

Family Resource Center Network



Responding to the
COVID-19 Pandemic



www.frcma.org

OUR STORIES

Where help is needed...

At the beginning of the pandemic, the **New Bedford FRC** received a referral from the New Bedford Police Department regarding a family with five children ranging in ages six months to 13 years old who were living in a local motel. They had traveled to Massachusetts to look for employment. The family's only source of income was SSI, as the parents were then unable to find work due to COVID-19. The FRC helped them with immediate access to food and followed that by identifying more stable housing and enrolling the children in schools.

Read more stories on page 6.



Taking Action in Tough Times

On March 10, 2020, Governor Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency in Massachusetts in response to the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In the weeks that followed, many businesses and organizations in the state (except those identified as COVID-19 Essential Services) were ordered to close their physical facilities.

The shut-down order directly impacted all 24 Family Resource Centers (FRCs) across the Commonwealth. The FRCs were able to quickly pivot, continuing to support their communities and vulnerable families using innovative approaches to service delivery. FRC staff undertook proactive outreach efforts to engage families they were already working with to reassure them that services were continuing and to assess any new needs. They were also able to serve new families seeking assistance. While the majority suspended walk-in services, FRCs continued to serve families telephonically, virtually or by individually scheduled appointments at the center location or in the community. FRCs also undertook efforts to configure their physical spaces to ensure appropriate social distancing, developed and trained staff on COVID-19 protocols, and provided personal protective equipment (PPE) to staff.

This report summarizes the efforts of the FRCs to respond to the pandemic between March and July of 2020. As families faced food insecurity, housing instability, schools closing, and job loss, the FRCs provided much needed resources and supports to families. Several sites kept their food pantries open and developed safe processes so that families could come and pick up what they needed. FRC staff made deliveries to homes or met families in the community to provide food and other essential items, including PPE, and also held diaper drives. With schools closing in mid-March, FRCs started providing tutoring for students using Zoom, WebEx, and other video conferencing resources. Over 80% of FRCs continued to provide parenting classes, support groups, and other activities through virtual means during this period.

During this global challenge that has impacted everyone, the FRCs never missed a step and have continued to be a resilient and vital resource in Massachusetts communities.

Virtual Activities – Feedback from Parents

"Thank you for brightening my day; my daughter was happy to have her playgroup."

"Just wanted to say thank you all for making today a little more normal."

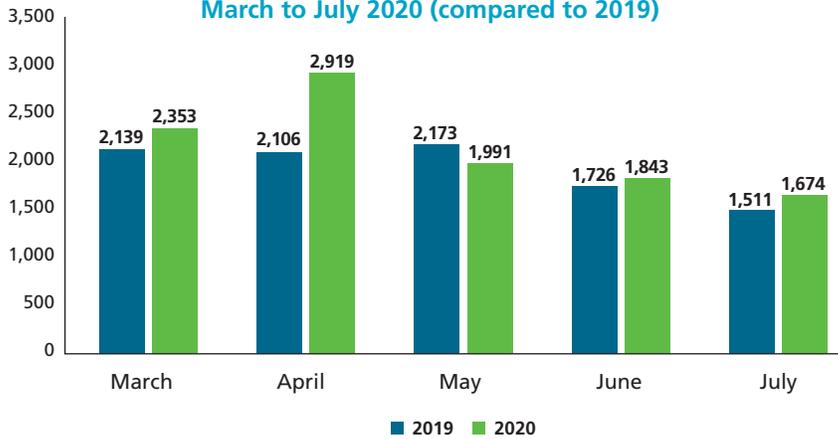
"Thank you for valuing our families!"

"Thank you for all that you are doing for our community."

