

# Family Resource Centers

## Assessing Outcomes Achieved by the Massachusetts Family Resource Center Network

December 2020



The Family Resource Centers (FRCs), local support programs staffed by people from the community, strengthen and empower families in Massachusetts by connecting them with needed services – services that help parents/caregivers and their children thrive and flourish.

Ongoing evaluations of the FRC Network have documented the wide array of services and supports that FRCs provide to families in need across Massachusetts. FRCs work to connect families to community resources for housing, mental health and health services, food and clothing, and other basic needs.

FRC school liaison staff assist families whose children experience challenges at school; clinicians provide assessment and service planning to families with children identified as a “child requiring assistance or CRA;” and family support staff work with Department of Children and Families (DCF)-involved parents to support successful parenting. FRCs also offer a variety of parenting education classes, support groups, workshops and recreational activities to parents and children. Satisfaction with FRC services among families is consistently high.

Beginning in the summer of 2020, Commonwealth Medicine, the public service consulting and operations division of UMass Medical School, conducted brief surveys of family members who received services from an FRC between January 2019 and June 2020. The surveys measured how families are doing in six key areas and learn how helpful the FRC had been in assisting in these areas. The six separate surveys asked family members about:

- **Getting Help with Housing**
- **Getting Mental Health Counseling**
- **Getting Parenting Support**
- **Getting Help for Your Child with School**
- **Getting Help with Your Child’s Behavior** (for families with a CRA)
- **Being a Parent to Your Child** (for DCF-involved parents)

These six areas were the focus because they align with FRC contractual requirements for service. It was evident in prior evaluations that FRCs provide significant support to families in these areas. Adult family members, ages 18 and over, who received services or supports from an FRC in the specific area, took the survey. For example, the housing survey was administered to a family member obtaining housing support from the FRC, the school survey was administered to a family member with a child given school-related support, etc. The surveys were sent to family members who received multiple days of service from an FRC.

In total, 1,908 family members were randomly selected to participate in the surveys between June and August. English and Spanish print versions of the surveys were mailed to selected family members. Trained interviewers then contacted family members who did not respond by mail to complete the survey by telephone. Spanish-speaking telephone interviewers were available as needed.

**A total of 668 family members completed the surveys for an overall response rate of 35%.**

**Family members completing the survey were:**

- **77%** female and **23%** male
- **16%** ages 18-30; **37%** ages 31-40; **28%** ages 41-50; and **20%** age 51 and over
- **76%** identified as White; **23%** as Black/African American; and **5%** as other race
- **48%** identified as Latinx

*This report presents the findings from each of the six surveys and summary findings reflecting overall changes for families served by the FRCs and family members’ perceptions of the overall helpfulness of the FRCs. Due to rounding, some figures in this report may not add up to 100%.*



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# Getting Help with Housing

**172 family members completed the FRC Survey on *Getting Help with Housing*.**



Among those completing the housing survey, **77%** were female, **59%** were aged 18 to 40, **60%** were Latinx and **59%** were White.

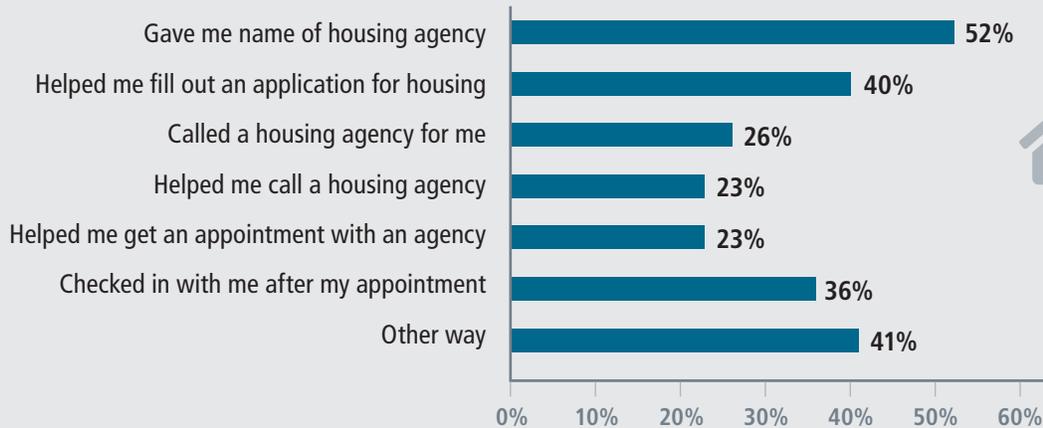
Over 50% of family members reported that the FRC provided them with a housing agency's name, 40% said that staff helped them fill out a housing application, and 36% said that the FRC followed-up with them after their appointment with a housing agency (Figure 1).

