

# Family Resource Center Program Evaluation Report

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## Family Resource Center Program Evaluation Report March 2015

The University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMass) submits this report pursuant to Chapter 165 of the Acts of 2014 (Chapter 165), as related to the evaluation of a network of Family Resource Centers (FRCs) established in accordance with section 16U of chapter 6A of the General Laws. Chapter 165, line item 4000-0051, requires the submission of an evaluation plan for the FRCs, data required for analysis and outcomes to be measured. This report meets such requirement.

### Background

Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are community-based, culturally competent programs that provide evidence-based parent education groups, information and referral, mentoring, educational support and other opportunities for children and families. FRCs also provide services specific to Children Requiring Assistance (CRA) who are having serious problems at home and at school, including runaways, truants, and sexually exploited children, as defined by Chapter 240 of the Acts of 2012 (Chapter 240). Following a competitive joint procurement by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and the Department of Children and Families (DCF), DCF signed contracts in January and February of 2015 for one FRC in each of the fourteen counties of the Commonwealth.

In January 2015, EOHHS contracted with the University of Massachusetts Medical School to serve as an Administrative Services Organization (ASO) to the FRCs. UMass is responsible for evaluation of the FRCs and other program support functions, including data management, communications, and evidence based training. UMass has contracted with Salem State University School of Social Work (SSU) to develop and implement—together with DCF, EOHHS, and UMass—a program evaluation designed to assess FRC processes and outcomes.

### Evaluation Team

The decision by UMass to select the School of Social Work at SSU as the evaluation subcontractor was informed by the fact that child welfare policies and services is one of three areas of concentration in the SSU social work curriculum. The School of Social Work's faculty has contributed extensively to the training of child welfare workers, as well as to the peer-reviewed research literature on child welfare services such as adoption, child protection, services to families, child welfare work with populations of immigrants and people with disabilities, as well as child and adolescent mental health.

Dr. Jonathan Lukens serves as the lead evaluator for this program, working with Dr. Elspeth Slayter and Dr. Lisa Johnson as co-evaluators.

Dr. Lukens received his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice where he focused on research on health and mental health policy and service delivery systems and family engagement in the delivery of services. Dr. Lukens has been responsible for evaluation of several agency-based programs and is currently the evaluator for a group-based intervention for family caregivers of adults and teens with a major mental illness. Dr. Lukens was a member of a team assessing outcomes of a transitional care program for adults with a major mental illness. Dr. Lukens has helped conduct an 18-month evaluation of Pathways to Housing of Philadelphia. He served as an evaluator for the Scattergood Program for the Applied Ethics of Behavioral Health, Social Work Connection evaluating school based social work interventions, and as an evaluation consultant for the Supportive Older Women's Network.

Dr. Slayter received her PhD from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at

Brandeis University where she focused on health services research in the disability and child welfare arenas. Specializing in the use of Medicaid claims data and other administrative data through her training with the National Institutes on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Dr. Slayter was also trained in Community-Based Participatory Research methods by the National Institutes of Mental Health. Dr. Slayter worked as a consultant to the Massachusetts Child Welfare Institute (MCWI) of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) where her evaluation work included the use of administrative data to track foster children's processes and outcomes and the evaluation of a graduate level educational intervention for DCF case workers. Previous experience in field evaluation included work for two DCF subcontractors, where she assisted in a therapeutic process implementation evaluation, satisfaction evaluations with clients with intellectual disabilities, housing outcomes for offender re-entry and the development of continuous quality improvement initiatives.

Dr. Lisa Johnson received her PhD from the University of Louisville where she engaged in training and evaluation of evidence-based parent and family programs. Dr. Johnson also completed evaluations of an anti-racism training and a community-based child welfare conference. Dr. Johnson has practice experience in the field of child welfare and extensive training in issues related to children and families.

The combined experiences and skill sets of the evaluation team members will be employed in completing a successful evaluation. Drs. Lukens, Slayter, and Johnson's skills in quantitative research methods and analysis is evidenced by their existing evaluation research experience, their contributions to the peer reviewed literature, and success teaching introductory and advanced courses in research methods, evaluation, and statistics.