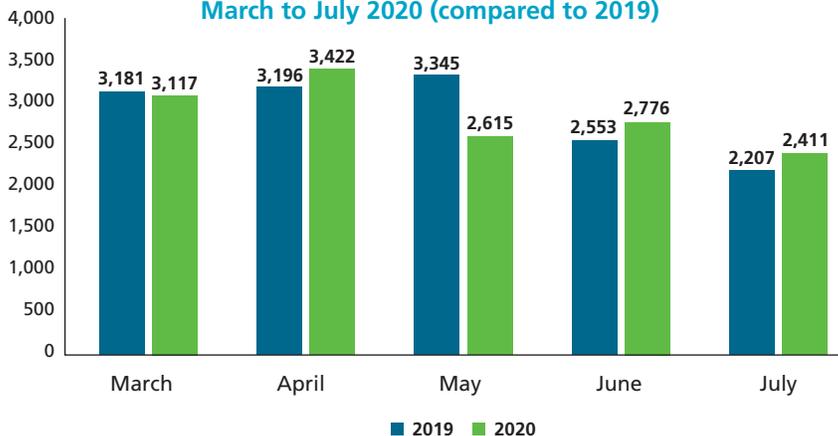
"J. had such a good time last week! Thank you for doing this for our kids and community. You're an invaluable resource."

FRC Activities from March to July 2020

Families Served Monthly by FRCs,
March to July 2020 (compared to 2019)



Family Members Served Monthly by FRCs,
March to July 2020 (compared to 2019)



- FRCs served a total of 7,377 families between March and July 2020, and for the most part served more families on a monthly basis than during the same time period in 2019
- There was a notable increase in the number of families served in April, reflecting the dedicated efforts made by FRCs to outreach to families in the period immediately following the state of emergency.
- In total, FRCs conducted active outreach efforts to over 4,200 families.

- FRCs served a total of 10,629 individual family members between March and July 2020. Despite the shut-down, there was no drop-off in the number of families or family members served in this period compared to 2019.
- FRCs served 2,933 new families between March and July 2020

Race and Ethnicity of Family Members Served, March to July 2020

During this period, there was a slight increase in the percent of non-white family members served compared to 2019.

RACE

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| White | 68% |
| Black/African American | 26% |
| Asian | 3% |
| Native American | 1% |
| Other | 2% |

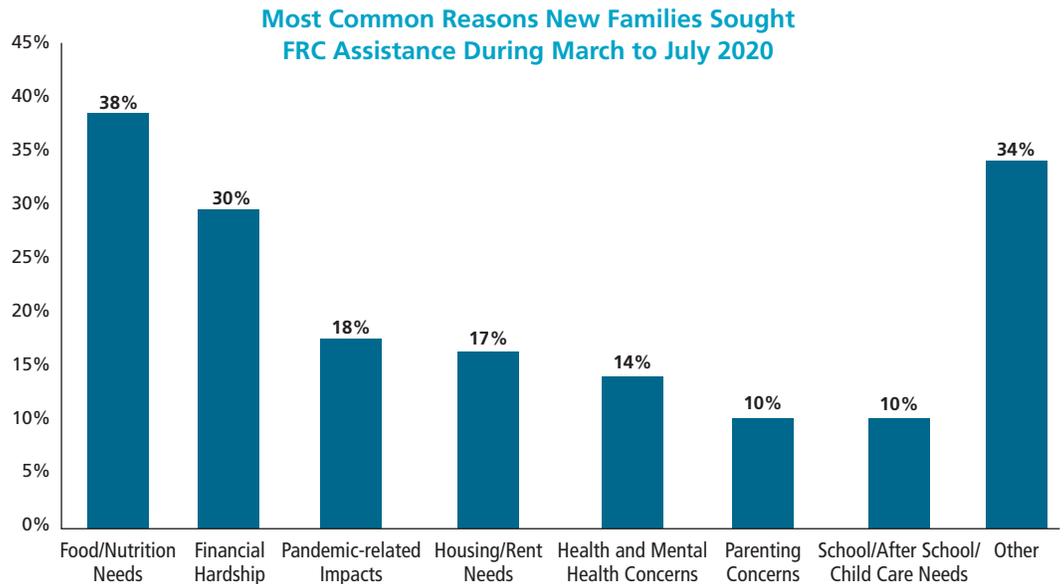
ETHNICITY

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Hispanic | 45% |
| Non-Hispanic | 55% |



