

HFNY Curriculum Committee: Review of Available Primary and Supplemental Curricula for Central Administration Approval

Executive Summary – February 2, 2020

According to the Healthy Families America Best Practice Standards (2018-2021), when a Central Administration (CA) endorses curricula for program use, it is essential that the curricula be evidence-informed, culturally sensitive, and appropriate for the cognitive and educational abilities of the families served. Healthy Families New York (HFNY) has not conducted a comprehensive review of curricula in some time, necessitating a new examination to ensure that the currently approved curricula continue to meet these requirements and to identify additional options that may be of interest to programs.

The HFNY Curriculum Committee convened to evaluate all curricula currently endorsed by HFNY and several newly identified curricula with the intention of determining those that meet HFNY standards and should be considered “HFNY-Approved.” The Committee included representation from all three branches of the CA (New York State Office of Children and Family Services, Prevent Child Abuse New York, and the Center for Human Services Research at the State University of New York at Albany). It also included membership of many HFNY program staff, whose contributions were invaluable to informing the Committee’s decisions.

Through this process, the HFNY Curriculum Committee compiled detailed information on 26 curricula. Curricula were evaluated as potential **primary curricula** (i.e., curricula comprehensive enough to function as a program’s only curriculum), or as **supplemental curricula** (i.e., curricula that cannot function as a standalone curriculum, but that can supplement a primary curriculum). While several are already well known within HFNY, others may represent new options. Some aim to serve all audiences, while others focus on special groups (e.g., teen parents, children ages 3-5, fathers, Native American or tribal communities).

This Executive Summary presents the Committee’s recommendations for curricula approval to the CA. CA decisions on these recommendations, and notes regarding pertinent issues, are detailed in **Table 1**. Some curricula are listed multiple times due to their relevance to multiple target audiences.

Each evaluated curriculum is recommended by the Committee and decided upon by the CA as:

- *Approved as a Primary Curriculum (✓1);*
- *Approved as a Supplemental Curriculum (✓S);*
- *Other not approved resources (*); or*
- *Not approved (✗);* in these cases, the reason for this designation is summarized. Such curricula may still provide helpful components for program use, but this should be done with caution and with preference given to approved options.

For further detail about the curricula, please see the attached Excel spreadsheet which includes:

- a general summary of the curricula;
- a summary of the research used in the creation of the curricula;
- a summary of the evidence of effectiveness of the curricula;
- programs' and other states' opinions of the curricula;
- the cultural sensitivity of the curricula;
- the costs of the curricula, as well as required or optional trainings;
- the appropriateness of the curricula for the educational/cognitive abilities of the diverse families served by HFNY; and
- contact information through which programs can inquire about and purchase curricula

Table 1. Curricula Evaluated by the HFNY Curriculum Committee & CA Approval Decisions

Category & Curriculum	HFNY Central Administration Decision		Other Information / Reason Not Recommended
General Curricula			
Primary Curricula			
Growing Great Kids Prenatal through 36 Months (GGK P36)**	✓1	Approved Primary	
Partners for a Healthy Baby/Florida State University (PHB/FSU)**	✓1	Approved Primary	
Parents as Teachers (PAT)**	✓1	Approved Primary	
San Angelo (with Maps for Dads)**	✗	Not Approved	Outdated, condescending, and no longer available. Allow a one-year wash-out period for programs to purchase other materials (By 2/2022).
Supplemental General Curricula			
Baby TALK (Prenatal-Age 5)	✓S	Approved Supplemental	
Just In Time (Prenatal-Age 5)	✓S	Approved Supplemental	
UNICEF Curriculum	✱	Resource to Include	Included in spreadsheet as Other (Non-Approved) Resources to Engage Parents
Partners for Learning**	✗	Not Approved	No information available
Helping Babies Learn**	✗	Not Approved	Outdated (last updated 1993)
Curricula Specifically for Ages 3-5			
GGK Play With Me! (Ages 3-4)	✓S	Approved Supplemental	
GGK for Preschoolers (Ages 3-5)	✓1	Approved Primary	
PAT Foundational 2 (Ages 3-6)	✓1	Approved Primary	
PAT: Partnering with Teen Parents (Prenatal – Kindergarten)	✓S	Approved Supplemental	Also approved as a curriculum for Teen Parents
Just In Time (Prenatal-Age 5)	✓S	Approved Supplemental	Also approved as a Supplemental General Curriculum
Baby TALK (Prenatal-Age 5)	✓S	Approved Supplemental	Also approved as a Supplemental General Curriculum
Prenatal Curricula			
Great Beginnings Start Before Birth – PCANY 2019 Hybrid*	✓S	Approved Supplemental	
Growing Great Kids Prenatal through 36 Months (GGK P36)**	✓1	Approved Primary	Also approved as a Primary Curriculum
Partners for a Healthy Baby/Florida State University (PHB/FSU)**	✓1	Approved Primary	Also approved as a Primary Curriculum
Parents as Teachers (PAT)**	✓1	Approved Primary	Also approved as a Primary Curriculum
Just In Time (Prenatal-Age 5)	✓S	Approved Supplemental	Also approved as a Supplemental General Curriculum
Baby TALK (Prenatal-Age 5)	✓S	Approved Supplemental	Also approved as a Supplemental General Curriculum

