

Massachusetts Family Resource Center Network

2022 Program Evaluation Report

March 2023

The Massachusetts Family Resource Centers (FRCs), overseen by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), are community-based, culturally competent centers that provide a wide array of services to families. UMass Chan Medical School serves as the Administrative Services Organization (ASO) for the FRCs, providing a range of program support activities, including data collection and reporting, marketing and communication support, evaluation, and technical assistance.



www.frcma.org



FRCs connect families to needed resources and supports, offer evidence-based parent education classes and support groups, provide school-related educational support, and offer recreational and other activities. In response to the legislative requirements of Chapter 240 of the Acts of 2012 to support Children Requiring Assistance (CRA), the FRCs also implement services and resources for families with children at risk of a CRA filing or with an existing filing with a juvenile court. FRCs work to strengthen relationships between children and their families so that both can thrive.

The first 18 FRCs were launched in 2015 with at least one FRC in each of the state's 14 counties. The network grew to 27 FRCs in 2020. The network continues to grow with at least five new FRCs starting operations in 2023. This report covers the 27 FRCs that were in operation in calendar year 2022.

Ongoing Evaluation of the FRCs

Since 2015, an evaluation team from UMass Chan has partnered with DCF to better understand how FRCs work with families, document FRC services, and assess outcomes for families served by FRCs. Data are collected by FRC staff at each site and entered into a secure, cloud-based database managed by the UMass Chan team. The information captured includes characteristics of both child and adult family members receiving services, the reasons families come to the FRCs, and the types of services families receive. The evaluation team has also employed focus groups and surveys of FRC staff, families, and other stakeholders to obtain feedback on the implementation and impact of the FRCs.

Pursuant to Line Item 4000-0051, Chapter 126 of the Acts of 2022, the FRC Annual Evaluation Report describes activities across the FRCs during the calendar year Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2022. The report tells the story about the families and family members served in 2022, the types of services provided, and includes notable changes in FRC activities since their launch in 2015. The report also highlights innovative FRC practices as well as efforts undertaken by DCF and UMass Chan to support FRC operations.

FRCs Are a Critical Community Resource

Many families come to an FRC during a crisis or for urgent help. The FRCs work swiftly to evaluate the specific situation and figure out how best to help.

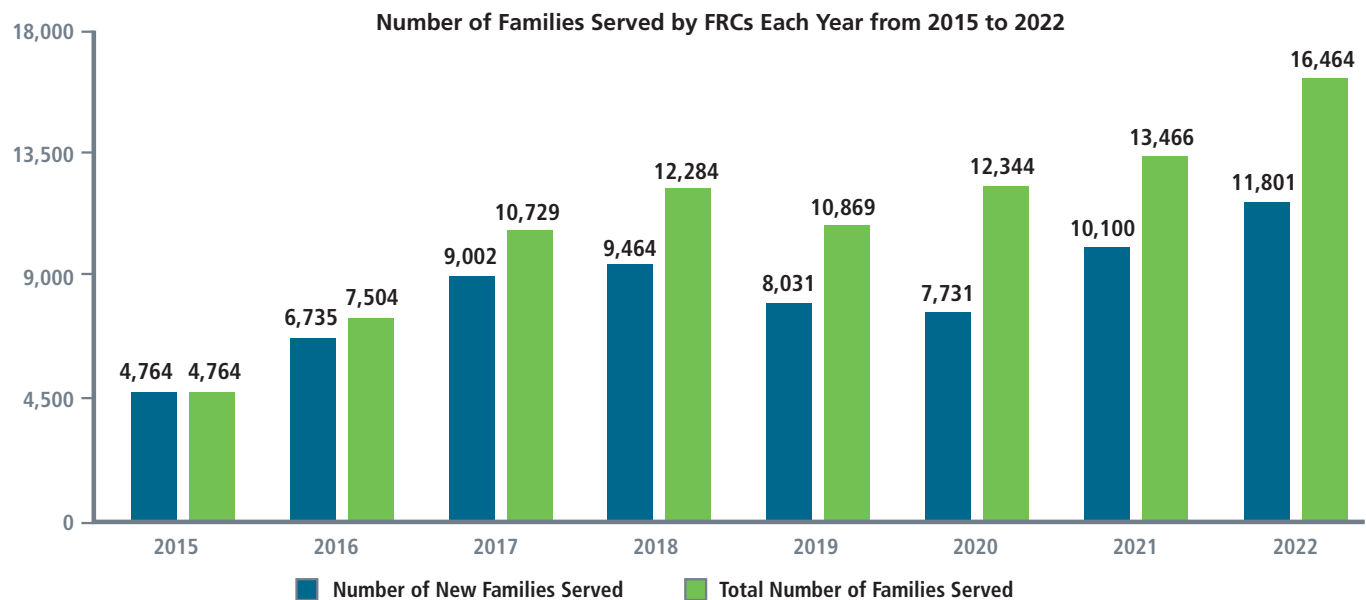
The FRCs help families access a wide range of resources, such as housing and employment supports and health and mental health services. They also provide school support, referrals to childcare and transportation, and fulfill many basic needs with food, clothing, diapers, and other material supports to families.

