

Massachusetts Family Resource Center Network

2021 Mid-Year Evaluation Report



September 2021

Across the Commonwealth, the 27 Massachusetts Family Resource Centers (FRCs) provide a wide array of services and supports to vulnerable families. FRC staff work to support effective parenting, connect families to housing resources, assist parents with accessing school services for their children, help family members find mental health counseling, and assist families with basic needs for food or other material goods. The FRC Network is overseen by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), with administrative support provided by the UMass Chan Medical School.

The FRC 2021 Mid-Year Report provides a brief summary of FRC activities for the period of January 1 to June 30, 2021. This report includes information on the numbers and characteristics of families served during the first six months of 2021 and the types of individualized services provided to families. The report makes note of FRC activities in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and highlights special efforts undertaken by DCF to support FRC operations.



www.frcma.org

Families and Family Members Served by the FRC Network

In the first six months of 2021, FRCs served a total of **7,098 unique families**. Among these families, **65% (4,627)** were families seeking FRC support for the first time, and **35% (2,471)** were returning families.

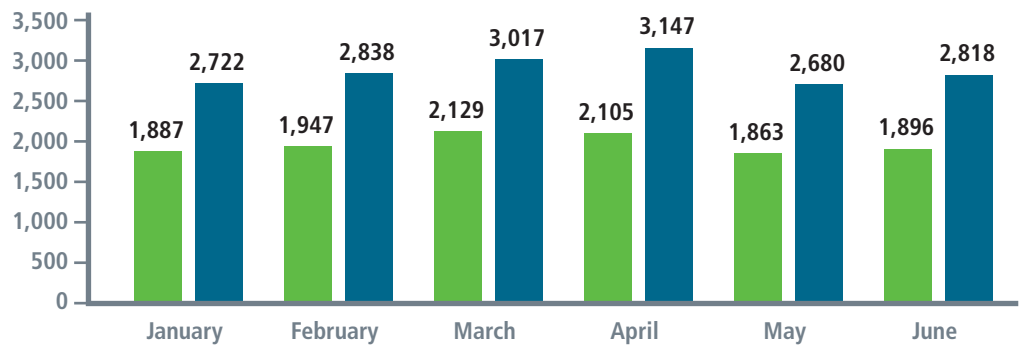
In comparison to previous years, the percentage of returning families has been notably higher since the onset of the pandemic in 2020, pointing to the efforts FRCs have continued to make to serve vulnerable families during this challenging period.

We expect that in 2021 FRCs are likely to exceed the number of families served in 2020 (12,000).

The figure to the right shows the number of families and family members served across the FRC network monthly, from January through June 2021.

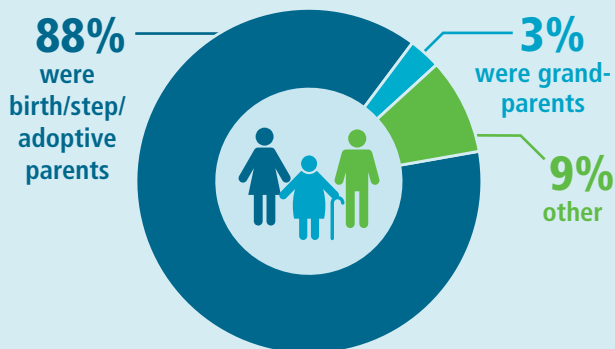
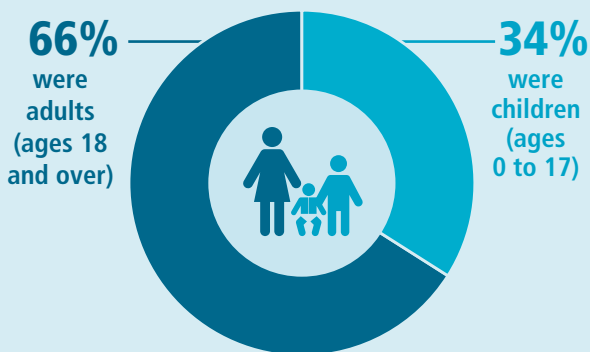


Families and Family Members Served by FRCs by Month, January to June 2021



FRCs provide services to both adult and child family members. Between January and June of 2021:

11,550
individual family members served



The majority of children served were enrolled in school. Across FRCs, **73%** of family members served identified as White; **24%** as Black; and **6%** as Asian, Native American, or another race. About **40%** identified as Latinx.

