

New Jersey Family Success Centers Practice Profile



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New Jersey Family Success Center Model

The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) funds a statewide network of Family Success Centers as “one-stop” shops that provide wrap-around resources and supports for families before they find themselves in crisis. Family Success Centers offer primary child abuse prevention services to families and bring together concerned community residents, leaders, and community agencies to address the problems that threaten the safety and stability of families and the community. There is no cost to access services provided by Family Success Centers (FSCs).

The Family Success Center Practice Profile

The New Jersey Department of Children and Families and the Family Success Center (FSC) network embarked on a partnership with National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) at the University of North Carolina to develop a practice profile for the Family Success Centers. Practice profiles are detailed descriptions of a practice's guiding principles and essential functions that must be present to say the practice exists. The essential functions include detailed descriptions of the activities FSCs would carry out to ensure consistency across the network, while also allowing for contextualization of the essential functions based on the FSC's community.

A Practice Profile...

- describes the essential functions that allow a model to be teachable, learnable, and doable in community organizations
- consists of measurable and/or observable, behaviorally-based indicators for each essential function so that the practice can be better supported and evaluated
- promotes consistency across practitioners at the level of actual service delivery

(Metz, 2016; Metz, Bartley, Blasé, & Fixsen, 2011)



Guiding Principles of Family Success Centers

The philosophies, values, or beliefs that FSCs have when working with families and communities.

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Collaborative | FSCs work in partnership with community and families. |
| Community-based | The FSCs are driven by the community and situated in an accessible place within the community. |
| Culturally Responsive | FSCs provide an atmosphere, approach, and services that are non-stigmatizing and culturally appropriate for the community, and diverse families. |
| Family-Focused | Programs, activities, and services are centered on family needs and are family driven. Family reflects all members of a family, whether they participate in the center as a family unit, or individually. |
| Flexible | Programs, activities, and services should be based on evolving family and community needs and enhanced or refined as needed. |
| Strength-Based | Staff and the FSC environment are focused on empowering and strengthening families, relationships, and self-sufficiency. |
| Voluntary | Participation in all services, functions, and programs is voluntary. Volunteerism is encouraged within the FSC and community. |
| Welcoming | FSCs are safe, warm, and welcoming neighborhood gathering places. |
| Holistic | FSCs view, understand, and approach the work taking into account all aspects of the lives of families and individual family members we partner with and within the context of the community. |

Essential Functions of Family Success Centers

The components that must be present to say that the practice exists and detail what is done when working with families and communities.

Engagement – FSCs engage with families, individual family members, community partners, and stakeholders to build relationships in the center and community that are substantive and meaningful. Strong relationships within the community can facilitate community cohesion and social capital (McDonnel, Behn-Arieh, & Melton, 2015).

Active Listening – FSCs actively listen for families' and individual family member's interests, goals, and needs; recognize that some families don't know how to ask for support or don't know what supports are available.

Connecting - FSCs provide referrals and linkages to external community resources that are identified with families and/or individual family members. Social supports must be integrated into a broad network of family services in order to meet the varying needs of families (Thompson, 2015). There is increased evidence that adequate social and material supports are necessary for children's safety (Pelton, 2015; Thompson, 2015).

Advocacy – FSCs work on behalf of, in coordination with, and empower families and individual family members to ensure their needs are met. FSCs partner with families and individual family members to support the development of skills to advocate on their own behalf.

Coordination - FSCs create a sense of community among the families and individual family members by helping them be an active part of their Center and community through volunteer work. FSCs coordinate the recruitment of individuals, families, partners and volunteers in the community to provide skill building programs, services, and activities. Opportunities for families and individual family members to connect within a community can increase the community's social capital (Dijken, Stam, & Winter, 2016).

Leadership – FSCs engage families, individual family members, and community partners in leadership activities within Centers. Community strategies that promote child protection focus on creating a shared belief and collective responsibility to protect children from harm and expand the range of services and supports available to families and individual family members (Daro & Dodge, 2009).

Skill Building – FSCs organize and oversee programs, services, activities, and resources within the Center that focus on strengthening child, family and individual family members' skills and protective factors. Family-centered programs that focus on positive parenting and family interactions, child cognitive development, and reducing family level and community level poverty showed the most benefits for children and families (Ruffolo, Evans & Lukens, 2003; Yoshikawa, 1995). Additionally, strategies to improve economic wellbeing of families and individual family members within a community can improve community health and wellness (Pinderhughes, Davis, & Williams, 2016).