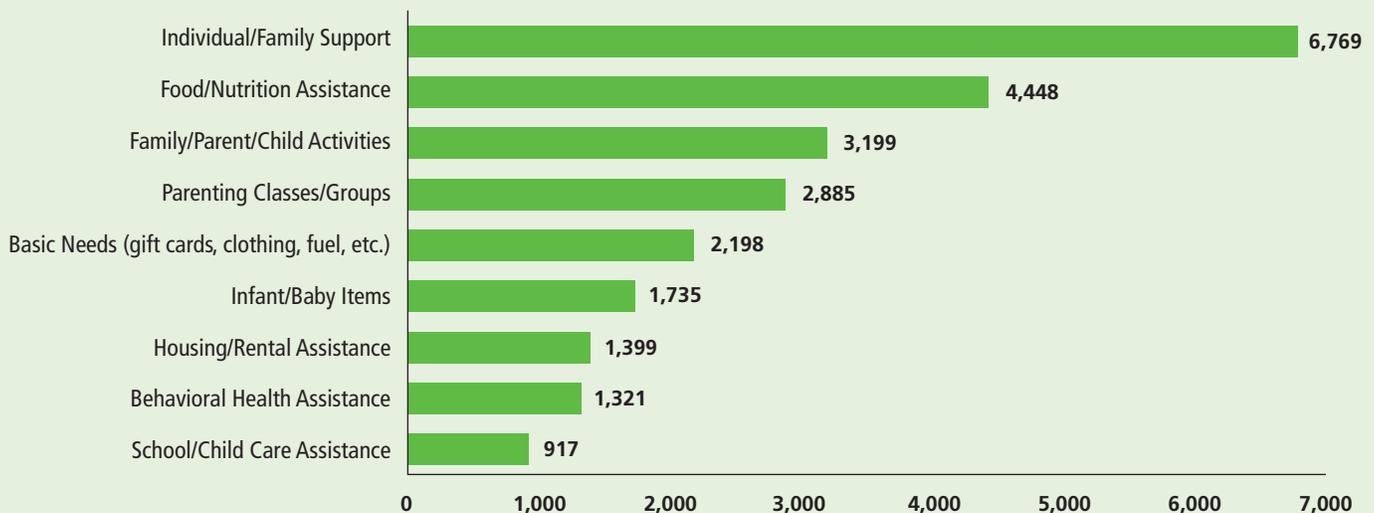
FRCs Reaching Out to Their Communities

In addition to the efforts FRCs made to continue to serve already engaged families, FRCs responded to the needs of new families seeking FRC assistance during the pandemic.



FRCs provided an especially high level of individualized services and supports to family members between March and July 2020, recording **over 30,000 separate instances of service**. For comparison, FRCs provided 38,467 instances of service in all of 2019. FRC services provided during this period reflect some of the direct impacts of the pandemic on families. Notably, FRCs provide 4,448 instances of food/nutrition assistance to families between March and July, compared to just over 2,400 instances of food/nutrition assistance during all of 2019.

Types of Individualized Services and Supports Provided to Families by FRCs During March to July 2020



Meeting a Basic Need of Families

In addition to individualized services and supports to families, the FRCs continued to serve families through events, drives, classes and other group activities following state COVID-19 guidance. The attendance numbers for these events show the remarkable efforts of the FRCs to meet the basic need of families for food. **Between March and July, the recorded attendance at FRC food-related events and activities exceeded 12,500 individuals.** FRC food-related events during this period included participation in community food drives, operating food pantries, arranging for families to pick up food packages at FRC locations, and/or directly delivering food to families.

The majority of FRCs continued to offer parenting classes, parenting support groups, and a variety of family recreational and social activities using virtual methods. A number also held drives for diapers and other infant/baby items. Attendance at these events and activities was also high.

Event Attendance, March to July 2020

| | |
|--------------------------|--------|
| Food Related Events | 12,596 |
| Parenting Groups/Classes | 3,288 |
| Family Activities | 2,244 |
| Infant/Baby Items | 1,095 |

Parent Testimonial

“We have so many amazing people trying to help us all stay sane and safe at home. Today M. and I joined our first virtual playgroup with our friends from the **Athol FRC**. These ladies put together the most amazing playgroup kits (and delivered them!). They had so much energy today on FB live with the kids. M. absolutely loved every minute. I appreciate ALL the "helpers" right now! These ladies saved the morning over here on day 12.”



