  
**Tennessee Department of Education**

Office of Student Support

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**Annual Family Resource Center Report**

(2017-18 School Year)

*Printable report also available on the department’s website at*

[*https://www.tn.gov/education/student-support/family-resource-centers.html*](https://www.tn.gov/education/student-support/family-resource-centers.html)*.*

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# Overview

Many of Tennessee’s students face obstacles—poverty, hunger, homelessness, abuse, mental illness, substance abuse, family conflict—which threaten their ability to learn. While schools are not structured to solicit resources to address the challenges that threaten the basic needs of many families, family resource centers (FRCs) can. FRCs have the ability to engage local businesses and civic and community organizations to play significant roles in addressing the debilitating problems faced by students and their families. Services and resources beyond the typical scope of the school district have been rallied through unique community partnerships created by FRCs.

Recognizing the barriers to school success facing many students, the General Assembly adopted T.C.A. § 49–2–115, giving FRCs the power 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."*

# Funding

T.C.A. § 49–2–115 authorizes the development of school-administered FRCs; however, school revenue constraints have restricted districts from developing FRCs without funding assistance. In the 2017-18 school year, the department allocated $3.5 million to fund 102 FRCs in 78 districts serving over **106,900**students and **62,350**families (See [Appendix A](#_Appendix_A:_Family) for a list of FRCs). Each FRC site receives an annual fixed award of $29,611.65. The district is required to provide a minimum match of $20,388.35.

FRC guidelines require that each FRC collaborate with community partners in the planning, development, and support of a coordinated service delivery to strengthen families’ ability to support academic and life success of children. FRCs collaborated with **2,383**community partners. Through these collaborations, FRCs were able to secure goods and services, donations, and grants in the amount of **$11 million,**tripling the department’s investment.

# Operational Organization

The FRC director is responsible for the overall operation of the programs, services, and activities of the FRC, as well as the supervision of staff, interns, and/or volunteers that assist in the day-to-day operations. The FRC director is responsible for ensuring that there are measurable goals established to direct the operation of the FRC. The goals are directly related to problems and challenges that are identified by the FRC advisory council and endorsed by the district.

Each FRC is required to have an advisory council that assists the FRC director in setting program and service priorities each year. The advisory council is composed of parents who are potential consumers, representatives of state agencies that serve children and families, local non-profit social service organizations, philanthropic groups, and family support service providers whose focus is service provision within the community served by the FRC. FRC advisory councils operate with the authority and responsibility to develop and maintain a needs-based plan of operation relevant to the schools it serves and the community.

FRC programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues. Annually, each FRC provides a report to the department that includes goals, strategies, outcomes achieved, and students served. This report is a summary of those FRC-provided 102 reports. To illustrate the diverse student needs and the varied activities implemented to meet those needs, quotes and brief statements in italicized font from individual FRC annual reports are presented throughout this document.

# Goal

FRCs share a unified goal: to assist families through information and training and to help families learn to resolve problems through the collaborative efforts of many disciplines within the community—educational, mental and physical health, business, and social services. The programs respect the strengths of families and build on those strengths rather than focus on weaknesses.

FRC goals, objectives, and strategies fall within one or more of the following domains:

* + - * [Attendance and Truancy](#_Attendance_and_Truancy)
      * [Collaboration and Partnerships](#_Collaboration_and_Partnerships)
      * [Behavioral Health and Social Personal Learning](#_Behavioral_Health)
      * [Family Support](#_Family_Support)
      * [Family Training and Education](#_Family_Training_and)
      * [Family Engagement](#_Family_Engagement)
      * [Academic Support](#_Academic_Support)

The goals established by each FRC, and the diverse strategies implemented to attain those goals, yielded significant increases in student attendance rates and academic progress. Where individual student data was available, specific outcomes were noted.

# Attendance and Truancy

For many years, educators focused on attendance chiefly in secondary school, viewing truancy or unexcused absence as an indicator of student disengagement and eventual dropout. This changed in 2008 when the National Center for Children in Poverty published a report detailing the extent of absenteeism—for excused and unexcused reasons—in the elementary grades. In the report, [*Present, Engaged and Accounted For*,](https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED522727.pdf) Hedy Chang and Maria Jose Romero used data from a nationally representative data set to document that one in 10 kindergarten and first grade students misses at least 10 percent of the school year.