Continuous Improvement – FSCs use data to guide decision-making, refine practice and improve services.

Essential Functions of Family Success Centers (continued)

The components that must be present to say that the practice exists and detail what is done when working with families and communities.

The essential functions are detailed on a **developmental continuum** of **expected**, **in development**, and **unacceptable** activities in order to describe the potential variations in implementation. This allows for the ongoing improvement of skills and practices.

Typically, new centers and staff will implement activities in the **in development** category as they begin to try out new skills and learn to generalize those skills within a variety of situations and contexts. **In development** activities are good candidates for ongoing coaching and feedback.

When activities performed fall within the **unacceptable** category, there are often barriers inhibiting implementation. FSCs and DCF staff should consider potential barriers inhibiting practice and resulting in **unacceptable** implementation, and use improvement strategies to shift implementation of the activities to the **in development** and **expected** categories.

Engagement

Active
Listening

Connecting

Advocacy

Coordination

Leadership

Skill Building

Continuous
Improvement

Engagement

FSCs engage with families, individual family members, community partners, and stakeholders to build relationships in the center and community that are substantive and meaningful.

Strong relationships within the community can facilitate community cohesion and social capital (McDonnel, Behn-Arieh, & Melton, 2015).

Engagement

| Expected | In Development | Unacceptable |
|---|--|--|
| Uses a variety of strategies to facilitate meaningful engagement with the community and families (examples include: physical plant is homelike, marketing materials, communication, attending events, door-to-door, collaborating on community calendars). Communication is critical to the engagement process so that stakeholders are aware and active participants in community change efforts (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016). | Uses some engagement strategies but does not use a variety of engagement strategies as directed. | Doesn't proactively engage and communicate with communities and families. Uses standard approaches to engagement and communication. |
| Actively participates in networking opportunities with community partners and stakeholders. | Attends but does not actively participate in networking opportunities with community partners and stakeholders, or attends/participates somewhat inconsistently. | Does not participate in any networking opportunities with community partners or stakeholders. |
| Actively seeks opportunities to work with community partners and stakeholders. | Waits for community partners and stakeholders to reach out to Center. | Does not engage community partners and stakeholders and demonstrates an unwillingness/inability to participate. Doesn't respond to outreach by community partners and stakeholders. |
| Designs and maintains furniture, decorations, and food to make the center homelike, reflecting the culture of the Center and community. An approach based in hospitality can increase engagement for those who might be isolated within a community (Thompson, 2015; Melton, 2014). | Maintains surroundings and food that is reflective of some parts of the community, but excludes other segments. | Does not maintain surroundings or food to make the center homelike or reflective of the community. Creates an environment that feels institutional and unwelcoming. |

Engagement

| Expected | In Development | Unacceptable |
|---|--|--|
| Uses a process that is welcoming and inviting in order to orient and introduce families and individual family members to the Center. | <p>Inconsistently uses a process that is welcoming and inviting in order to introduce new families and individual family members to the Center.</p> <p>Uses a process that is clinically based in order to introduce new families and individual family members to the Center.</p> | <p>Does not use a process to orient and introduce new families and individual family members to the center.</p> <p>Uses a process that is unwelcoming and does not invite new families and individual family members to participate in the variety of Center activities.</p> |
| Creates opportunities for and encourages families and individual family members to connect with each other. Social connectedness has been linked to reduced risk of neglect and emotional abuse (Beeman, 1997; Zolotor & Runyan, 2006). | Provides an environment supportive of naturally emerging connections but does not actively provide opportunities for families and individual family members to connect. | Creates an inhibiting environment for social connectedness or does not provide opportunity for families and individual family members to connect. |
| Creates opportunities for engaged families and individual family members to bring all their family members to FSC activities. | Attempts to engage some families and individual family members, but not all. | Does not create opportunities for the engaged families and individual family members to bring all family members to the FSC. |

Active Listening

FSCs actively listen for families' and individual family member's interests, goals, and needs; recognize that some families don't know how to ask for support or don't know what supports are available.



