

Building Block 2: Family Resource Centers and Evidenced-based Parenting Education

What are Family Resource Centers?

A Family Resource Center is a warm and welcoming place in the community where any family member can go, as a regular part of day-to-day life. There are no eligibility requirements, they are a place where every family in the community can go to connect with other families. Family Resource Centers generally offer evidenced-based parent education classes, child development activities, parent-to-parent support groups, health information, and referrals to other community resources. In some cases, depending on the needs of the community, Family Resource Centers can offer afterschool and academic enrichment, GED preparation, literacy instruction, and employment counseling.

Family Resource Centers are unique in their approach to working with families: they build families' strengths and capacities, serve as a hub for the community, work for positive social change, and offer help without stigma. Parents act as resources in many capacities, from serving on a decision-making board, participating in resource center programs, learning job skills, to cooking for a potluck community dinner.

Why do Family Resource Centers matter?

Family Resource Centers can serve as lifelines for families with young children. In 2015, 1,339 individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and socio-economic levels made a total of 18,180 visits to the three family resource centers in our area. They attended parenting education classes and Parents Anonymous groups, had legally mandated supervised visitation with their children in safe, family-friendly settings, received referrals to resources for basic needs, brought their children for developmental screenings, learned about maternal-child health, borrowed parenting books and DVDs, and built social support. Family Resource Centers build parenting skills and confidence.

Family Resource Centers build on the five protective factors that research shows can prevent child abuse and maltreatment. These factors include parental resiliency, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in time of need, and social and emotional competence in children. By providing evidenced-based parenting education, family resource centers support families by helping them master the skills needed to raise healthy and happy children and help ensure children function well at home and at school. Family resource centers are especially valuable in rural areas where there are few opportunities

for networking, and social isolation of parents with young children can become a serious problem.

What is the return on dollars invested in Family Resource Centers?

The cost for one person to utilize a Family Resource Center in our area is far less than the costs of later interventions. (Operational costs for a family resource center are approximately \$75,000 to \$100,000 per year.) Research shows that evidence-based parenting programs are cost-effective due to savings from decreased rates of child maltreatment and social, emotional, and behavioral disorders in children. Researchers calculate that evidence-based parent education programs can save communities \$6.06 for every dollar spent. Effective parent education promotes protective factors including nurturing and attachment, knowledge of child development, parental resilience, and social connectedness. Family Resource Centers provide value in several ways:

1. They serve to effectively link families to existing community resources, thereby making the existing human services system function more effectively.
2. By providing a place for families to socialize and connect to one another they help eliminate the isolation that many families feel that leads to depression and other mental health problems.
3. By providing social supports and evidenced-based parenting education programs, family resource centers help parents raise healthy, happy children that do well in school and life.

What needs to be done to make Family Resource Centers available to all families in the region?

While Family Resource Centers exist in 3 communities across the region, there are large numbers of families that do not have access to the valuable support that Family Resource Centers provide.

The Challenges

- A significant proportion of families in our region have no access to a Family Resource Centers.
- It is difficult for many families, especially those with limited income, to find transportation to the existing centers. The Adirondack region is vast and public transportation is limited.
- The largest existing source of public financing for Family Resource Centers in the region is the Child and Family Trust Fund administered by the NY State Office of Children and Family Services. Unfortunately, that funding source is small and gradually declines to 50% of the original grant and it is not guaranteed after 5 years. Other sources of funds, (i.e.,

county program funding, and the United Way) have not been sufficient to make up the difference let alone fund expansion to other communities.

To increase access to Family Resource Centers in the region, the Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance is working with parents in Saranac Lake on the design and development of family resource center in that community. In addition, efforts are underway to with community members in Lake Placid and Schroon Lake to investigate the possibility of developing family resource centers. The Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance and the Adirondack Foundation are also working with community foundations to build support for the development of the new resource center. In addition, the Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance established a small group that investigated the availability of existing facilities and resources in Essex County.