Specialized Supplemental Curricula			
Fatherhood-Focused Curricula			
24/7 Dad*	✓S	Approved Supplemental	
Nurturing Fathers	✓S	Approved Supplemental	
Partners for a Healthy Baby/Florida State University (PHB/FSU)**	✓1	Approved Primary	Contains 30+ fatherhood-focused handouts; Also approved as a Primary Curriculum
Boyz 2 Dads*	✗	Not Approved	Meant for teenage boys and their fathers to prevent pregnancy, not to help with raising children
Understanding Dad	✓S	Approved Supplemental	
Mom as Gateway*	✓S	Approved Supplemental	Addendum to a Curriculum
PAT: Partnering with Teen Parents	✱	Resource to Include	Contains 8 handouts for teen dads; Also under Curricula for Teen Parents
InsideOut Dad*	✱	Resource to Include	Included in spreadsheet as Other (Non-Approved) Resources to Engage Parents
Fathering in 15 (Addendum to a Curriculum)	✱	Resource to Include	
PAT: Focus on Fathers (Addendum to a Curriculum)*	✱	Resource to Include	
The Responsible Fatherhood Curriculum	✱	Resource to Include	
Curricula for Teen Parents			
PAT: Partnering with Teen Parents	✓S	Approved Supplemental	
24/7 Dad Adaptation for Teen Dads	✓S	Approved Supplemental	
Baby TALK (Prenatal-Age 5)	✓S	Approved Supplemental	Contains 20+ teen parent handouts developed by experts in 2017; Also approved as a Supplemental General Curriculum
Curricula for Children with Disabilities			
PAT: Interactions Across Abilities	✓S	Approved Supplemental	
PAT: Partnering with Teen Parents	✓S	Approved Supplemental	Contains 4 handouts for children with disabilities. Also approved as a curriculum for Teen Parents
FACE: Family and Child Education Program	✱	Resource to Include	Not a curriculum. Specifically designed to detect disabilities in Native American children. Also under Program for Native American/Tribal Communities
Overcoming Adversity/Trauma & Building Resilience			
Mind Matters: Overcoming Adversity & Building Resilience	✓S	Approved Supplemental	
Program for Native American/Tribal Communities			
FACE: Family and Child Education Program	✱	Resource to Include	Not a curriculum. Also under Children with Disabilities

**Listed as “HFNY-Approved” Curricula and listed on the MIS prior to 2/2/2021 CA Decisions

*Listed on the MIS but not as “HFNY-Approved” Curricula prior to 2/2/2021 CA Decisions

Evidence-Informed vs. Evidence-Based Curricula

One of Healthy Families America's requirements for approval of a curriculum is that the curriculum be evidence-informed. But it is important to make the distinction between evidence-*informed* (also known as research-based) curricula and evidence-*based* curricula. The Healthy Families America Best Practice Standards (HFA BPS; 2018-2021 edition) defines evidence-informed parenting curricula as follows:

"[T]he information contained within it is based on scientific knowledge or research. Strategies employed, or goals of a curriculum, may also be grounded in scientific research (e.g. – strive to strengthen the parent-child relationship, which research has shown to be a key factor in healthy development). The reason there is a focus on the use of evidence-informed materials is to ensure that families are receiving well-founded, factual, relevant and credible information versus materials that are opinion-based or outdated and no longer accurate."