Only 34% of family members said they were able to get the housing they needed. Among those not able to get housing, the most common reasons were that the wait time for housing was too long (76%) and that housing is too expensive (33%). Over 30% said they did not get any help from a housing agency.

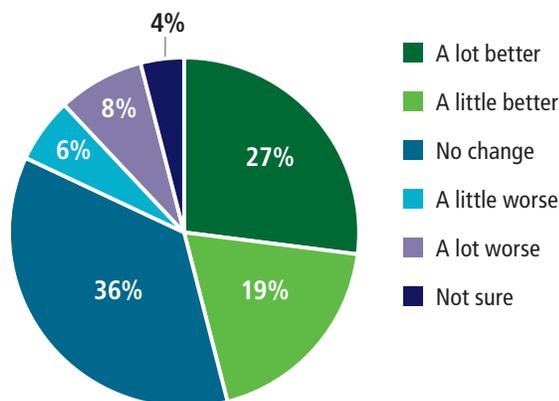
About 57% of family members responding to the housing survey said they were very or somewhat happy with their current housing; 38% said they were somewhat or very unhappy. 46% of family members described their housing situation as a lot or a little better since coming to the FRC, while 14% described it as a little or a lot worse. (Figure 2).

Among family members responding to the housing survey, 72% said the FRC was very or somewhat helpful in helping them with their housing needs (Figure 3).

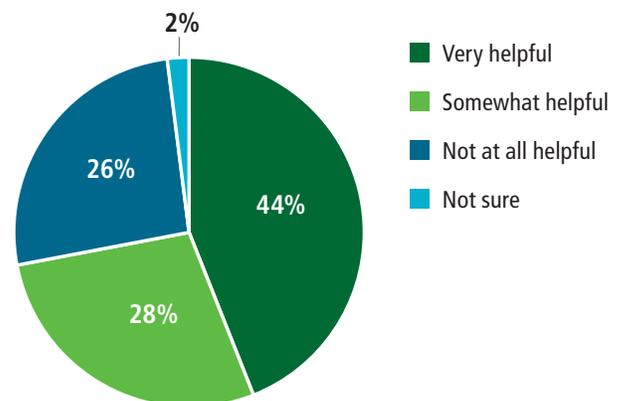
**Figure 1. How Did the FRC Staff Help You with Housing?**



**Figure 2. Since Coming to the FRC, How Would You Describe Your Housing Situation?**



**Figure 3. Overall, How Helpful has the FRC Been in Helping Your with Your Housing Needs?**



# Getting Mental Health Counseling

**171 family members completed the FRC Survey on *Getting Mental Health Counseling*.**



Among those completing the mental health survey, **86%** were female, **50%** were aged 18 to 40, **78%** were White and **46%** were Latinx.