Active
Listening

Active Listening

| Expected | In Development | Unacceptable |
|---|--|---|
| Creates a space for families to share their goals and/or identify their needs. Uses meaningful inquiry strategies to understand families' interests, goals, and needs. | Inquires about families' interests, goals, and needs using routine questions. | Provides only general information and a routine orientation to the Center and does not inquire about interests, goals, and needs. |
| Creates a culture of inquiry, so interested families and individual family members share ongoing and evolving goals, needs, and desired involvement with the FSC and the community. Listening to families and individual family members can provide an opportunity to recognize signs of stress and strengthen families' protective factors with timely and relevant supports (Daro & Dodge, 2009). | Follows up on conversations with interested families and individual family members about initial conversations, but is not attuned to evolving and changing interests and needs. | Does not regularly ask about families and individual family members' interests and involvement. |
| Uses a process to debrief with families and individual family members about their stated interests, goals, and needs to match them with available FSC and community resources. This process should be consultative in nature and not direct or suggest what the interests, goals, or needs are (Prinz, 2015). | Reflects what is available at the FSC and in the community but does not identify or match insights from families' interests, goals, and needs. | Does not attempt to identify insights, opportunities, or concerns, or share what is available in FSC or the community. |

Connecting

FSCs provide referrals and linkages to external community resources that are identified with families and/or individual family members.

Social supports must be integrated into a broad network of family services in order to meet the varying needs of families (Thompson, 2015).

There is increased evidence that adequate social and material supports are necessary for children's safety (Pelton, 2015; Thompson, 2015).



Connecting

Connecting

| Expected | In Development | Unacceptable |
|---|--|--|
| Identifies and provides information regarding resources, services and activities offered within the community that meet families' and individual family members' interests, goals, and needs. Connections with external community resources should be easy to access, non-stigmatizing social and material supports for families with children (Kimbrough-Melton & Melton, 2015). | <p>Shares information, based on perceptions of family interests and needs.</p> <p>Community resources are preselected and not matched to the family.</p> | <p>Does not help families and individual family members identify the services that best meet their interests, goals, and needs.</p> <p>Does not help families and individual family members connect with resources outside the FSC.</p> <p>Mentions community resources without providing information about how to access.</p> |
| Checks in with families and individual family members on their experience in connecting with resources. Asks if they were useful and, if not, helps the member locate another resource. | <p>Checks in with families but doesn't assist families in locating any needed new resources.</p> <p>Inquires whether a resource is useful but does not help member explore the reasons a resource was not useful.</p> | <p>Does not follow up to ensure a connection was made.</p> <p>Does not ask if resource is useful.</p> |
| Regularly identifies and updates relevant resources within the community that align with the FSC mission and vision and can meet families' and individual family members' interests, goals, and needs. Family is able to explore resources on an ongoing basis. | <p>Identifies resources within the community in a limited range of contexts, that are somewhat relevant, or only for certain families and individual family members or families. Does not regularly update resources.</p> <p>Identifies resources that can meet families' and individual family members' interests, goals, and needs only on a short-term basis.</p> | <p>Does not seek or update relevant resources within the community.</p> <p>Identifies resources that do not align with the FSC mission or families and individual family members' needs.</p> |

Advocacy

FSCs work on behalf of, in coordination with, and empower families and individual family members to ensure their needs are met. FSCs partner with families and individual family members to support the development of skills to advocate on their own behalf.



Advocacy

Advocacy

| Expected | In Development | Unacceptable |
|---|--|--|
| Support and coach families and individual family members on how to access resources or services based on their interests, goals, and needs. Advocacy practices that empower families and individual family members to access resources can facilitate internal motivation of individual and families (Ryan & Deci, 2000). | Provides information regarding resources and services along with some general helpful hints about how to access resources. | Provides information regarding resources and services without determining if member has the skills needed to access resources. |
| Connects with external resources on behalf of the member in order to access the needed resources, only when necessary for the family or individual family member (e.g. family member does not have the skills needed, language barriers). | <p>Inconsistently connects with external resources on behalf of the FSC community/participants, when necessary for the family or individual family member.</p> <p>Identifies external resources, but does not connect with the resources alongside with the families or individual family members.</p> | Does not connect with external resources on behalf of the FSC community/participants, when necessary for the member. |
| Works with community partners to address barriers to accessing services and resources (e.g. transportation). | Asks community partners to address access barriers but does not join in effort to develop solutions. | Ignores barriers that prevent FSC families and individual family members from accessing services and resources. |

Coordination

FSCs create a sense of community among the families and individual family members by helping them be an active part of their Center and community through volunteer work. FSCs coordinate the recruitment of individuals, families, partners and volunteers in the community to provide skill building programs, services, and activities.

