

Massachusetts Family Resource Center Network

2022 Mid-Year Evaluation Report



September 2022

Across the Commonwealth, the 27 Massachusetts Family Resource Centers (FRCs) provide a wide array of services and supports to vulnerable families. FRC staff works 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. FRC services are accessed through local community-based centers. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, FRCs significantly enhanced their capacity to serve families through online and remote approaches. FRCs have continued to use these approaches to best serve families. The FRC Network is overseen by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), with administrative support provided by the UMass Chan Medical School.

Pursuant to Line Item 4000-0051, Chapter 24 of the Acts of 2021, the FRC 2022 Mid-Year Report briefly summarizes FRC activities from January 1 to June 30, 2022. This report includes information on the numbers and characteristics of families served during the first six months of 2022, the types of individualized services, parenting education, and other group programming provided to families. The report also highlights special efforts by the FRCs to support court-involved and other at-risk children and parents.



www.frcma.org

Families and Family Members Served by the FRC Network

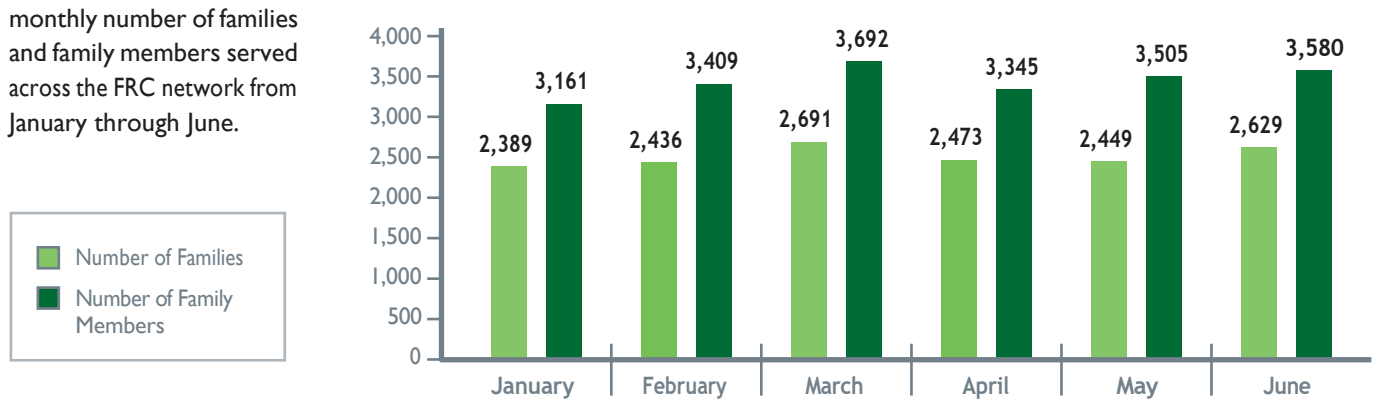
In the first six months of 2022, FRCs served a total of **8,862 unique families**, suggesting that in 2022 FRCs are likely to exceed the number of families served in 2021 (13,466). Among these families, 63% (5,590) were families seeking FRC support for the first time and 37% (3,272) were returning families.

Compared to previous years, the percentage of returning families has been notably higher since the onset of the pandemic in 2020. This points to the efforts FRCs have continued to make to serve vulnerable families as the impacts of the pandemic persisted.

"I've learned how to let go of the past and not repeat cycles, so I can move forward and be a better parent for myself and, most importantly, my daughter."

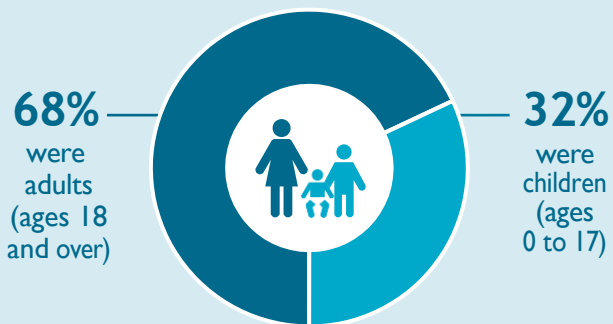
This figure shows the monthly number of families and family members served across the FRC network from January through June.