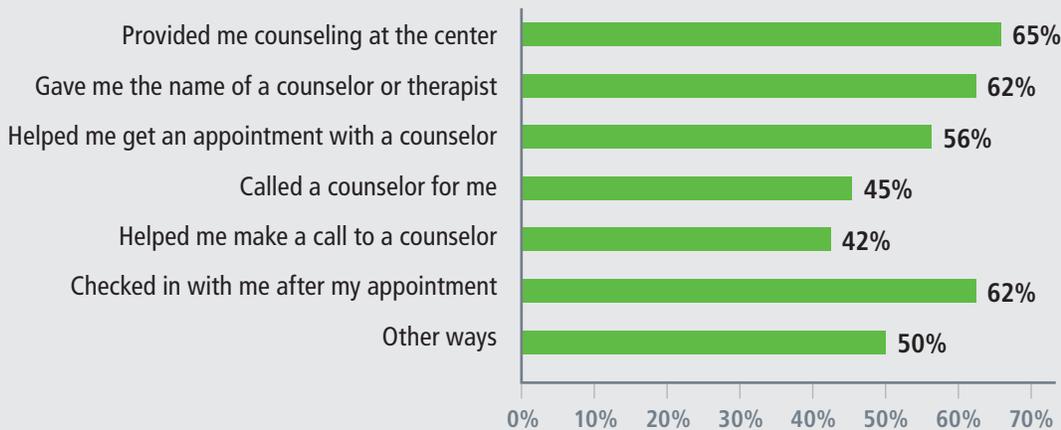
Over 60% of family members reported that the FRC provided them with counseling at the center or referred them to a counselor or therapist, and 62% said that the FRC followed-up with them after their mental health appointment (Figure 4).

79% of family members said they were able to get the mental health counseling they needed, and of these members, 95% said the counseling was very or somewhat helpful. Among those who said they could not get counseling, 41% said that the wait time was too long and 34% said there were no counselors or therapists available.

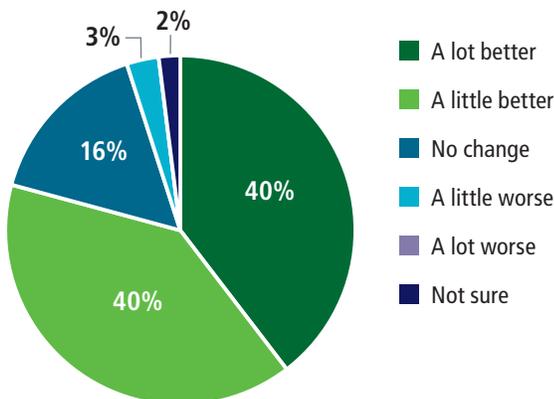
80% of family members described their mental health as a lot or a little better since coming to the FRC. Only 3% described their mental health as a little worse (Figure 5).

Among family members responding to the mental health survey, 89% said the FRC was very or somewhat helpful in helping them with their mental health counseling needs (Figure 6).

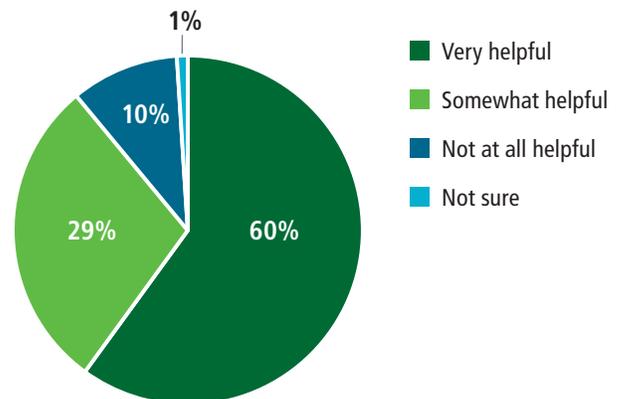
**Figure 4. How Did FRC Staff Help You with Mental Health Counseling?**



**Figure 5. Since Coming to the FRC, How Would You Describe Your Mental Health?**



**Figure 6. Overall, How Helpful has the FRC been in Helping You with Your Mental Health Counseling Needs?**



# Getting Parenting Support

**70** parents completed the FRC Survey on *Getting Parenting Support*.



Among those completing the parenting survey, **67%** were female, **50%** were aged 18 to 40, **78%** were White and **43%** were Latinx.

Over 97% of parents reported attending parenting classes or support groups at the FRC. Responding parents reported attending Parents Support Group (48%), Parenting Journey (42%), Nurturing Parents (31%), Active Parenting (27%), and Grandparents Support Group (25%).