Social Connection

At the Athol FRC, a mother checked in with the group facilitator to talk about how important the STEM group was for her son. She said that during the COVID pandemic, her son had regressed. She felt his regression in behavior was due to remote schooling and the social isolation he was experiencing. The mom said that because of our interactive virtual groups, her son made a lot of gains; he engages with the other children with excitement, looking forward to what will come up next for the group activity. This group proves not only to be engaging for the children, but has been a source of support and hope for the parents as they see their children making gains.

Collaboration

The Nantucket FRC was part of a community COVID-19 Resource Response team, which included the Nantucket Food Fuel and Rental Assistance Agency, Nantucket Immigration Resource Center, Department of Human Services, Nantucket Health Department, and Fairwinds Counseling Center. The FRC served as the first point of contact, conducted intakes for community members needing help, and referred them to the agencies best suited to meet their needs. Once the vaccine was available, the partners collaborated on vaccine education, outreach, and registration.

Serving Families in Need

Families seeking FRC services often come to the centers with multiple needs.

The beginning of 2021 saw an increase in the percentage of families seeking assistance for mental health- and school-related concerns.

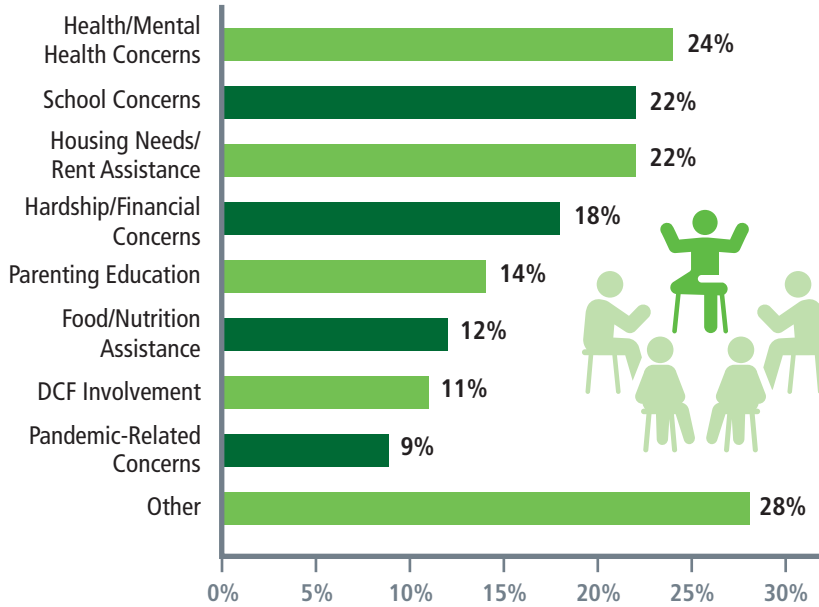


FRCs provided over 54,000 instances of individualized services to adults and children in the first six months of 2021, suggesting that the centers are on-track to exceed the number of services delivered in 2020 (79,500). With the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, all FRCs adapted their approaches in order to offer both remote and in-person services, with in-person services following COVID safety protocol. This mix of remote and in-person services has continued in 2021.