Families and Family Members Served by FRCs by Month, January to June 2022



FRCs provide services to both adult and child family members. Between January and June of 2022:

13,879
individual family members served



Across FRCs:

90% of children are enrolled in school



Serving Families in Need

Families seeking FRC services often come to the centers with multiple needs. As in past years, housing needs, financial issues, and school-related concerns continued to be among the most common reasons new families sought FRC assistance in the first half of 2022. During this period, there was a notable increase in families seeking help for health and mental-health-related concerns (33%). There was also an increase in families seeking teen and young adult activities, which may reflect recent efforts by FRCs to enhance programming specifically targeted to teens and young people.

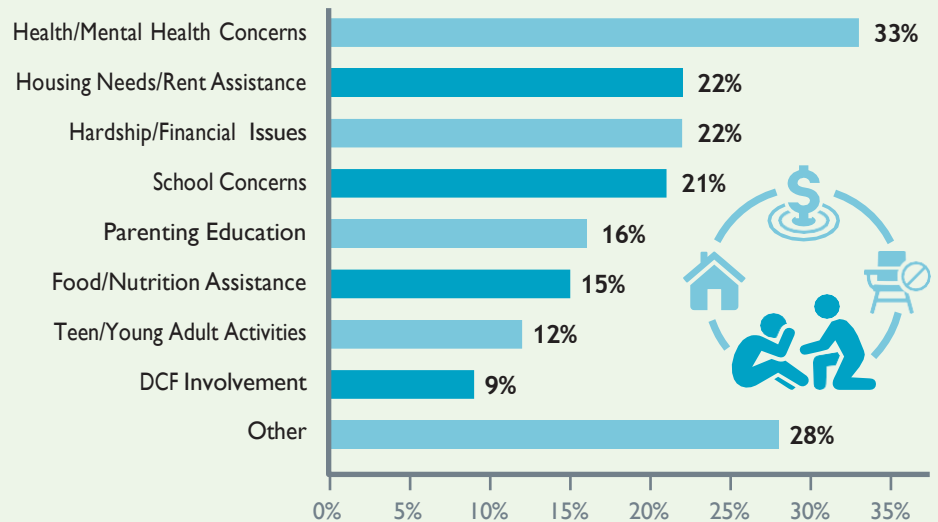
In the first half of 2022, FRCs across the Commonwealth provided over **57,000 individualized services and supports** to families.

The number of services provided by FRCs continues to increase, and the FRC Network appears on track to exceed the number of services provided in 2021 (103,921). Parenting support and individual/family support are by far the most common type of services provided by FRCs. FRCs also continue to provide substantial services related to families' basic needs for equipment, food, and housing.

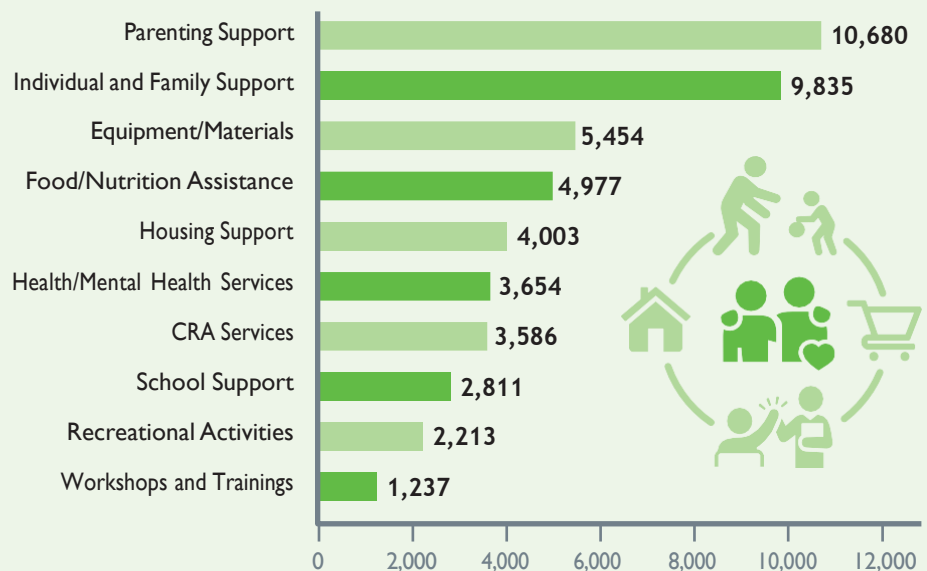
"I've learned that I'm not alone or the only one who struggles as a parent."