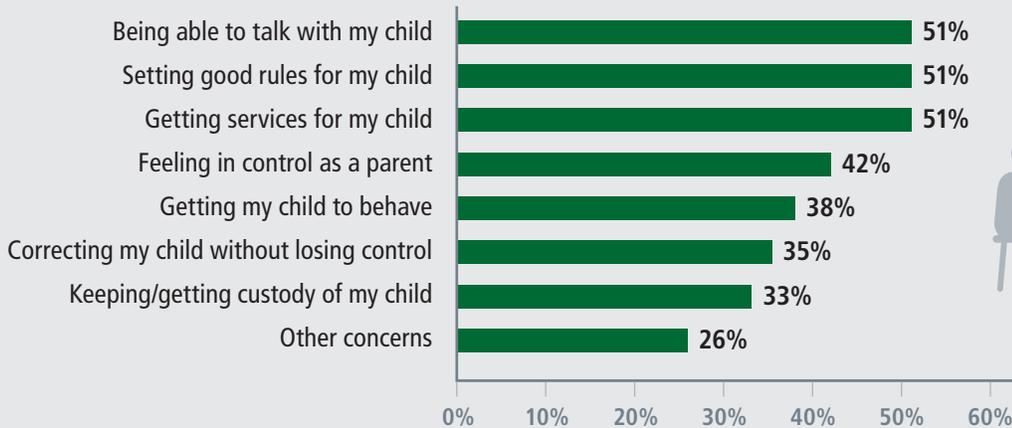
Over half of parents reported that their main parenting concerns were being able to talk with their child, setting good rules for their child and getting services for their child. About one-third of parents identified keeping or getting custody of their child as their main concern (Figure 7).

Over 70% of parents reported that the FRC helped them "a lot" to learn new parenting skills, and 25% said the FRC helped "a little." Only 5% said the FRC helped "not at all" to learn parenting skills.

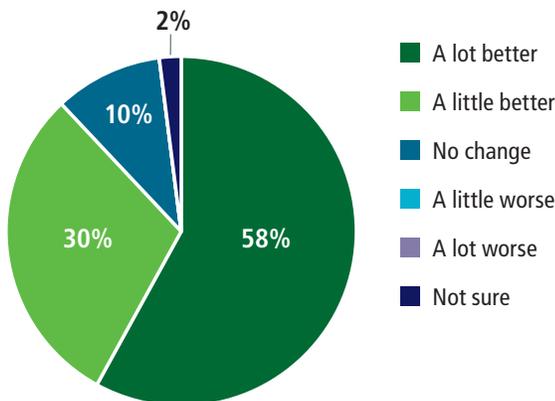
88% of parents described their parenting as a lot or a little better since coming to the FRC, and none described their parenting as worse. (Figure 8). 87% of parents said that coming to the FRC helped them get to know other parents.

Over 70% of parents said that the FRC "was very helpful" in assisting them with parenting challenges and concerns, and only 7% reported that the FRC was not at all helpful (Figure 9).

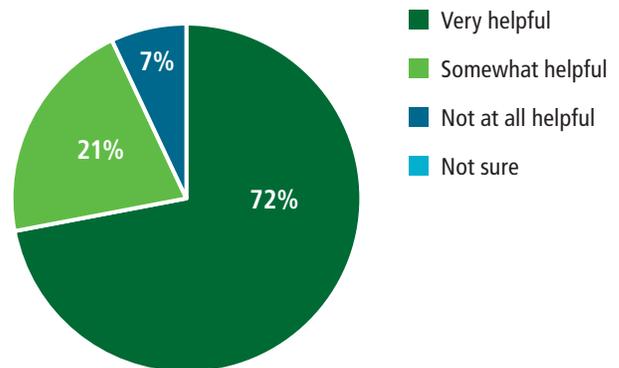
**Figure 7. Before Coming to the FRC, What Were Your Main Concerns as a Parent?**



**Figure 8. Since Coming to the FRC, How Would You Describe Your Parenting?**



**Figure 9. Overall, How Helpful has the FRC Been in Helping You with Parenting Challenges and Concerns?**



# Getting School Support for Your Child

**83** parents completed the FRC Survey on *Getting Help for Your Child with School*.



Among those completing the school survey, **87%** were female, **43%** were aged 18 to 40, **69%** were White and **43%** were Latinx.