Opportunities for families and individual family members to connect within a community can increase the community's social capital (Dijken, Stam, & Winter, 2016).



Coordination

Coordination

| Expected | In Development | Unacceptable |
|--|--|---|
| Formally asks FSC families and individual family members about their interests in volunteering. Revisits if a member says no at initial engagement. | Gives some but not all families and individual family members an opportunity to contribute through volunteer work. | Asks about interest in volunteering once at initial engagement, then never revisits during family's involvement with the Center. |
| Vets and matches families and individual family members with volunteer opportunities, based on their interests and the needs of the FSC. There should be good fit between an individuals' interests and opportunities for social connections through volunteer opportunities (Thompson, 2015). | Connects families and individual family members with volunteer opportunities, but does not consistently match the opportunities to their interests or the needs of the community. | Offers volunteer opportunities to families and individual family members without ever matching them to the families and individual family members' interests or the needs of the community. |
| Identifies, creates and supports opportunities based on community needs for FSC families and individual family members to volunteer internally at the Center. | Identifies relevant volunteer opportunities at the FSC for community members, families and individual family members based on community needs. | Identifies volunteer opportunities without regard to relevance to community needs. |
| Recruits partners and sector leaders from within the community to volunteer and matches them to internal Center activities based on the Center needs. Opportunities to engage volunteers from the community can increase their awareness and sensitivity to broader needs within their community (Melton, 2014). | Recruits partners and sector leaders from within the community to volunteer, but does not consistently target recruitment based on the needs of the Center. Inconsistently matches the partners' interests with the center's activities once recruited. | Does not recruit partners and sector leaders from within the community to volunteer. |

Leadership

FSCs engage families, individual family members, and community partners in leadership activities within Centers.

Community strategies that promote child protection focus on creating a shared belief and collective responsibility to protect children from harm and expand the range of services and supports available to families and individual family members (Daro & Dodge, 2009).



Leadership

Leadership

| Expected | In Development | Unacceptable |
|--|---|---|
| Involves individuals, families, and community partners through a formal process in making recommendations about the Center's programs/services. Actively involving families and individual family members can promote more tailored and customized delivery of the program (Kirby & Sanders, 2012, 2014; Metzler, Sanders, Rusby, & Crowley, 2012). The goal is to enhance the fit of the programming within the context (Sanders & Kirby, 2014). | Sometimes informally solicits family and partner opinions and inputs for consideration about the Center's programs/services. | Does not involve or consider input from parents and partners. Does not provide equal opportunity to all FSC families and individual family members to express opinions about the Center's programs/services. |
| Families, individual family members, and community partners lead efforts within the Center (i.e. co-leader of an advisory board, co-leader in community outreach efforts, leader of a program within the Center). Families and individual family members within a community are not just recipients of outcomes; they are also makers of outcomes achieved. Therefore, it is critical to "recognize and respect there are assets that community families and individual family members bring to an initiative" (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016). | Families, individual family members, and community partners are in leadership positions, but often treated as support/secondary leaders, not as fully vested co-leaders. Families, individual family members, and community partners are not fully engaged in all planning activities for the effort they are "leading". | Parents and community partners are token leaders. Leadership activities and meetings are held at times inconvenient for participation by parents and community partners. |

Leadership

Expected

Proactively builds the leadership skills of FSC families and individual family members to ensure meaningful participation in leadership activities and recommendations for the Center's programs/services. As families and individual family members "become engaged in service planning process, they can empower themselves to assume ownership of the process and make personal investments in their community" (Daro & Dodge, 2009).

In Development

Reacts to emerging skill development needs.

Unacceptable

Involves parents but does not build their problem solving and leadership skills.

Skill Building

FSCs organize and oversee programs, services, activities, and resources within the Center that focus on strengthening child, family and individual family families and individual family members' skills and protective factors.