FRCs also offer **parenting education classes, support groups, recreational activities**, and other events in addition to individualized services. In the first part of 2022, attendance at food and material drives was high, reflecting the ongoing need of FRC families for these basics. As the impacts of the pandemic have lessened, FRCs have seen an increase in attendance at classes, groups, and related programming.

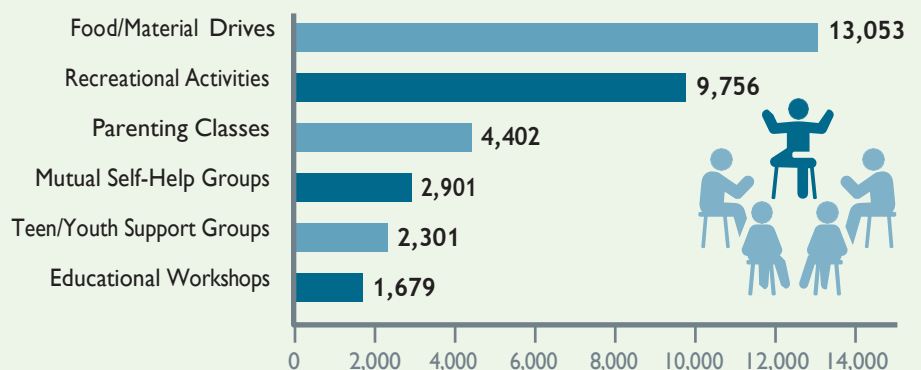
Main Reasons New Families Sought FRC Services, January to June 2022



Most Common Individualized Services Provided by FRCs, January to June 2022



Attendance at FRC Classes, Groups and Events, January to June 2022



Supporting At-Risk Children and Parents

While any family in need can access FRC services, FRCs are mandated to support specific at-risk children and their parents. An FRC priority population includes Children Requiring Assistance (CRA) as well as children exhibiting behaviors consistent with the CRA designation (CRA-related).

Children Requiring Assistance (CRA)

A CRA is a child whose parent, guardian, or school official has requested court assistance in supervising the child. Parents and/or schools may request this help for a child who consistently misses school, runs away, or has difficulty following rules at home. The FRCs saw a considerable drop in the number of CRAs served from 2019 to 2020 due to pandemic-related court closings (from 925 to 627). However, as courts have reopened, the FRCs have increased their work with courts to support court-involved families. The number of CRAs seen by FRCs rose significantly to over 1,000 in 2021 and was over 900 in the first 6 months of 2022.

The **Plymouth FRC** has established a strong relationship with the juvenile court. The FRC offers support and case consultation to members of the probation department as needed. The staff also attend team meetings at the courthouse, which include court personnel, the school district, appropriate community agencies, and most importantly, the families, to determine positive planning and outcomes. The court reported over a 90% decrease in formal CRA case filings through this teamwork.

Collaborations

The **Worcester FRC** worked on a pilot program with Amazon to have Amazon Pantry deliver fresh food items to homes. One parent shared, "I haven't been able to give my kids fruits and vegetables in a while because I haven't been able to afford it."

Working with the Greater South Shore Behavioral Health Collaborative, the **Quincy FRC** hosted a "Schools Out Welcome Summer" Resource Fair. Nearly 200 community members enjoyed a festive carnival-themed outdoor party, and families could visit resource tables hosted by various community providers.

The Mental Health Advocacy Program (MHAP) for Kids

Over the past several years, the FRC Network has partnered with Health Law Advocates to provide MHAP for Kids, serving families whose children need access to appropriate mental health services and are court-involved or at-risk for court involvement.

In 10 FRCs across the Commonwealth, staff attorneys represent families at no cost, assisting them to:

- Begin or improve special education services
- Secure and/or coordinate community-based mental health services
- Collaborate with state agencies like DCF, the Department of Mental Health, and the Department of Developmental Services
- Advocate for general education accommodations
- Apply for or manage health insurance coverage

Connecting with the Community

The **Lowell FRC** hosted a prom event with over 100 free brand new prom dresses and some tuxedos. Students from high schools all over Greater Lowell and even further out attended the event and enjoyed raffles, refreshments, and a make-up tutorial.

Families at the **Great Barrington FRC** are developing their creative skills and may have found a potential income source! Abstract art lamp shades, quilling both on canvas and as earrings, and vases made of cardboard with paper origami flowers were created during FRC workshops to be displayed at a booth at the Latin Heritage Festival.



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