OUR STORIES

...FRCs deliver.

The **Worcester FRC** collaborated with community partners on a hot meal delivery program for families under quarantine or sick with COVID-19 on May 14, with 50 available slots per day, and expanded to 75 slots per day by the end of the month thanks to additional funding.

A family struggling with managing the remote learning situation due to language issues and lack of support services received help from the **Southbridge FRC**. The staff communicated with teachers and translated documents and homework. The student was then approved for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

The **Quincy FRC** worked with a single mother and her child who had to flee a domestic violence situation during the pandemic. FRC staff helped the family search for an apartment, apply for and receive other state assistance, and apply for a grant for the apartment security deposit. The FRC also connected them with domestic violence resources and supports. The family moved into their new apartment within a week of leaving their previous home.

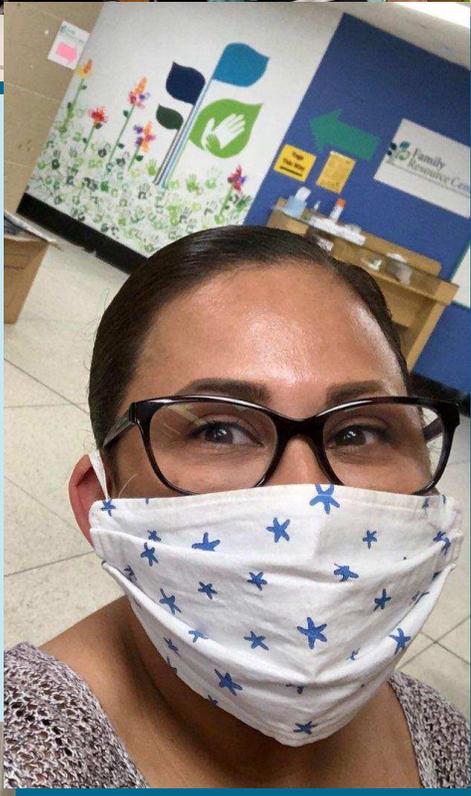
Through outreach during COVID-19, the **Nantucket FRC** identified a family that needed several supports. The staff connected this family with the needed resources such as rental assistance, SNAP, Nantucket Relief Fund community dinners, and CARES unemployment benefits for artists. The FRC staff has also worked with one of the children to help ensure success with remote learning.