FRC Programming and Supports Include:

- Parenting skills workshops
- Self-help groups
- Grandparents' groups
- Financial workshops
- Stress management workshops
- Education programs
- Family events and activities
- Playgroups and youth groups
- Arts, cultural, and sports events
- Information and referral to help access other services

Families Served by the Family Resource Center Network

As the COVID-19 public health emergency subsides and the FRC network continues to expand, the number of families served across the Commonwealth has continued to grow. Since their inception and through December 2022, the FRCs have served more than 62,000 families and more than 112,000 individual family members.



FRCs make targeted efforts to engage new families and serve returning families, using both in-person and remote approaches. In 2022, FRCs served 16,464 families, 11,801 of which were new that year.

The number of new families served in 2022 reflects a 17% increase from 2021.

On average, each FRC served 610 families in 2022, a 22% increase in the average number of families served in 2021.

More than 25% of the families served in 2022 were returning families, demonstrating the positive impact the FRCs have on the families they serve.

Households Served by FRCs

Most families served by the FRCs continue to represent single-parent households. Of the families who were new to the FRCs in 2022, **69% were from single-parent households; 27% were from two-parent households.**

Consistent with recent years, the FRCs served a substantial number of households that did not include minor children. However, in 2022, the number of households served without minor children (18 years old or younger) in the home decreased to 21% compared to 31% in 2021. Most families served in 2022 had one child in the home (35%), followed by 25% of families with two children in the home.

Among new families served in 2022, **about 14% were homeless** (sheltered and unsheltered) when first served by the FRCs.

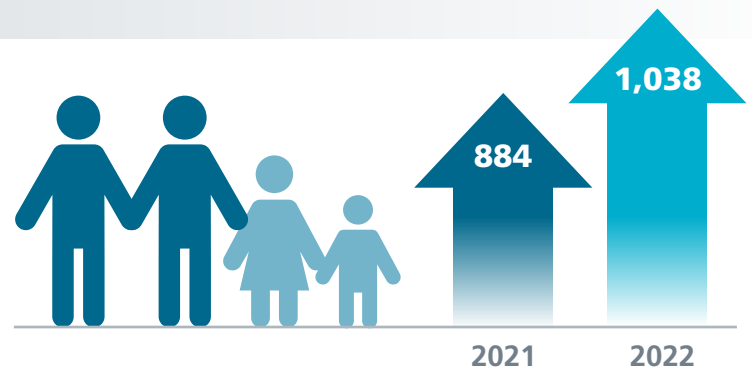


Adults and Children Served by the Family Resource Center Network

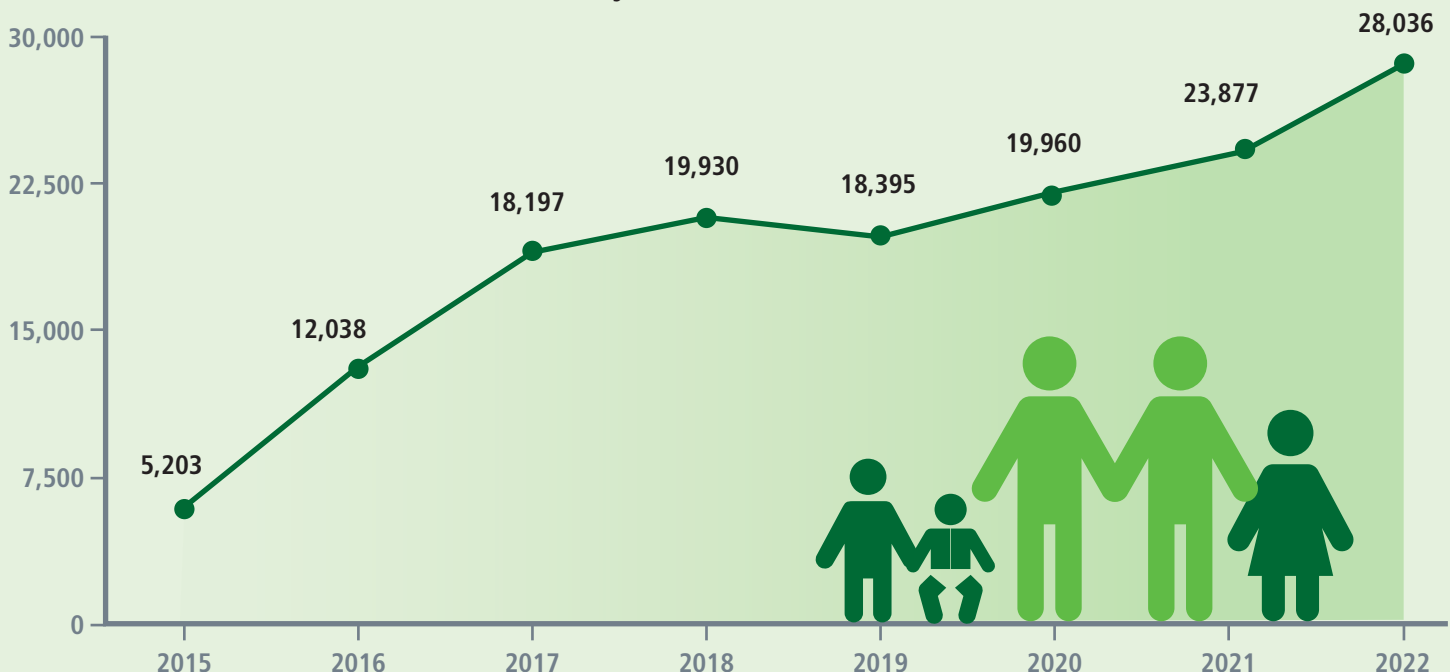
The number of family members – adults and children – served by the FRCs continues to grow.