### **Evaluation Plan**

Frameworks: The Family Resource Center model is informed by the Five Promises framework, and also includes elements of the following frameworks: Strengthening Families, Systems of Care, and Positive Youth Development Indicators. Aspects of these frameworks will be included in the evaluation design. The evaluation will reflect the following five key domains:

- Health (physical and behavioral): Family Members have access to adequate physical and behavioral health supports;
- Safety: Family Members live in adequate housing and are safe from violence;
- Connection to a Caring Adult: Family Members are connected to caring adults;
- Education and Employment: Family Members are prepared for and successful in school; youth and their caretakers are prepared for the workforce and employed to their fullest potential; and
- Civic Engagement: Family Members are engaged in decision-making and are an active part of the civic and cultural opportunities that their communities have to offer.

Evaluation Activities: Evaluation activities include working with the UMass data collection team to develop and implement data collection strategies, analysis of FRC program evaluation data, interpretation of evaluation results, and reporting functions. Since initiating this partnership, the evaluation team from SSU has been working with, and continues to work with UMass, EOHHS and DCF to develop an evaluation plan that is both thorough and feasible.

Evaluation Design: The benefit of evaluation research is to measure program effectiveness and provide continuous program feedback that can be used to assess quality, improve services and note family outcomes. Taking a tri-level perspective, this evaluation will consider individual, setting and system level factors. This evaluation will capture, analyze, and report on data related to service provision, family service experiences, and family outcomes. This evaluation may be characterized as a descriptive process and outcome evaluation.

Research Question and Goals: The evaluation is designed to answer the following research question: To what extent do the Family Resource Centers promote and support positive youth and family development? The goals of the evaluation include:

- Track service provision of individual FRCs, and across all FRCs
- Provide continuous program feedback
- Assess implementation of and fidelity to evidence-based parenting program(s)
- Assess the relationship between FRC outputs and individual/family outcomes

### **Outcomes to be Measured**

A logic model will include the following components:

- Community context: profile of the communities served by the FRCs, taking into account data and outcomes related to the five key domains identified above;
- FRC Services: services provided by each FRC onsite or through referral;
- Process: individual and family indicators that capture activities in each key domain, as well as outputs relevant to the overall operations of each FRC; and
- Outcomes: individual and family outcomes in each key domain.

### **Data Required for Analysis**

Data for the four components of the logic model will be collected as follows:

- Community context: Publicly available data will be identified for each key domain, and compiled to illustrate the broad community context for FRC services. Where feasible, the data will incorporate caseload data from state agencies such as the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Youth Services, the Department of Transitional Assistance and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, as well as data that may be available through the courts.
- FRC Services: The evaluation team will work with UMass to obtain current information related to the programming and services offered at each FRC.
- Process: To assess evidence of tasks completed and services provided by the FRC and evidence of family experiences with and participation in services and supports, the evaluation team will collect a series of family indicator measures and FRC outputs. Individual and family indicators will be gathered and reported on a monthly and bi-annual basis depending on the measure, and will be measured via data gathered at intake, discharge and post-discharge. Family indicators and outcomes will be associated with the five key domains identified above. To evaluate FRC process outputs, the evaluation team will utilize data gathered through the data collection and data management activities conducted by UMass across the FRC network, as well as through

focus groups and/or interviews with FRC managers every six months. Finally, the process evaluation will also include fidelity analysis of required evidence-based parenting programs.

- **Outcomes:** To assess evidence of family experiences, the evaluation team will collect evidence of family outcomes attributable to FRC involvement. The focus of family outcome measurement will primarily be on participation in FRC Basic Services or FRC-initiated referrals and facilitation of access to community supports. Additional information regarding family outcomes in terms of family functioning will be gathered via families' responses at intake, discharge and post-discharge to selected standardized measures. Family satisfaction data will also be collected via a survey common to all FRCs

Consent process and Institutional Review Board review: In conjunction with EOHHS and DCF, the evaluation team will determine required consent processes to allow for the collection of program evaluation data. Additionally, the evaluation team will prepare any proposals and/or reports requested for review by the relevant Institutional Review Board, as appropriate.