



## School-Based Resource Centers: General Information and History

School-based Family Resource Centers were developed as specified in T.C.A. § 49-2-115 to address the problems within the home and community environments which impede or create barriers to a child's ability to learn and grow successfully. The problems 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 and agencies to coordinate problem-solving and goal setting processes with parents while assisting them to meet the needs of their children and to create a supportive environment for their children.

The goals and implementation strategies vary from center to center. Likewise, the service area or catchment area of each center varies. In counties with sparse populations, the family resource center may serve all school communities within the county. In counties with increased densities, the family resource center sites are established to serve school communities in areas with high concentrations of "at-risk" families.

Specific geographic location of each center is dependent upon accessibility and space availability. The majority of the family resource centers are located within k- 12 grade school structures. Economy of function is realized through maximizing the use of the school facility. Communication between faculty and resource center staff is enhanced by such physical proximity. More importantly, the school is viewed as a stable, positive public institution. That perception increases community participation both in receiving assistance as well as volunteering to assist.

In other communities the family resource centers are located in adult education centers, in school system central offices, or subsidized housing developments.

Directors of Family Resource Centers are selected for their abilities to implement the goals of the family resource center in which they serve. The one hundred four directors vary in experience and professional training: some are former teachers, principals, social workers, teaching assistants, or nurses.

The family resource centers create close alliances with other state and federal programs in order to enhance all program areas. Many of the 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 (Welfare Reform in Tennessee).

The operational activities of the family resource centers are extremely diverse in levels of complexity, coordination and sensitivity. The frequency of risk factors faced by many students and their families require a center structured to provide both: organized programs for life skills, parenting skills and job skills development; and individualized services to address acute problems.

The family resource centers work to maximize availability and to reduce duplication of existing services. Because the centers are working with families in a prevention/early intervention mode, problems and potential problems are accessed quickly. Therefore, the problems are more readily addressed by the



## School-Based Resource Centers (page 2)

appropriate agency. The increased networking and collaboration to address specific problems results from the collaborative networks, established by the centers. Those networks include, but are not limited to, Department of Health, Department of Children's Services, Department of Human Services, UT Agricultural Extension Services, Community Mental Health Agencies, Family and Juvenile Courts, Families First Councils, Community Health Agencies, TennCare, churches, and public and private child/family service agencies.

Funding for the Family Resource Centers is provided through grants awarded to school systems that have successfully responded to Requests for Proposals. Grantees receive a grant of \$29,611.65 with a minimum local match of \$20,388.35 per center.

Family Resource Centers must file an annual report detailing the goals, strategies implemented to meet those goals, the results of those strategies and a listing of the active Family Resource Center Advisory Council members.

The numbers of children and their families served by each center varies with the program components developed in response to the need driven goals. Therefore, those centers that have developed programs such as early childhood development programs requiring daily contact with the same target population will serve a smaller total number of clients, annually, than those centers that provide a more comprehensive continuum of short term programs and services. The number of clients served by any one center will range from approximately fifty students to nearly over one thousand students.

### About the Tennessee Department of Education

The Tennessee Department of Education strives to expand students' access to effective teachers and leaders, families' access to good schools, educators' access to resources and best practices and public access to information and data. We aim to be the fastest-improving state in the nation in terms of academic achievement by 2015.