In comparison, evidence-based curricula are peer-reviewed studies of curricula effectiveness in which a treatment group is compared to a control or pre-test group.¹ Ideally, approved curricula would be evidence-based because that is the true measure of whether curricula are effective in improving child and parental outcomes. Although curricula may have been conceived using rigorous and up-to-date scientific knowledge (i.e., they would meet the HFA BPS definition of evidence-informed curricula), they still may not be effective in achieving the desired outcomes in practice.

Despite curricula needing only to fulfill the requirements of an evidence-informed curriculum, the Committee also investigated whether the curriculum was evidenced-based, as well. Interestingly, the majority of the evaluations of these curricula had relatively unbalanced comparison groups: while the intervention group received home visiting services *plus* the curriculum, the control group typically did not receive home visiting services at all. This flaw makes it difficult to disentangle the role of the curriculum specifically from the home visiting services more generally. See the accompanying spreadsheet for a discussion of evidence-based studies along with notes of such methodological issues.

¹ Any of three types of studies would ideally be used to establish an evidence base: (1) a randomized controlled trial comparing an intervention group that received home visiting plus the curriculum of interest to a control group that received home visiting but not the curriculum; (2) an observational longitudinal study comparing a cohort that received home visiting plus the curriculum with a comparison cohort that received home visiting but not the curriculum; and (3) a pre-post-test study comparing outcomes before and after receiving the curriculum (where both periods includes home visiting).

Summary of Curricula Recommendations

The HFNY Curriculum Committee researched and has provided recommendations for 26 curricula. Of the twelve curricula currently listed on the MIS,² four (GGK P36, PHB/FSU, PAT, and San Angelo) are currently considered (prior to 2/2/2021) HFNY-approved primary curricula, and two (Partners for Learning and Helping Babies Learn) are HFNY-approved supplemental curricula. The additional 14 curricula were newly identified and evaluated.

Table 1 lists each of the 26 curricula considered (ordered by type of curriculum) and the HFNY CA decision for approval for each curriculum, subsequent to Committee recommendations.

A brief summary of the Committee's recommendations and CA decisions are provided below. For more detailed information about individual curricula, please refer to the Excel spreadsheet.

Recommendations for HFNY-Approved Primary Curricula

The HFNY Curriculum Committee recommends that GGK P36, PHB/FSU, and PAT continue to be endorsed as HFNY-approved primary curricula. These three curricula share the following characteristics:

- They meet the definition of evidence-informed (i.e., they were created by a team of multidisciplinary experts and have been recently updated);
- They are culturally sensitive;
- They span from the prenatal period through 36 months;
- They are supported by well-established, intellectual organizations (e.g., universities or nonprofit organizations) comprised of experts who are available to provide support to HFNY programs, as well as updates to the curricula as required by HFA standards; and
- They are still available for purchase.

Although two of these three curricula (GGK and PAT) have been criticized by some programs as being “wordy” and not as user-friendly, we recommend continuing to endorse these curricula because they offer exceptional support in facilitating positive parent-child interaction, teaching and assessing child development, and enhancing family functioning. Further, many HFNY programs have invested a substantial amount of money in purchasing these curricula and training their staff in their use, and shifting would represent a significant burden.

The Committee does not recommend continuing to endorse the San Angelo curriculum as a primary curriculum. This decision was made based on the following considerations:

- Most programs use a version that was last updated 17 years ago. While there is a more recent version, only one HFNY program reported having this newer version, and it is no longer available for purchase;

² Growing Great Kids Prenatal through 36 Months (GGK P36), Partners for a Healthy Baby by Florida State University (PHB/FSU), Parents as Teachers (PAT), San Angelo, Great Beginnings, Partners for Learning, Helping Babies Learn, 24/7 Dad, PAT: Focus on Fathers, Mom as Gateway, InsideOut Dad, and Boyz 2 Dads.

