



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 13, 2021

CONTACT: Liv O'Keefe

lokeeffe@sierrahealth.org; (916) 802-8750

Parent Leadership Program Launches to Support Students in Low-Income Neighborhoods and Communities of Color
Sacramento PASS Program brings together community resources, advocacy and support for local student success

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The Sacramento Parents Advocating for Student Success (PASS) initiative launched today with the unveiling of a Leadership Training Institute to support the healthy social and emotional development of local students and their families.

[Sacramento PASS](#) is a two-year, parent-led school and community initiative that connects, supports and empowers parent advocates who have children in Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) Title 1 schools to ensure student achievement, mental health and well-being, and education equity throughout the district.

Today's launch comes within a week of dire national headlines concerning [student suicides](#) and [COVID-19 parent mortality rates](#). The impacts hit diverse and low-income communities the hardest. According to a recent study in the journal *Pediatrics*, 65 percent of children who have lost a parent or caregiver are people of color, and the State of California reports that communities with median incomes below \$40,000 a year have a 33 percent higher COVID-19 case rate than the rest of the population.

"PASS is a direct response to the profound challenges students in diverse and under-resourced communities are facing," said Chet P. Hewitt, president and CEO of Sierra Health Foundation and The Center, one of the initiative's funding partners. "We owe it to our kids to think differently, and this initiative helps ensure we get the right supports in place for their academic, social and emotional needs."

Central to PASS is the new 10-month Leadership Training Institute, which will provide four hours of in-person training a month to the participating parent cohort, as well as connection, support and resources to build and expand local and regional parent networks. The cohort will be comprised of 20 parents who will learn to lead engagement at school sites, build partnerships and relationships with other parents and advocate for the needs of their students.

“Every parent loves their child, and many long to be more engaged in their children’s education,” said Elvia Vasquez, an SCUSD parent and PASS partner. “But not all parents that want to be engaged are able to do so.”

Parents, especially those from historically marginalized communities, encounter multiple barriers to being more involved in their child’s education and school site, ranging from cost of childcare to language differences and long working hours. Traditional groups and models for parent participation have not been able to meaningfully engage and include these parents. Sacramento PASS is designed to address those barriers by recruiting, supporting and training a cohort of diverse parent leaders on local school campuses.

Sacramento PASS incorporates intentional resources to support access to participation, including in-language support, outreach and training, as well as financial support to engage parents and families who have been excluded from or not able to participate in other forums up to this point. The 20 parents selected for the cohort will receive \$250 monthly stipends to help cover the cost of childcare and make it easier to participate.

Sacramento PASS is managed by Roberts Family Development Center and Sacramento Area Congregations Together and is funded by Sierra Health Foundation and The Center at Sierra Health Foundation through a grant from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. Community partners include Black Parallel School Board, Sacramento East Bay Asian Youth Center, Youth Forward, Sacramento Building Healthy Communities, TEAL Group, Rose Family Creative Empowerment Center, Innovation Bridge, Greater Sacramento Urban League and United and Guided. Each of the participating partners have established trusted relationships with neighborhood schools and families to help foster a supportive environment for participating parent advocates.

“It is our responsibility as a community to assist parents in being effective advocates,” said Derrell Roberts, executive director and co-founder of the Roberts Family Development Center. “Building parent power is at the heart of what we are doing through this initiative and at Roberts Family Development Center.”

PASS partners have been actively recruiting parents in the community, but all parents with students in SCUSD can still apply through this Friday, Oct. 15. Partners also encourage SCUSD parents from all schools to join the greater PASS coalition by signing up for e-mail alerts. Multilingual applications and information are available at sacramentopass.org.

###

[Watch the recording of today’s press conference live-stream.](#)

ABOUT THE CENTER AT SIERRA HEALTH FOUNDATION: *The Center at Sierra Health Foundation promotes health and racial equity in communities throughout California with local, state and national partners. Learn more at shfcenter.org.*