Parents are often unaware of the corrosive effects of absenteeism and how quickly absences add up to academic trouble in the early grades. Some face challenges with health, transportation, or housing that contribute to absences. FRCs provide a myriad of services to families to address the issue of absenteeism, and in 67 FRCs attendance and truancy were a top goal.

*The* ***Millington Municipal Schools*** *Family Resource Center focuses on improving attendance in grades pre-k–12 through mentoring and home visits. Students who were identified as being chronically absent were paired with teachers and school staff, and middle school male students were paired with male mentors from the local YMCA. These adults provided support and acted as accountability partners for students and families. The district social worker also made personal home visits. Their efforts paid off with a 10 percent reduction in chronic absenteeism compared to the previous year.*

# Collaboration and Partnerships

FRCs are an essential participant in effectively serving children and their families. However, FRCs alone cannot address all the challenges faced by children and their families. Therefore, partnerships between schools and concerned stakeholders in the community and state agencies must be developed. The FRC director is the chief liaison between the FRC and its partners and community stakeholders. FRCs reported developing over **2,600**partnerships. Through these partnerships, the FRC provided families the necessary services and resources that would enable their children to be successful in school.

*Partnerships and collaborations are the key ingredient in meeting the needs of the students and families in* ***Lewis County Schools.*** *Through their* ***90+*** *partners, the Family Resource Center provides students and families the resources and services they need to be successful. Resources and services include Adopt-A-Class, family literacy night, teen safe night, Petals and Pearls Mother and Daughter Day, emergency resources, food backpacks, clothing, school supplies, and family education programs.*

# Behavioral Health and Social Personal Learning

Childhood and adolescence are important times for social and personal development. School plays a crucial role in the development of social and personal skills and the well-being of their students. Research shows that social and personal learning not only improves achievement by an average of 11 percentile points, but it also increases prosocial behaviors (e.g., kindness, sharing, and empathy), improves student attitudes toward school, and reduces depression and stress among students (Durlak et al., 2011).

FRCs provide a variety of programs and services to meet the social and personal needs of students and their families. These may include case management services, life skills sessions, school-based mental health services, and early intervention programs.

*The* ***Grundy County*** *Family Resource Center’s goal was to increase mental health awareness in their schools and the community through a partnership between the school counselor and Volunteer Behavioral Health. The partnership provided training on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) to over 155 educators and community members. They also partnered with Grundy County Infant Court to provide training on wraparound services for families to over 50 family members.*

# Family Support

Many students bring a wide range of problems to school each day, ranging from poverty, difficult and diverse family conditions, to high rates of mobility. Committed to the success of *all* students, FRCs work to alleviate these problems through a myriad of services and resources that include weekend food backpacks, school supplies, clothing, hygiene items, eye exams, dental care, assistance with rent and utilities, Christmas assistance, and summer feeding programs. By addressing the basic needs of students and their families, FRCs seek to alleviate the impact these issues have on student success.

*Thanks to the support of community organizations, the* ***Trenton Special School District*** *Family Resource Center increased the number of families served by nine percent. Programs to meet the basic needs of families included weekend food backpacks, holiday assistance, clothing assistance, school supplies, housing and utility assistance, transportation, and medical assistance. They met their goal by serving 156 families. By eliminating barriers such as hunger, homelessness, food, clothing, and medical needs, the center strengthened the families’ capacity to participate in their students’ academic success.*

# Family Training and Education

Parenting is the most important and challenging job anyone can have; yet, there is very little formal training for this task, and parents are often isolated and without adequate support networks. Operating under the premise that parents/families are a child’s first teacher, FRCs offer opportunities for families to learn how to effectively parent and how to work with their child on core subjects such as math and reading.

*The* ***Haywood County*** *Family Resource Center presents parents with effective age-appropriate methods for working with their children, including social, personal, behavioral, and educational topics through monthly “come and go” events. In partnership with UT Extension, a total of 406 parents attended the monthly events to learn more about healthy snacks, exercise, reading and math skills, and childhood anxiety.*

# Family Engagement

The most adequate predictor of student success in school is not family income or social status but the extent to which a student’s family is involved. When parents talk to their children about school, expect them to do well, help them plan for college, and make sure that out-of-school activities are constructive, their children do better in school, including preschool. FRCs offer families the opportunity to become actively engaged in school through a variety of activities and programs that include: literacy programs, home visits, interpreter services, parent nights, and parent resource fairs.