- This outdated version contains information now known to be potentially harmful, particularly for infants;
- The curriculum is perceived by many HFNY staff to be condescending to families; and
- It is no longer available for purchase, and neither the curriculum authors nor an intellectual organization are available to provide the required program updates.

Fortunately, San Angelo is currently only being used by a limited number of HFNY programs, and even then typically only in a limited manner (for families with 3-5-year-olds and before home visitors have received required training in another primary curriculum). The Committee identified other curricula that HFNY programs can implement to serve this 3-5-year-old age group and recommends that the San Angelo curriculum be phased out over a period of one year in order to allow programs sufficient time to find and purchase a replacement curriculum.

Recommendations for HFNY-Approved Primary or Supplemental Curricula for 3-5-year-olds

The Committee recommends several new curricula that either specifically focus on children 3-5 years of age, or that include this age range in their broader curricula. These curricula are either recommended as:

- HFNY-approved primary curricula: GGK for Preschoolers (Ages 3-5), PAT Foundational 2 (Ages 3-6);
- HFNY-approved supplemental curricula: GGK Play With Me! (Ages 3-4 – an addendum to a curriculum), Baby TALK (covers prenatal-kindergarten), and Just In Time (covers prenatal-kindergarten).

Of these five options, only PAT Foundational 2 and GGK Play With Me! require pre-certification in the base curriculum (PAT Foundational 1 or GGK P36, respectively) for the earlier age group. Any of these curricula would serve as an excellent alternative for programs that currently use the San Angelo curriculum to serve this age group.

Recommendations for HFNY-Approved Supplemental Curricula

The Committee does not recommend continuing to approve either Partners for Learning or Helping Babies Learn, the two current HFNY-approved supplemental curricula. There is no information available online for Partners for Learning, so the Committee was unable to review it and programs are unable to purchase it. Helping Babies Learn was last updated in 1993, so likely contains outdated information.

The Committee recommends that Baby TALK and Just In Time be endorsed as HFNY-approved supplemental general curricula. Both of these curricula are broad, covering a wide range of topics in child development and parenting, are up-to-date, and are research-based. They are appropriate for use with families with children through age five or six. However, Just In Time was not felt to be comprehensive enough to be approved as a potential sole curriculum for programs, and the Committee felt it needed additional information and potentially more

evidence base to approve Baby TALK as a standalone curriculum. More information on these two curricula can be found below.

Baby TALK

The Baby TALK curriculum shows great promise and has been adopted by HF San Diego as their primary curriculum. It offers similar breadth and depth to the other HFNY-approved primary curricula. But in addition to being less visually appealing than other curricula, the format strays from the usual parent handouts and instead provides a guide for home visitors; this format may be less ideal for programs. And while this curriculum does have a sound research base, the evidence-based studies are lacking (due to few studies and small sample sizes) in comparison with current primary curricula.

As such, the Committee recommends revisiting the Baby TALK curriculum in a year or two. In the interim period, the Committee recommends inviting Baby TALK representatives to give a presentation to the CA or at a Statewide Leadership Meeting to better convey what this curriculum looks like in the field (potentially via a videotaped demonstration of its use with a family) and what is included in the curriculum materials and training. The Committee could then reconsider potential approval, including determining whether the evidence base has expanded, evaluating CA's and programs' perception of and interest in the curriculum, and particularly gathering the feedback from any programs that purchased and implemented it.

Just In Time

The research base and evidence base are more limited for the Just In Time curriculum (it has a smaller team of experts and less rigorous evidence-based studies), and the materials themselves are not as comprehensive or in-depth as the recommended primary curricula. However, it does contain useful, relevant, and up-to-date information, and thus offers a positive choice for programs to use as a supplement to their primary curriculum. Some HFNY programs already use this curriculum some of the time.

