Family Resource Centers

What are Family Resource Centers?

The Connecticut Family Resource Center concept promotes comprehensive, integrated, community-based systems of family support and child development services located in public school buildings. This model is based on the "Schools of the 21st Century" concept developed by Dr. Edward Zigler of Yale University.

Family Resource Centers provide access, within a community, to a broad continuum of early childhood and family support services which foster the optimal development of children and families. They offer parent education and training; family support; preschool and school-age child care; teen pregnancy prevention (positive youth development services); and family day-care provider training. Family Resource Centers provide:

- quality child care;
- physical accessibility in public schools;
- hours of operation consistent with family schedule; and
- family support and child care services administered by school or community-based agencies collaborating with schools.

What is the Philosophy?

Family Resource Centers embody the underlying concept that healthy development and good education begin with access to quality child care and support services from birth. This concept fosters the development of a system for child care and family support that takes advantage of the physical accessibility of the public school. The school is an institution that is known to, recognized by, and accessible to all families. The model offers preschool programs with operating hours that are consistent with parents' schedules. The Connecticut model offers flexibility, in that family support and child-care services can be administered by the school or by community-based agencies on behalf of the school.

Family Resource Centers are expected to prevent an array of childhood and adolescent problems by strengthening effective family management practices and establishing a continuum of child care and support services that children and parents need. By using local public school buildings and resources, Family Resource Centers, with the collaboration of the school system, are able to better prepare children and families for success.

School-based Family Resource Centers collaborate with the many resources in their communities, including child-care providers, School Readiness Councils, local United Ways and service providers of the Departments of Social Services and Children and Families.

This philosophical foundation is designed to provide the best possible start for children and families of all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups living in communities in which Family Resource Centers are located. Like the public school system, Family Resource Centers provide a common ground for all families to benefit from the services offered, and a unique opportunity for families of diverse cultures and backgrounds to share and learn from each other.

Who is Eligible for Services?

All families who reside in the designated service area, regardless of income, are eligible for services offered by the center. Some services may require a family contribution based on a sliding fee scale established by the center or school.

What is the Legislative Authority?

Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-4o provides the authorization for Connecticut Family Resource Center Programs.

What are the Service Components?

Centers must provide or collaborate with existing agencies to offer the following services:

✧ Quality Full-Day Child Care and School Readiness Programs

Quality full-day child care and school readiness are services offered year-round for children ages three to five who are not enrolled in school. This service and the school-age child-care component operate on a sliding fee scale. Centers must be licensed by the Connecticut Department of Public Health and are expected to be accredited or in the process of being accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children or other accrediting agencies recognized by the State Department of Education.

Preschool programs must be in compliance with all state statutes and regulations governing child care and, in the case of the school readiness program, in compliance with the standards set for programs pursuant to Section 10-16p, as amended.

✧ School-Age Child Care

This component is offered for children enrolled in school up to the age of 12 for before and after regular school hours and on a full-day basis during school holidays and school vacation This service is offered from 7:00 a.m. until school starts and from the end of the school day until 6:00 p.m., and is in operation full-time (7:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m.) during the summer and when school is not in session.

✧ Resource and Referral Services

Family Resource Centers, by their location and access to families, have established themselves as a primary resource and referral service for issues concerning the well-being of families. Support services are provided to parents of newborn infants to ascertain their needs and provide them with referrals to other services and organizations and, if necessary, education in parenting skills.

✧ Families in Training

This component provides, within available appropriations, community support services to expectant parents and parents of children under the age of 3. Such services shall include, but not be limited to, providing information and advice to parents on their child's language, cognitive, social and motor development, visiting a participant's home on a regular basis, organizing group meetings at the center for neighborhood parents of young children and providing a reference center for parents who need special assistance or services. The program shall provide for the recruitment of parents to participate in such programs.

✧ Adult Education

This component offers a range of adult education opportunities, including parent training and adult education, support and educational services to parents with children who are participants of the child-care services of the program and who are interested in obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent. Parents and their preschool-age children may attend classes together in parenting and child-rearing skills so as to promote the mutual pursuit of education while enhancing parent-child interaction, English as a Second Language (ESL) and Basic Skills may also be offered through this component.

✧ Support and Training for Family Day-Care Providers

A continuum of child-care opportunities are provided for families. The staff of the canter offer training and technical assistance and' other support to providers in the community and serve as an information and referral system for other childcare needs or coordinate such systems as may already exist in the community.

✧ Teen Pregnancy Prevention (Positive Youth Development)

The Family Resource Center provides a teen pregnancy prevention program to adolescents emphasizing responsible decision-making and communication skills. Aimed at children in Grades 4 through 6, this component offers a range of recreational and educational opportunities targeted at preventing teen pregnancy, substance abuse and school dropouts.