



Positive
Solutions
for
Families

POSITIVE SOLUTIONS FOR FAMILIES

REPORT OF FINDINGS

2022



CANADA RESEARCH CHAIRS
CHAIRES DE RECHERCHE DU CANADA



Early Childhood
Collaborative
Research Centre

About PSF



Positive Solutions for Families (PSF) is designed to develop family protective factors for mental health promotion through parenting strategies that help build families' confidence in and ability to support their young children's social, emotional, and behavioural development. PSF is a population-level and evidence-based intervention originally developed in the U.S. by

the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL).

PSF compliments the existing *Pyramid Model for Promoting Social and Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children* program implemented in select Pre-primary programs and regulated childcare centres in Nova Scotia. In collaboration, these programs can support young Nova Scotians' social, emotional, and behavioural development in child care and at home by providing coaching to early childhood educators and resources for families.

The workshops have been adapted to meet the needs of more diverse communities in Nova Scotia. It has been adapted for French and Arabic communities and is in the process of being adapted for and with Indigenous communities.

PSF is delivered through a series of six workshops which are facilitated by staff at the Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Intervention Services (NSECDIS). The program is evaluated by the Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre (ECCRC).

PSF is a part of the Mental Health Promotion Innovation Fund (MHP-IF) which is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC).



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada



Workshop Format

In the fall of 2021, Phase 2 of the PSF program was implemented. This involved adapted workshops which were informed by the participants of Phase 1. For example, some adaptations were made to make the workshops more culturally-responsive and accessible for families. See the infographic from Phase 1 [here](#).

In fall, 2021, **147** participants were placed into three groups for the purpose of evaluating different delivery methods:



Facilitated Workshop with Parent Forum

Five regulated child care centres in Nova Scotia volunteered to participate in the PSF program by sharing the program with their families. **32** families from these centres participated in online workshops facilitated by Developmental Interventionists from NSECDIS. These families also had access to a Facebook parent group.



Self-Directed Workshop *with* Parent Forum

Parents across Nova Scotia who had at least one child in regulated child care, Pre-primary or a day home volunteered to participate in the program. **57** families were randomly placed into this group where they had access to online, self-directed workshops and a Facebook parent group.



Self-Directed Workshop *without* Parent Forum

Parents across Nova Scotia who had at least one child in regulated child care, Pre-primary or a day home volunteered to participate in the program. **58** families were randomly placed into this group where they had access to online, self-directed workshops, but no Facebook parent group.

**The self-directed workshops filled up within a day which showed the interest in this program.*



What Parents Learned

After each workshop, some participants completed post-surveys and after all six workshops were complete, 69 participants filled out a post-survey. Across all three groups, some common themes participants indicated that they learned were:

- ✓ To understand and support children's emotions and behaviours
- ✓ To understand parent reactions and their impacts on children
- ✓ To understand why children behave in certain ways



"I will use new emotional words with my children. I will teach them how to express their feelings by using the new words."



- ✓ To communicate with their child
- ✓ To understand that children are continuously learning

"I found that using positive encouragement, as well as thinking (and brainstorming with my children) about what things to do with them to fill their relationship tank, were both very helpful things! I was also happy to receive information about transitions, as that is something that seems to be difficult for my daughter. I also loved the focus on emotional intelligence!"

- ✓ To use expectations and visual guides and the benefits of them
- ✓ To use specific instruction and praise of positive behaviour





Benefits of PSF

- ✓ Almost all participants across groups indicated that the PSF workshops were useful and they would use what they learned at home.
- ✓ **All** participants across groups indicated that they would recommend PSF to another parent.



Participants identified what they liked about the workshops and what was useful:

Facilitated

Self-Directed



"I really enjoyed the workshops, especially how they were broken down into smaller segments that allowed me to try things out before moving on to something new. I also really enjoyed that real-life examples were given so that I could better visualise how to try/implement something in my own life with my own child."

"I liked the many techniques presented and the easy way they were displayed in, easy to grasp & remember and very effective. I was waiting to participate in such workshops, so glad I was offered the opportunity."

Daily Hassles

Before and after participants completed the workshop series, they completed a survey that used a Daily Hassles Parenting Scale. The purpose was to see if the PSF program helped decrease daily hassles for participants.

Although not statistically significant, the results did show a trend of lower scores for parents after completing the self-directed workshops. In other words, some results showed parents who

completed the self-directed had less daily hassles. Again, because these results were not statistically significant, there is no proof that PSF self-directed workshops *in fact* helped to decrease daily hassles for participants. Results could have been *by chance/coincidental*.