Recommendations for HFNY-Approved Specialized Supplemental Curricula

The Committee recommends several curricula that focus on specific groups or populations as HFNY-approved supplemental curricula. These curricula are variously focused on:

- **Prenatal period:** Great Beginnings Start Before Birth – PCANY 2019 Hybrid Version;
- **Father engagement and fatherhood:** 24/7 Dad, Nurturing Fathers, Understanding Dad, and Mom as Gateway;
- **Teen parents:** PAT: Partnering with Teen Parents, 24/7 Dad: Adaptation for Teen Dads, and Baby TALK;
- **Children with disabilities:** PAT: Interactions Across Abilities and PAT: Partnering with Teen Parents; and
- **Families with a history of trauma or facing other adverse experiences:** Mind Matters.

Recommendations for Other Resources

The Committee also recommended several programs, curricula, and addenda to curricula as Other Resources to Engage Families. These materials are variously not comprehensive enough to act as a curriculum, would require significant adaptation to work in a home visiting context, or are not entirely in line with HFNY's needs, but still may be of use to programs as they work to engage and serve various populations. These programs include:

- **General use:** The UNICEF curriculum;
- **Father engagement and fatherhood:** InsideOut Dad (for incarcerated fathers), Fathering in 15, PAT: Focus on Fathers, and The Responsible Fatherhood Curriculum; and
- **Native American families and Native American children with disabilities:** The Family and Child Education Program (FACE). FACE is not a curriculum, but is a resource to which tribal leaders can apply (perhaps with assistance from HFNY programs) to better serve Native American or tribal communities, and to identify children with speech, language, hearing, and other disabilities, by instituting federally-funded, community-wide home visiting and center-based services.

Highlights of Selected Curricula

Highlights for the following five curricula (all recommended by the Committee) are shared below:

- GGK for Preschoolers;
- 24/7 Dad;
- PAT: Partnering with Teen Parents;
- PAT: Interactions Across Abilities; and
- Mind Matters: Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience.

Except for 24/7 Dad, these curricula are new to HFNY. These curricula were chosen for highlighting for a number of reasons. First, all meet the HFA BPS definition for evidence-informed parenting curricula. These curricula would serve as excellent supplements to already implemented primary curricula by meeting the needs of special groups. They are all user-friendly. And lastly, three of the five are quite inexpensive (the exceptions being GGK for Preschoolers and Mind Matters, though the latter is inexpensive if the optional training is not purchased or if the virtual Mind Matters Now training is purchased instead).

GGK for Preschoolers

Growing Great Kids (GGK) for Preschoolers serves children ages three through kindergarten, and thus offers an alternative for the several programs currently using the San Angelo curriculum to serve this age group. This curriculum draws on the same substantial research base that the GGK Prenatal-36 Months (GGK P36) curriculum uses. (GGK P36 has a strong

research base and is currently used and well-liked by many HFNY programs.) These theoretical underpinnings include:

- attachment theory (which posits that secure parental/nurturer attachment of the child during the critical 0-5 years period is essential to healthy development long-term);
- the importance of parents' providing nurturing responses to help children develop the ability to control their own emotions (i.e., helping parents provide children with external regulatory capacity [co-regulation] until children are able to regulate their own emotions [self-regulation]);
- the importance of increasing executive functioning in parents, which results in better problem solving, stress management, and other life skills; and
- the importance of building six protective factors shown by research to help prevent child abuse:
 - nurturing and attachment;
 - social and emotional competence of children;
 - knowledge of parenting and child development;
 - parental resilience;
 - social connections; and
 - concrete supports for parents.

GGK for Preschoolers includes:

- the base Growing Great Families Curriculum Manual, which offers research-based tools for strengthening family foundations, enhancing stress management and problem-solving skills, and forming protective family and community buffers;
- the GGK for Preschoolers Curriculum Manual, which includes 24 parent education modules;
- the GGK Play With Me! 3 & 4 Handouts, a set of over 400 child development activities for 3- and 4-year-olds; and
- downloadable parent handouts and activities with reproduction license.

Home visitors and supervisors are not required to be certified in GGK P36 to use the GGK for Preschoolers curriculum. If not certified, the home visitor and supervisor are required to take a five-day training. If they are already certified in GGK P36, the training is reduced to three days.

24/7 Dad

24/7 Dad is a National Fatherhood Initiative curriculum that teaches fathers to be involved, responsible, and committed. Although it is currently listed on the MIS, it is not an HFNY-approved supplemental curriculum; the Committee recommends listing it as an approved supplemental curriculum.

