



# Family Resource Centers

## Program Guidelines

Tennessee Department of Education | April 2021



# Table of Contents

## Family Resource Center Program Guidelines

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	3
<b>Tennessee Family Resource Centers</b> .....	4
Introduction .....	4
Mission and Vision Statement .....	5
<b>Guidelines</b> .....	6
Program Administration .....	6
Program Oversight .....	6
Family Resource Center Advisory Council .....	7
Family Resource Center Strategic Approach .....	8
Family Resource Center Strategic Approach Action Planning .....	9
<b>Appendix</b> .....	10

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# Introduction: Tennessee Family Resource Centers

In 1993, school-based Family Resource Centers (FRC(s) or Center(s)) were developed as specified in T.C.A. § 49-2-115 to address the potential risk factors within home and community environments that impede or create barriers to a child's ability to learn and grow successfully. Potential risk factors include but are not limited to poverty, hunger, homelessness, abuse, neglect, poor health, mental illness, substance abuse, and/or family conflict. Family Resource Centers network with community organizations to coordinate problem-solving and goal-setting processes with parents<sup>1</sup> while assisting them in creating a supportive environment to meet the needs of their children.

Service areas, as well as goals and implementation strategies, vary from Center to Center. In counties with sparse populations, a Family Resource Center may serve all school communities within the county. In counties with increased densities, Family Resource Centers are established to serve school communities in areas with high concentrations of historically underserved families.

The specific geographic location of each Center is dependent upon accessibility and space availability. Most Family Resource Centers are located within K-12 grade school structures. Colocation in the school facility maximizes economies of function, and communication is enhanced between school faculty and Center staff by such physical proximity. Positive public perception of school stability increases community participation both in receiving assistance as well as volunteering to assist with programming. Family Resource Centers may also be located within adult education centers, school system central offices, subsidized housing developments, or other locations near a school. Directors of Family Resource Centers are selected for their ability to implement the goals of the Center which they serve.

Family Resource Centers create close alliances with other state and federal programs to enhance all program areas. Centers work in collaboration with adult basic education, Even Start, Title I preschool programs, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, homeless education programs, Head Start and Families First. Family Resource Centers serve as hubs providing a multitude of supports including but not limited to social and mental health supports, parenting classes, job skills, and personalized services to remove barriers that hinder family well-being and the social, personal, physical, and academic well-being of students.

Family Resource Centers that are established and operated in Tennessee pursuant to T.C.A. 49-2-115 shall do so in keeping with the following: Tennessee Family Resource Centers shall be established by local education agencies (LEAs), in collaboration with state agencies and community stakeholders, operating in such a manner as to provide leadership in planning, developing, and supporting an

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<sup>1</sup> "Parent" means the parent or legal guardian of a student served by the FRC.





# Guidelines

## Program Administration

Local Education Agencies implementing Family Resource Centers, in conjunction with the Tennessee Department of Education, must adhere to the following guidelines in order to assure operation and performance is aligned with the legislative intent of T.C.A. 49-2-115:

- Ensure the FRC is located in or near a school.
- Identify a full-time, qualified individual designated as the Family Resource Center director. The FRC director may be either an employee of the school system or an employee of the agency that any given school system may choose to contract with for the provision of an FRC.
- Develop and provide a written job description of FRC personnel with minimum qualifications to include education and/or experience in social service, mental health, and/or education-related fields; pre-service and annual in-service training in specific services, which are related to the goals of the FRCs, shall also be included. The FRC director shall serve as the liaison between the advisory council and administration, including school administration and the Board of Education.
- Ensure new FRC personnel attend trainings as set forth and required by the department.
- Determine a physical location for the FRC that is in or near the school/district the FRC serves.
- Establish and maintain adequate funding through the combination of state, local, and/or other mechanisms to ensure operations and program goals are sustainable.
- Develop and implement a coordinated system of supports for students and families aligned to LEA needs, and adhere to components set forth by the department.
- Develop and implement meaningful ways to engage students, families, schools, and the community to address and support program initiatives and goals.
- Engage in local and state programs and processes to develop and support improvements in school-aged and family-serving programs with similar goals.
- Establish and sustain meaningful relationships with school personnel, students, families, community organizations, philanthropic groups, etc. to broaden and link available community resources.
- Identify and secure financial and/or technical assistance through collaborations and partnerships with community agencies and organizations.
- Establish a system for evaluation and monitoring to assess the effectiveness of FRC programming.
- Provide interagency services/resources information on issues such as parent training, crisis intervention, respite care and counseling needs for families of children with behavioral/emotional disorders.
- Help families answer questions regarding funding for the options of service their child or family requires.