92% of parents reported that FRC staff met with them to discuss their child's school-related needs, and 69% said that FRC staff met with their child. Most parents reported that FRC staff showed them ways to help their child, explained how to get school services, and helped them get services for their child (Figure 10).

Over 60% of parents reported that they were able to get all the help their child needed from the school. However, some parents reported that the school refused to provide services or that the school did not have the services their child needed.

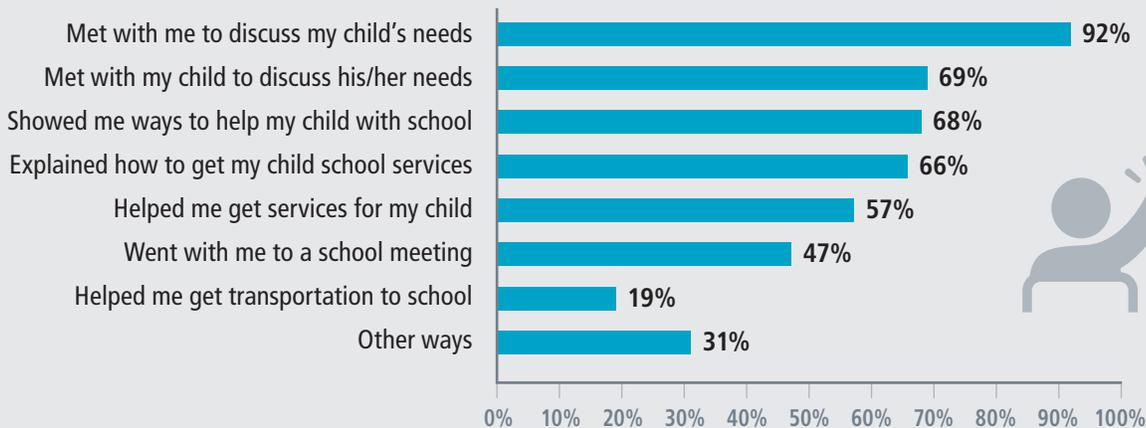
76% of parents said their child was doing a lot or a little better since coming to the FRC, and only 2% described their child as doing worse (Figure 11).

88% of parents said that the FRC was very or somewhat helpful in helping them with their child's school needs. Only 8% described the FRC as not at all helpful (Figure 12).

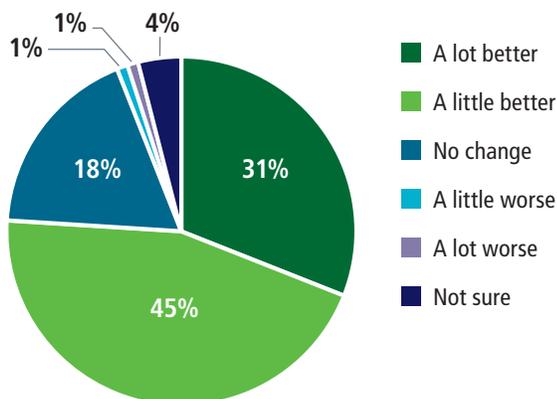
**The main school-related concerns of parents included that their child:**

- Needed extra help in school (69%)
- Was having difficulty learning (63%)
- Was having problems with other children in school (42%)
- Was getting in trouble with teachers (41%)