*The* ***Athens City Schools*** *Family Resource Center set a goal to increase the number of family engagement outreach efforts for the center. The center met this goal by partnering with their Title I family engagement coordinator to host three highly successful family engagement events that focused on topics that included parenting children with disabilities, effective communication skills for families, and tips on how to help with homework. Sixty-eight families participated in the events.*

# Academic Support

Poor school achievement and growth are a concern and the focus of most current school improvement efforts. But poor achievement is also a concern because it is a predictor of problem behaviors in late elementary school (Hawkins, Lishner, Catalano, & Howard 1986) as well as middle and high schools (Hirschi 1969; Jessor & Jessor 1977). The term “academic support” refers to a wide variety of instructional methods, educational services, or school resources provided to students in an effort to help them catch up with their peers, meet learning standards, or generally succeed in school. FRCs provide a broad array of educational strategies, including tutoring sessions, summer learning experiences, after-school programs, and volunteer mentors to assist all students in a school.

*The* ***Maryville City Schools*** *Family Resource Center set a goal to improve student growth in reading and math for students served by the Maryville Housing Authority. Eliminating transportation as a barrier to providing learning opportunities, volunteer tutors and mentors provided homework assistance at the housing authority. Laptops, tablets, and Wi-fi access were made available to assist students in homework assignments as well as snacks and food bags to take home. All students participating on a regular basis showed significant improvement in reading and math on assessment tests.*

# Evaluation

Each year FRCs are required to submit SMART (i.e., specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely) goals for their program. SMART goals clarify exactly what is expected and the measures used to determine if the goal is achieved and successfully completed. In the past, programs and activities provided through FRCs have been difficult to evaluate using traditional methods. However, SMART goals allow the utilization of multiple evaluation methods and help improve achievement and success through the reporting of specific outcomes for each goal. FRCs are encouraged to submit a SMART goal under each of the seven domains: attendance, partnerships, behavioral health and social personal learning, family support, family education, family engagement, and academic support.

An annual report on FRC SMART goals, the activities and services to achieve each goal, the evaluation method utilized in measuring the goal, and the outcomes for each goal are submitted to the department in May of each year. The report also provides quantitative data on the number of students and families served; the number of partnerships with outside organizations; and the monetary value of those goods, services, and volunteer hours donated to the center.

# FRCs Celebrate 25th Anniversary

In the 2018-19 school year, the FRC program is celebrating its 25th year of providing resources to families and students in Tennessee schools. Beginning in 1993 as a discretionary grant, the FRC grant program was developed by state lawmakers as a replication of Kentucky’s successful Family Resource Center/Youth Service Center (FRSKY) program. Initial grant competitions allowed funding for 78 districts to implement the FRC program.

Unfortunately, in subsequent years, increased funding for implementation in additional districts was not included in the state budget; however, current levels of funding have been maintained.

Over the years, FRCs have dealt with changing family dynamics and their impact on education. Despite limited resources, FRCs provide families with an accessible system of coordinated, integrated public and private sector services to strengthen families’ abilities to support academic and life success of all children.

FRC goals align directly with the department’s strategic plan, [*Tennessee Succeeds.*](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/reports/tn_succeeds_2018_state_of_the_education.pdf)The five priority areas of *Tennessee Succeeds* serve as a guide to expand and enhance the work of FRCs.

1. Early Foundations and Literacy: Building skills in early grades to contribute to future success
2. High School and Bridge to Postsecondary: Preparing significantly more students for postsecondary completion
3. All Means All: Providing individualized support and opportunities for all students with a focus on those who are farthest behind
4. Educator Support: Supporting the preparation and development of an exceptional educator workforce
5. District Empowerment: Providing districts with the tools and autonomy they need to make the best decisions for students

FRCs will continue their important work toward building a support system for every student to help reduce risk and promote protective factors so that *all* students achieve academic success and success in life. For further information about the FRC program, please contact Pat Conner at [Pat.Conner@tn.gov](mailto:Pat.Conner@tn.gov).

# Appendix A: Family Resource Centers

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