## Program Oversight

- Conduct a bi-annual needs assessment to ensure programs and supports are responsive to FRC stakeholders.
- Establish and maintain a visible online presence that should include but is not limited to an LEA district website or school website, where respective stakeholders can be aware of FRC program supports. The visible presence should ensure “Family Resource Center” terminology.
- Develop and implement a referral process to ensure school-aged students, families, and school staff can refer individuals in need of supports.
- Develop and submit an action plan to the department outlining goals and measurable objectives prior to the beginning of a new school year.
- Provide mid-year (end of December) and end of year (end of May) updates on the outcomes of your action plan to the department.
- Submit an annual report as specified by the department showcasing total program outcomes.
- Submit and maintain state funding budget and expenditures in ePlan based on allowable expenses related to FRC programming.
- Ensure state funding expenditures support the FRC’s programming goals.
- Participate in department-led meetings, trainings, or other related professional development on an ongoing basis.
- Develop and provide quarterly impact reports to FRC Advisory Council, Director of Schools, and other stakeholders relevant to supporting FRC work.
- Develop and present to the Director of Schools and Board of Education on the impact of FRC programming annually.

## Family Resource Center Advisory Council

Advisory Councils serve as a guiding body and support of FRC programming. The work and guidance of an advisory council is the backbone of FRC effectiveness. The FRC director shall facilitate the activities and operation of the advisory council. In accordance with the established purpose of FRCs, the advisory council shall:

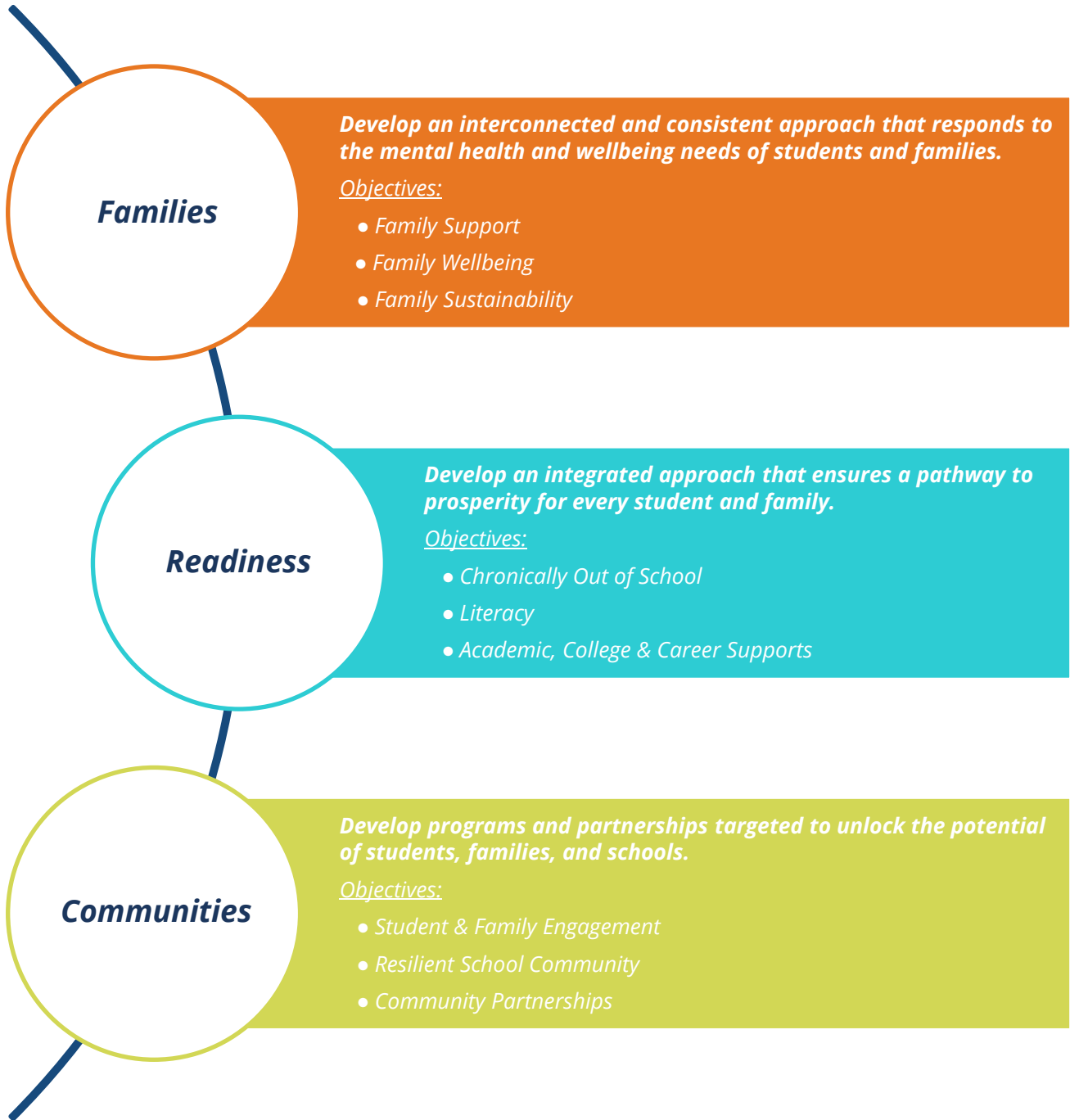
- Sustain a membership representation of at least nine members.
- Ensure parent membership represents a majority.
- Acquire and sustain a diverse membership such as: parents, school personnel, school board member(s), elected officials, state agencies, non-profit organizations, community service organizations, philanthropic groups, citizens and/or individuals at-large, mental health, health care, juvenile services professionals, etc.
- Meet at least twice a year as deemed necessary by the council and FRC director.