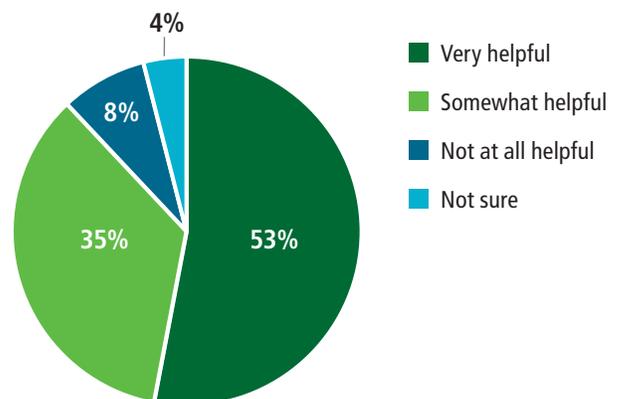
**Figure 10. How Did FRC Staff Help You and Your Child with School Needs?**



**Figure 11. Since Coming to the FRC, How is Your Child Doing in School?**



**Figure 12. Overall, How Helpful has the FRC Been in Helping You with Your Child's School Needs?**



# Getting Help with Your Child's Behavior

**55** parents identified as having a "child requiring assistance" (CRA) or a child at-risk of being a CRA completed the FRC Survey on *Getting Help with Your Child's Behavior*.



Among these parents, **82%** were female, **37%** were aged 18 to 40, **89%** were White, and **49%** were Latinx.

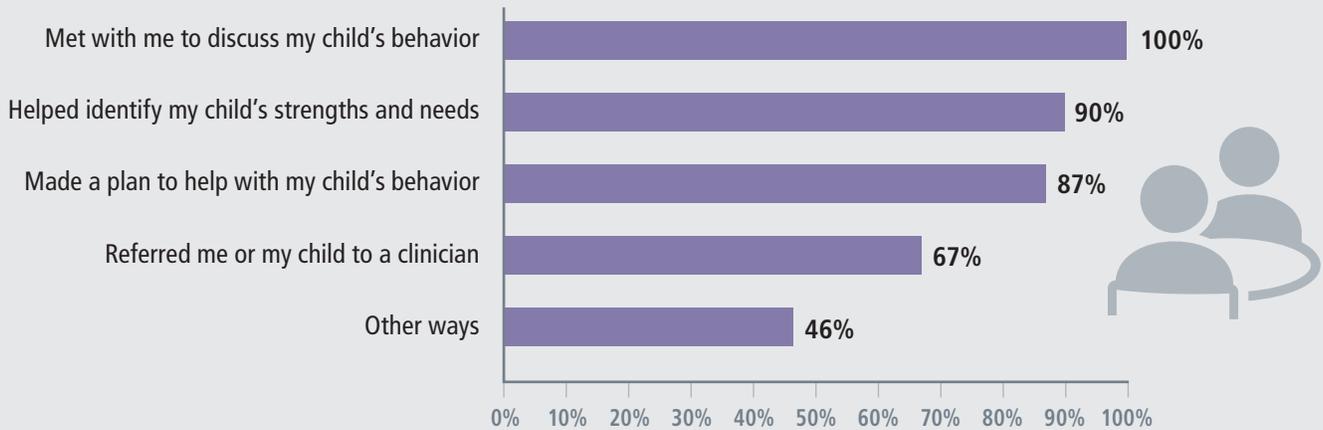
72% of parents reported that the FRC had helped them in some way with their child's behavior. Of these parents, 100% said FRC staff had met with them to discuss their child's behavior, 90% said the staff helped them identify their child's strengths and needs, and 87% said staff helped them to make a plan related to their child's behavior (Figure 13).

72% of parents responding to the survey reported that a CRA petition had been filed with the court to get help for their child. About half of these parents said that FRC staff had helped them in some way with the CRA petition. Most often, FRC staff explained the CRA to parents (72%), and 44% of parents said FRC staff met with them along with the probation officer involved in their case. Among parents reporting that a CRA petition was filed, 66% got informal help from a probation officer; 63% reported the CRA petition was dismissed.