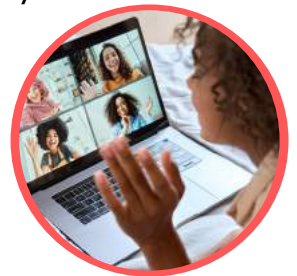




Parent-to-Parent Connection

In the beginning of Phase 1 (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic), parents indicated the value of the parent-to-parent connection. To keep that valued aspect, we tried different ways to facilitate those connections virtually.

Parents in the facilitated workshops enjoyed the opportunity to connect with other parents virtually. They felt less alone knowing that others have similar experiences.



"Savoir je ne suis pas la seule momma avec un enfant tête dure, et il y a beaucoup de stratégies pour améliorer comme parents."

**original quote was in French*



"Knowing that I am not the only momma with a hard-headed child, and that there are many strategies to improve parenting."



Parents in the self-directed workshops enjoyed the use of real-life stories from parents and liked knowing others have similar experiences.

For the facilitated and self-directed groups with access to the Facebook parent forum, the majority found it somewhat helpful but not many parents connected through it.



"I've enjoyed the slides and trying to engage in discussion. I want to connect more with other parents and the Facebook group is a good tool but I'd love to have a parent meet up or something when it's appropriate again."



Suggestions for Improvement

A part of the post-survey was to get participants' feedback on what improvements they would suggest if PSF workshops were to be implemented again in the future.

Participants made the following suggestions for improving the PSF workshops:

Facilitated Workshops

- A different time of day;
- Technical difficulties (although parents indicated it wasn't the fault of the facilitators).

Self-Directed Workshops

- More examples;
- Closed captioning on videos;
- More interactive;
- Consideration of other learning styles;
- More solutions to behaviours in the examples;
- Check-in questions.

Facebook Forum

- Chat option;
- More interaction between participants;
- Compile all languages into one post.

"إذا توافر بعض المواد التفاعلية"

*original quote was in Arabic

"If some interactive materials are available"

"There was a bit too much going on. I felt bad because I could see the effort that was going into it, but it didn't compel me naturally. Maybe it would be more effective with a bit more community building, rather than focusing on providing resources. For example, the only discussion I chimed in on was one about favourite movies."



Next Steps

Indigenous Adaptations

In the fall of 2021, our team began adaptations of the PSF program with and for First Nations communities. We organized and facilitated small group discussions with members of Indigenous communities to review the existing program content and delivery format and then used this feedback to develop a series of four

workshops. These workshops were modified to be more visual, including the use of visual representation and artwork from within communities, and to use more storytelling through the production of short videos that were filmed at different First Nations communities across Nova Scotia. In-person, facilitated sessions were then offered to groups of parents in Sipekne'katik and feedback showed that the information was felt to be useful and well-received. In fall 2022, the sessions will be offered in Membertou and feedback will be collected. Future plans include offering the adapted program both in-person and virtually to various other First Nations communities province-wide.”

Integration with the Pyramid Model Program in Nova Scotia

PSF and *Pyramid Model for Promoting Social and Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children* program both aim to support young children's social, emotional, and behavioural development. Pyramid Model is focused on child care supports and PSF is focused on at-home supports. Under NSECDIS, these two programs will be integrated to provide similar supports for children in child care and at home.

The integration will begin this year with new program onboarding into the coaching program. To support Family Engagement, an essential element in program-wide implementation of the Pyramid Model, new child care programs will be offered the PSF workshop modules for parents/guardians to access.

Through these modules, families will be introduced to the same key Pyramid Model principles and practices being introduced to the child care program educators. Families will be able to participate in either in-person, online facilitated, or online self-directed modules.

Child care program educators will also be provided with “Coffee Chat” kits to support 5 mini parent discussion sessions. The kits include: session invitation; facilitation guide; family handouts; and materials for hands-on activities to take home. These sessions are designed to spark conversation between educators and families around Pyramid Model principles and practices to support social emotional learning in young children.





Additional Quotes

"It has given me some great tools to help me not yell so much and better understand my child's behaviours and ways to approach them, so that we both are happier."

"I like [that] it starts with explaining why kids behave the way they are, why their perspective is different than adults, it made me understand why kids behave certain ways, it is not because they are ""Brats"" when they have tantrums, it is because to them small things can be big. It really opened my eyes as I learned that I really should try to be considerate for my kids from their perspective. That was a big pivot point for me for parenting because a lot of the frustration comes from thinking kids being unreasonable."

"Really liked how in depth it was and how it gave me a different outlook on how little people's minds work and different questions and how to handle them appropriately."

"I liked the length and pace of the workshops. I thought the delivery was convenient. Having the manual on hand for activities was also nice. In terms of material, I liked the overall parenting approach. I also liked having a piece of homework, or goal to try each week following the workshop. I've been using several of the techniques."