- Maintain a record of meeting agenda(s), attendance, minutes, and other relevant information pertaining to the facilitation of the advisory council.
- Develop and implement programmatic plans and strategies to communicate to stakeholders that include but are not limited to potential funders, volunteers, benefactors, etc. that support student and family needs.
- Engage in activities that accurately and meaningfully determine school and community strengths, weaknesses, and needs, and develop plans and strategies aligned to the overall FRC strategic approach.



# Family Resource Center Strategic Approach

Family Resource Centers shall develop an action plan with measurable objectives around each of the following priorities:



# Action Plan

The department will provide FRCs with a template to guide the writing of an action plan. This template serves as a tool for FRCs to state strong programmatic objectives and evaluation measures.

## Priorities:

- In the action plan, selection of at least two objectives for each of the priorities in the strategic approach is required (totaling six objectives).
- For the Readiness priority, FRCs are required to prepare a goal to support families with students chronically out of school.
- Goal(s) and action step(s) for each chosen objective must be established, and they should all include measurable outcome(s).
- Provide progress information in the action plan template – such as a bulleted, short summary of progress made toward the goal.
- List barriers encountered during the school year if a goal was not met.

## Examples of Goals and Action Steps:

*Goal (Family Support): By May 2022, XYZ FRC will increase the number of students and families served through the district's targeted referral pathway by two percent, as measured by referral pathway data from previous school year.*

*Action Step (Family Support): By August 2021, XYZ FRC will meet with school administrators to share about the referral pathway to determine how school staff and families will utilize the program.*

## Goals Best Practices:

- Ensure a date is specified for reaching the goal.
- State the desired outcome.
- Specify responsible parties or groups.
- An overall measurement must be included.

## Action Step Best Practices:

- Specify the change or action that will occur.
- Indicate the responsible party that will carry out the action.
- Indicate the completion date of action step.

# Appendix

## Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A) 49-2-115 – Family Resource Centers

**(a)** Family resource centers may be established by any LEA in order to coordinate state and community services to help meet the needs of families with children. An LEA may directly operate its own family resource centers or may contract with a locally based nonprofit agency, including a community action agency, to operate one (1) or more such centers on behalf of the LEA. Each center shall be located in or near a school. The local school board shall appoint community service providers and parents to serve on an advisory council for each family resource center. Parents shall comprise a majority of each advisory council.

**(b)** Upon approval by the department of education, classroom support and pupil contact funds may be expended by an LEA to plan and implement a family resource center. The application for such approval shall identify a full-time director and other professional staff from the school or community, or both, which may include psychologists, school counselors, social workers, nurses, instructional assistants and teachers. In establishing family resource centers, the department shall consult with the departments of health, mental health and substance abuse services, intellectual and developmental disabilities and children's services.

**(c)** The commissioner of education is authorized to award grants of up to fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) to LEAs for the purpose of planning, implementing and operating family resource centers. All LEAs, upon receiving such grants for a period of three (3) school years, shall be evaluated by the commissioner to determine progress in attaining objectives set forth within this section. Those LEAs awarded satisfactory evaluations shall be eligible to continue receiving such grants for a period of three (3) additional school years. Beginning with the 1995-1996 school year, the number of family resource centers receiving such planning, implementation and operation grants shall be increased at least fifty percent (50%) above the number of centers receiving grants during the 1994-1995 school year.

**(d)** LEAs with state approved family resource centers may be given priority in receiving additional state funding for:

- (1)** Formal parent involvement programs in elementary schools;
- (2)** Early childhood programs for children at-risk;
- (3)** Programs for parents with preschool at-risk children;
- (4)** Learning centers in urban housing projects;
- (5)** Programs in high schools for pregnant teenagers; and
- (6)** "Jobs for Tennessee Graduates" in high schools.

**(e) (1)** Family resource centers shall provide interagency services/resources information on issues such as parent training, crisis intervention, respite care and counseling needs for families of children with behavioral/emotional disorders.

**(2)** Family resource centers shall serve the function of being the center of information sharing and resource facilitation for such families.

**(3)** Family resource centers shall also serve the function of helping families answer questions regarding funding for the options of service their child or family requires.

**(f)** The purpose of each family resource center shall be to maximize the potential learning capacity of the child by ensuring that school environments and neighborhoods are safe and socially enriching, that families are strong and able to protect children and meet their basic needs and that children are physically healthy, emotionally stable, socially well-adjusted and able to connect with enriching opportunities and experiences in their schools and communities. In order to enable children to attain the most benefit possible from the time they spend in educational settings, the family resource centers shall focus on providing information to families about resources, support and benefits available in the community and on developing a coordinated system of care for children in the community in order to effectuate this purpose.

**(g)** The department of education and the department of children's services shall jointly develop guidelines for the operation of family resource centers, focusing on the requirements of this section, including the stated purpose of family resource centers in subsection (f). The guidelines shall be used by all family resource centers established pursuant to this section. The guidelines shall be reviewed and updated jointly by the departments of education and children's services no less frequently than every three (3) years.