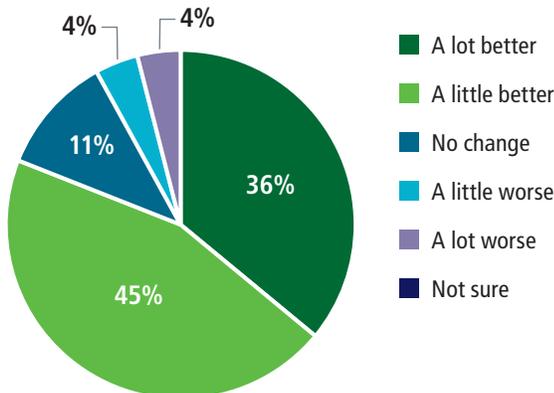
81% of parents with a CRA or at-risk child reported their child's behavior was a lot or a little better since coming to the FRC. However, 8% said their child's behavior was worse (Figure 14).

Over 90% of parents said that the FRC was very or somewhat helpful in helping them with their child's behavior (Figure 15).

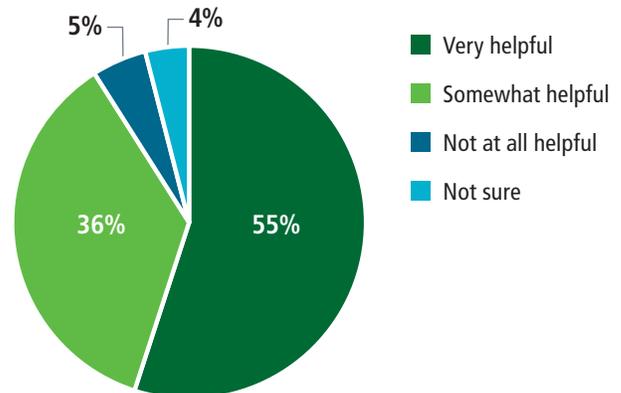
**Figure 13. What Did the FRC Staff do to Help You with Your Child's Behavior?**



**Figure 14. Since Coming to the FRC, How Would You Describe Your Child's Behavior?**



**Figure 15. Overall, How Helpful has the FRC Been in Helping You with Your Child's Behavior?**



# Being a Parent to Your Child

**118** parents involved with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) completed the FRC Survey on *Being a Parent to Your Child*.



Among those completing the survey, **62%** were female, **63%** were aged 18 to 40, **86%** were White and **41%** were Latinx.

44% of these parents had lost custody of a minor child at some point, and 39% currently lacked custody of one or more minor children. On average, parents had 2.3 minor children.

As shown in Figure 16, 73% of parents said that the FRC staff helped them learn new ways to parent their child, 66% said staff helped them meet the goals of their DCF service plan, and 53% said staff explained DCF rules to them. Notably, among parents who had experienced loss of custody, 47% reported that they were able to regain custody of a child since coming to the FRC.

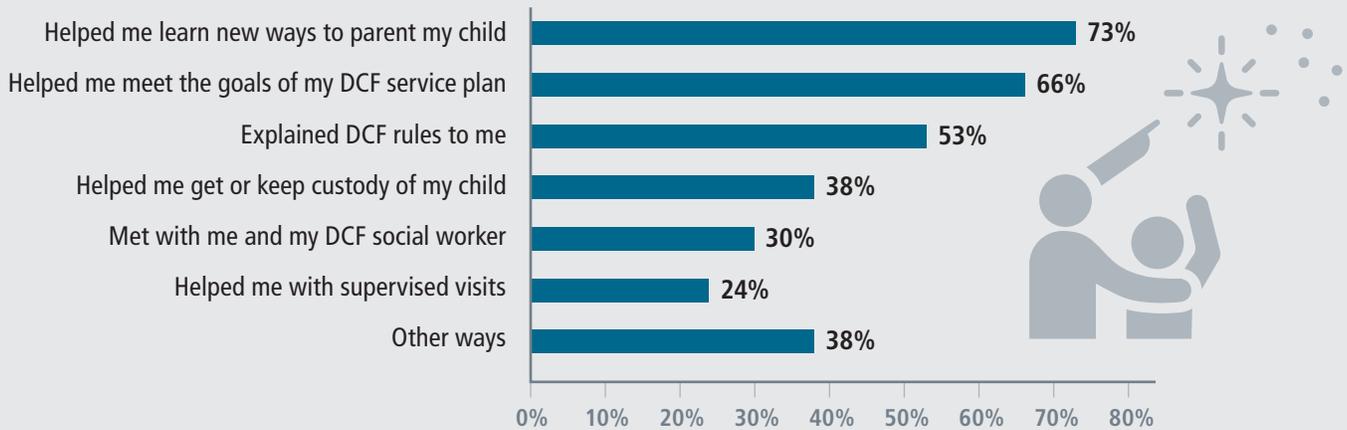
62% of DCF-involved parents said they are doing a lot better, and 24% a little better, since coming to the FRC, and only 2% said they were doing worse (Figure 17).