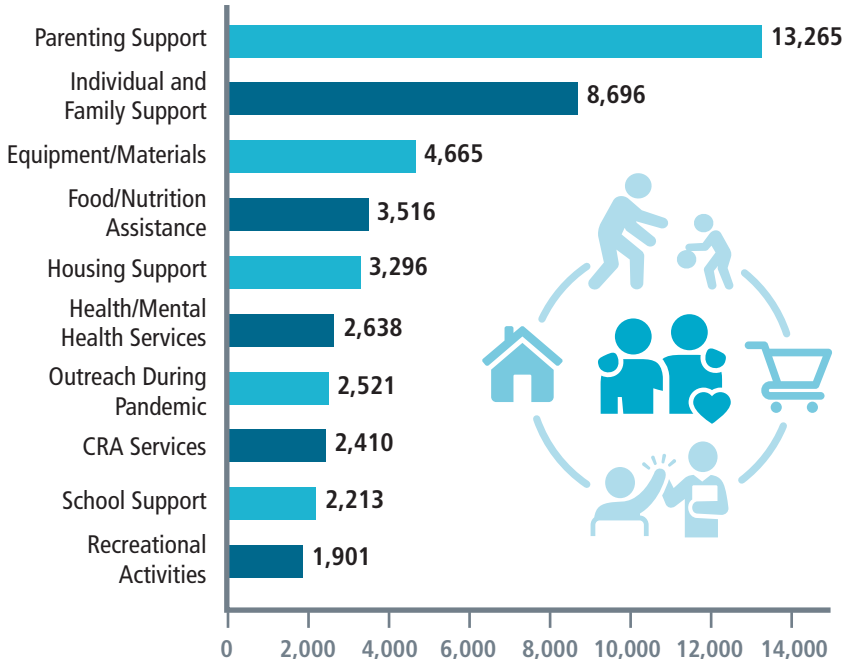
Parenting support and individual/family support were, by far, the most common types of services provided in the first half of the year. FRCs also continued to work to meet families' basic needs for equipment/materials, food, housing supports and other resources. With the onset of the pandemic, FRCs saw a dramatic increase in the number of families with these basic needs.

Anecdotal reporting by FRC staff suggest that pandemic-related stressors, as well as challenges parents and children faced as schools started transitioning from remote to in-person learning may account for the increases in mental health and school related concerns.

Main Reasons New Families Sought FRC Services, January to June 2021



Type of Individualized Services Provided by FRCs to Family Members, January to June 2021



Addressing Racial Equity Across the FRCs

Beginning in January 2021, DCF and UMass Chan Medical School partnered with the Massachusetts Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) to launch a facilitated **racial equity listening tour** across the FRC Network. JDAI, an initiative of the MA Department of Youth Services, aims to reduce detention rates and length of stay, and to reduce racial and ethnic disparities for youth in MA.

The listening tour gave FRC staff an opportunity to learn more about racial equity and explore how to best implement it into their work. JDAI facilitated five 2-hour sessions, which were held in each of 5 regions across the Commonwealth, offering FRC staff an opportunity to:

- Explore their experiences with racial and ethnic disparities in their personal lives
- Examine their agency's policies and practices related to racial and ethnic equity
- Generate actionable recommendations to address equity



Supporting FRC Operations – A New Orientation Series

DCF developed and launched an **FRC Staff Orientation and Foundational Training Series** in Spring 2021 to provide all FRC staff with a foundation of knowledge on which to build and grow in their roles. The training topics are facilitated as nine half-day presentations delivered across three months for groups of up to 20 participants at a time. The presentation topics include:

- FRC Orientation Day 1
 - DCF and UMass Chan team roles, Chapter 240 Legislation, FRC Positions, Service Elements
- FRC Orientation Day 2
 - DCF Ombudsman's Office, Safety, Training, Key Relationships
- Protective Factors/Strengthening Families
- Motivational Interviewing
- Trauma Informed Care
- Culture and Parenting
- Child Development and the Adolescent Brain
- Secondary Traumatic Stress, Boundaries, and Self-Care
- Navigating the Customer Relationship Management System, Data, and Reporting

32 of the 39 FRC staff enrolled in the Spring 2021 sessions have **completed** the FRC Orientation and Foundational Training series, **a graduation rate of 82%**. Those who have not yet graduated will continue to make up missed trainings in upcoming sessions.

38 FRC staff are currently participating in the Summer 2021 training sessions, and **DCF plans to enroll 20 FRC staff** in the Fall 2021 session and **another 20** in the Winter 2022 session

The series will continue until all FRC staff have completed the program, and DCF will offer this series as needed when new staff come onboard in the future.

Recommended citation: Henry, A. D., Pratt, C., Tedesco, R., & Kamins, K. (2021, September). Massachusetts Family Resource Center Network: 2021 Mid-Year Evaluation Report. Shrewsbury MA: Commonwealth Medicine, University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School. For more information on FRC evaluation efforts, contact FRCHelp@umassmed.edu.



To learn more about the FRCs or find the location nearest you, visit www.frcma.org.