24/7 Dad is a 12-week group program but can easily be adapted to the one-to-one home visiting format. It comes in two versions: one is a basic fathering program for dads who are

struggling with what it means to be a father, and the second is an advanced version which addresses more difficult topics. The 24/7 Dad curriculum is evidence-informed and is up-to-date.

The 3rd Edition, which came out in 2015, includes:

- a basis in the Transtheoretical Model (Stages of Change), in which the stages of change are precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance;
- a focus on developing habitual behavior, based on the concept that being a good dad is a habit; and
- inclusion of a 24/7 Dad Checklist (that dads customize for themselves), based on research in several fields that has found checklists to be beneficial.

There are evidence-based studies of the 24/7 Dad program delivered in the group-based format. One randomized controlled trial found several improvements in the 24/7 Dad group that were not found in the control group, including outcomes such as improved reading to and doing homework with the child, increased level of support to the mother of the child, improved disciplining of the child, and increased level of happiness about being a parent. Another study found dads in the 24/7 Dad group had significant improvements in parenting knowledge and conflict resolution skills. These results represent strong evidence for the impact of this curriculum, and support its recommendation for approval as a supplemental curriculum in HFNY.

Parents as Teachers (PAT): Partnering with Teen Parents

PAT: Partnering with Teen Parents is an evidence-informed curriculum created by a multidisciplinary team of experts to specifically address the specialized needs of teen parents. While there are no studies of its effectiveness, it is grounded in a firm research base. It includes 1,100 pages of resources for professionals, parent handouts, and activity pages geared toward teen parents, as well as toolkit cards that can be used during home visits.

Topics include:

- adolescent development of life skills as they approach adulthood;
- parallel development of the needs of teens and their infants/young children;
- the importance of fathers, even if the parents are not together; and
- mindfulness techniques for focusing attention during parent-child interaction.

Parents as Teachers (PAT): Interactions Across Abilities

PAT: Interactions Across Abilities is designed for parents of children who have developmental disabilities or who are at risk for developing them. Its focuses include:

- promoting optimal child development and recognizing red flags;
- promoting positive parenting behaviors, including nurturing, guiding, responding, communicating, and supporting learning;

- adaptations and assistive technology;
- parent-professional relationships; and
- conditions, diseases, and disabilities.

It includes many parent-child activity pages. PAT: Interactions Across Abilities is an evidence-informed curriculum created by a multidisciplinary team of experts to help children with disabilities and their families. While there are no studies of its effectiveness, it is grounded in a firm research base.

Mind Matters: Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience

The Mind Matters curriculum is a psychoeducational curriculum that teaches individuals ages 12 and up to respond to trauma and other negative experiences with methods based on current research and neuroscience. The Committee believes that this curriculum would be useful for parents and other adults, as well as older children. It is not designed for young children, but the author reported interest in creating an adaptation for young children.

This curriculum was originally designed as 12 one-hour group lessons, but has since been adapted to the one-to-one home visiting format. It can now be delivered in 21 one-to-one sessions that are 15-20 minutes each. The Appendix describes this adaptation in detail.

The Mind Matters curriculum focuses on the following six topics:

- self-soothing and regulating emotions (peripheral vision exercise, focused breathing, grounding/mindfulness exercises, etc.);
- developing an observing self;
- relationship skills;
- compassion for the hijacked brain (having compassion for the trauma one has endured and remembering that any response to it was both appropriate and can be changed in the future);
- self-care; and
- intentionality.

The authors emphasize that this curriculum is not designed as a group therapy and should not be used to replace psychotherapy. When using this curriculum, the home visitor should have a list of mental health resources available for participants. Additionally, the authors warn that discussion of specific traumatic incidents is likely to retraumatize the participant and therefore discussion of specific personal traumatic events should be entirely avoided. To this end, the curriculum itself delays discussion of trauma itself, even more generally, until lesson six once participants have learned self-soothing methods, developed an observing self, and established a relationship with the home visitor.

References

Healthy Families America. *HFA Best Practice Standards Effective January 1, 2018 – December 31, 2021*. (2018, January 1.)