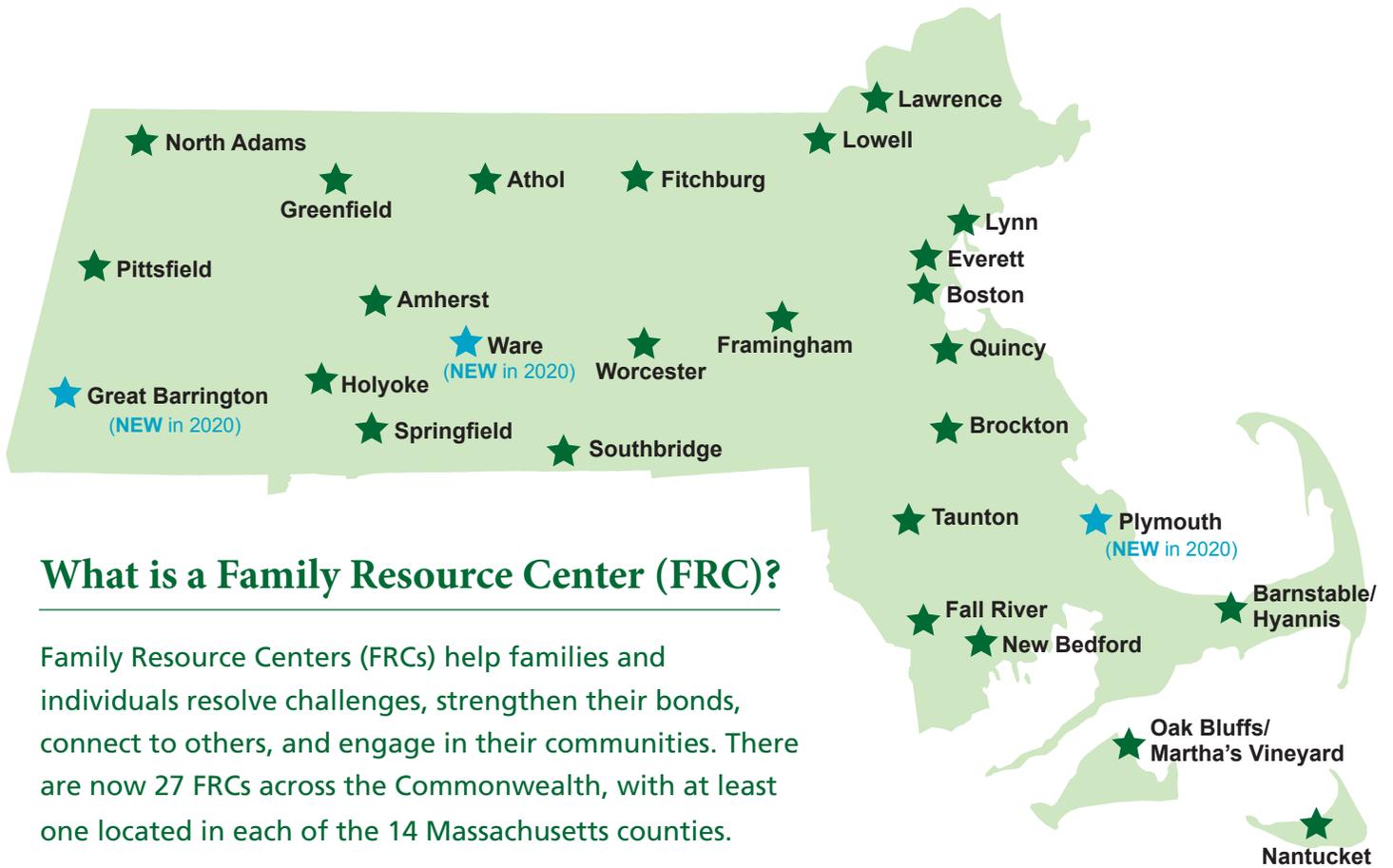


MOVING FORWARD

As of September 2020, the 24 FRCs are operating in a hybrid model using virtual methods and by individually scheduled appointments to deliver services either at the FRC or in the community. In addition to the existing locations, three new FRCs opened over the summer in the communities of Great Barrington, Ware, and Plymouth for a total of 27 FRCs across the state. More than 85% of the FRCs can be socially distant inside their site, and several have outdoor space that can be utilized. In August, 15% of the FRCs with enough space to be socially distant began holding in-person groups and classes with limited attendance. Additional locations will begin providing in-person groups in September.

Utilizing the virtual model for groups has allowed for collaboration among FRCs and made groups and classes accessible for families from different communities. For example, if a parenting class is not starting soon at one FRC location, but is being offered at another FRC location virtually, parents can be referred to that class and start the program sooner. As the school year begins, the FRCs continue to be flexible and innovative so that they can meet the needs of their communities and the families they serve. Several FRCs are working with their local schools and parents to set up “learning hubs” for students attending school remotely. The FRCs continue to show that they are a vital resource in their communities.





What is a Family Resource Center (FRC)?

Family Resource Centers (FRCs) help families and individuals resolve challenges, strengthen their bonds, connect to others, and engage in their communities. There are now 27 FRCs across the Commonwealth, with at least one located in each of the 14 Massachusetts counties.

FRCs assist families with basic needs and offer parenting programs, support groups, information and referral resources, assessment services, early childhood services and education programs for families whose children range in age from birth to 18 years old.

FRCs also have specific services for families with children who may be frequently absent or have serious problems at school, have serious problems at home, have run away from home, or are being exploited.

FRCs work with parents, children, teens, grandparents, guardians, caregivers, or any other family member or member of the community who may be involved with the family.

For more information on a particular FRC, including address, hours of operation, and services available, please visit www.frcma.org.



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