Family-centered programs that focus on positive parenting and family interactions, child cognitive development, and reducing family level and community level poverty showed the most benefits for children and families (Ruffolo, Evans & Lukens, 2003; Yoshikawa, 1995).

Additionally, strategies to improve economic wellbeing of families and individual family members within a community can improve community health and wellness (Pinderhughes, Davis, & Williams, 2016).



Skill
Building

Skill Building

| Expected | In Development | Unacceptable |
|--|--|--|
| Identifies programs, services, and activities that promote skill and protective factor development based on community's needs and interests. | Not all programs, services, and activities consistently promote skill and protective factor development. | Programs, services, and activities do not promote skill and protective factor development. |
| Helps families and individual family members identify and build on their strengths. | Observes and tells the family what their strengths are. | Focuses on family deficits/weaknesses to be fixed. |
| Coordinates and delivers programming to the community that is based on their needs and interests. | Coordinates and delivers programming with inconsistent focus on the community's needs and interests. | Coordinates and delivers programming without any basis in the community's needs and interests. |
| Develops internal resources based on the community's needs and interests. | Develops internal resources, but they are inconsistently based on the community's needs and interests. | Does not develop any internal resources. Develops internal resources that have no basis in community's needs and interests. |



Skill Building

Continuous Improvement

FSCs use data to guide decision-making, refine practice and improve services.



Continuous
Improvement

Continuous Improvement

| Expected | In Development | Unacceptable |
|--|--|--|
| Identifies relevant data and information that will help the FSC understand the needs of their community and develop relevant skill building programming, engagement activities and community connections. A resource analysis can assist with understanding the culture of the community and identify gatekeepers, existing social and professional networks, and opportunity to develop new connections within the community (Kimbrough-Melton & Melton, 2015). | Relies on basic data to understand FSC community needs and program functioning. | Does not utilize data and information that would help the FSC understand the needs of its community and its programs. |
| Gathers data and information from families and individual family members on a regular basis (at least monthly) to assess key aspects of program functioning (such as skill-building programming, outreach, or engagement efforts). Efforts to gather feedback from families and individuals provide the opportunity to gather information on their needs and garner buy-in (Kimbrough-Melton & Melton, 2015). | Gathers data and information from a limited number of families and individual family members and a limited variety of sources. Gathers data and information sporadically. | Does not gather data and information. |
| Examines data as a team in order to identify opportunities and create a plan to improve practice and programming. Data and information can be used to target risk and protective factors of relevant impact, and identify empirically supported activities in response that fit within the community context (Slep & Heyman, 2008). | Examines data as a team, but does not develop an improvement plan. | Revises practice and programs without being informed by data gathered from its families, individual family members and community partners. |

Continuous Improvement

Fundamental Questions about Family Success Centers

The process for developing the practice profile involved individual interviews with a sample of FSC and DCF staff, as well as an extensive vetting and consensus process with a sample of FSC staff, directors, and DCF staff. Throughout this process, participants had questions related to fundamental aspects of the FSC work that were beyond the scope of the practice profile. These questions were shared with the FSC Practice Profile Leadership Team and the team agreed that it was important to provide clarity to the FSC network with regards to the fundamental questions. The Leadership Team went through a facilitated process to review existing FSC documents, draft responses to the fundamental questions, and garner a shared understanding of the responses. The Leadership Team would like to share the responses to these questions with the FSC network in addition to the practice profile to support ongoing communication with the FSC network. The fundamental questions and responses are provided on the next page.



Fundamental Questions about Family Success Centers (continued)

What is the overall goal of FSCs?

- ***Prevent child abuse and neglect, and strengthen protective factors.***
- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children

What is the purpose of the FSCs?

- Enrich the lives of children by strengthening families and neighborhoods
- Develop networks of family strengthening services to prevent child abuse and neglect
- Provide integrated, locally based services that are family focused and culturally responsive
- Strengthen connections with families, between families, and to the community

Where should FSCs be located?

- Strongly encouraged to be located in a separate structure from host agencies
- Convenient, accessible and welcoming to families
- Areas where there are opportunities to create community connections

Who do FSCs serve?

- Families

What needs do FSCs attend to?

- Programming is designed to meet the needs of families with children

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