88% of parents said that the FRC was very or somewhat helpful in helping them with parenting their child. 12% described the FRC as not at all helpful (Figure 18).

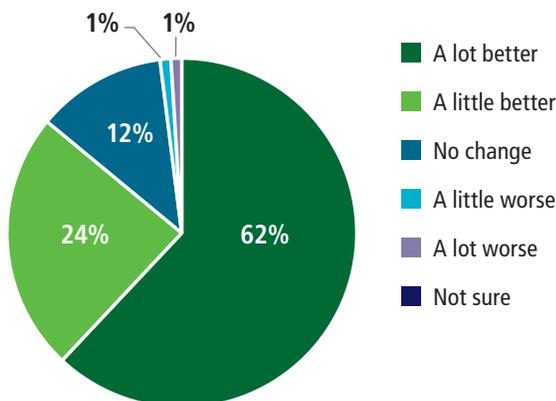
### The main concerns of these DCF-involved parents included:

- Taking better care of their child (60%)
- Getting or keeping custody of their child (58%)
- Feeling more in control with their child (57%)
- Setting better rules for their child (55%)
- Spending time with their child (54%)

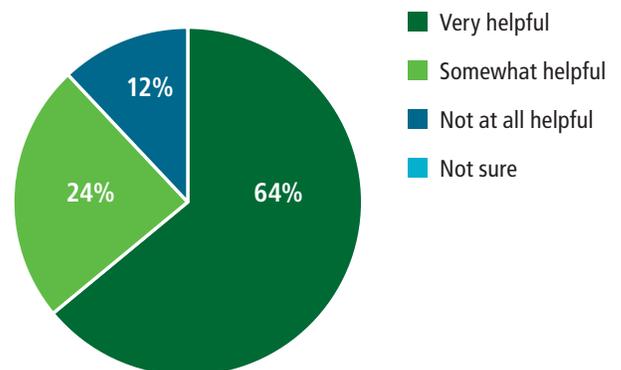
**Figure 16. How Did the FRC Staff Help You with Parenting?**



**Figure 17. Since Coming to the FRC, How Would You Say You Are Doing as a Parent?**



**Figure 18. Overall, How Helpful Has the FRC Been in Helping You with Parenting Your Child?**





*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.*

*To learn more about the FRCs, please visit [www.frcma.org](http://www.frcma.org).*

## Summary

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These findings suggest that many family members receiving FRC services experienced improvements in the six key areas examined by the surveys. Averaging across all six surveys, 70% of family members described their situation as “a lot” or “a little” better since coming to the FRC, while only 8% described their situation as “a little” or “a lot” worse. For each of the six areas covered by the surveys, responding family members identified a number of important ways in which the FRCs provided critical assistance in times of need.

Beyond these specific ways that the FRC aided families, many responding family members offered additional comments about their positive experience with the FRC, noting that they valued the opportunity to connect with other parents, to learn new skills, and to improve their relationships with their children. Many commented that the FRC made them feel supported, cared for, and that they were “not alone”. Averaging across all six surveys, 85% of family members described the FRC as “very” or “somewhat” helpful.

Overall, the results of the surveys point to the positive impact of FRC services for families seeking their assistance.

Citation: Henry, A. D., Pratt, C., Miller, F., & Tedesco, R. (2020). Assessing outcomes achieved by the Massachusetts Family Resource Network. Commonwealth Medicine, University of Massachusetts Medical School.



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