In 2022, FRCs served over **28,000 individual family members**, a 17% increase over the number served in 2021.

The 27 FRCs across the state each **served an average of 1,038 family members in 2022**, compared to the average of 884 family members in 2021.



Number of Family Members Served from 2015 to 2022



Characteristics of Adults and Children Served by the FRCs in 2022

FAMILY PROFILE

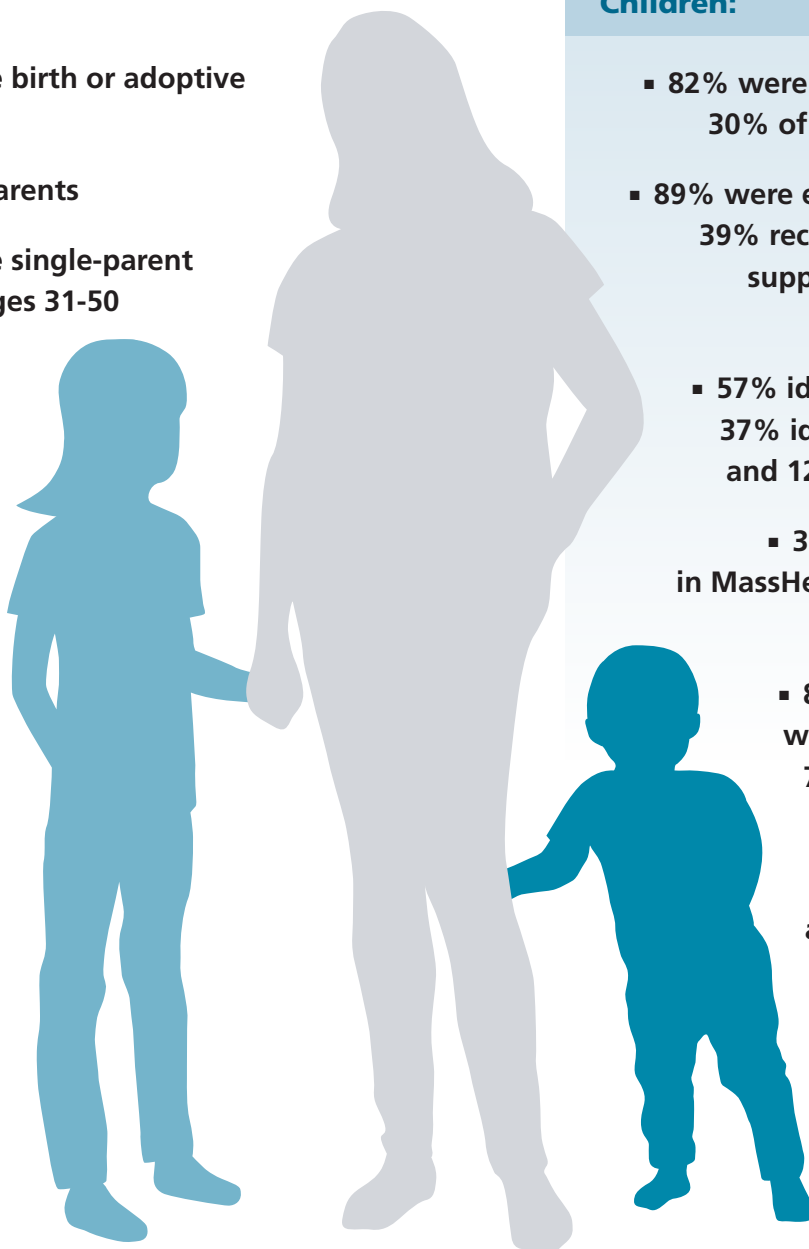
Of the 28,036 individuals served by the FRCs in 2022, about 60% of them were adults, ages 18 and over, and about 40% of family members served in 2022 were children, ages 0 to 17.

Adults:

- Most adults were birth or adoptive parents (83%)
- 3% were grandparents
- Most adults were single-parent women (78%), ages 31-50
- 25% were ages 18-30; 16% were older than 50
- 42% identified as Latinx and 24% said Spanish was their primary language
- 44% were enrolled in MassHealth compared to 35% in 2021
- 61% identified as White; 17% identified as Black or African American

Children:

- 82% were ages 0 to 14 with 30% of that between 0-5
- 89% were enrolled in school; 39% received educational support such as an IEP or 504 plan
- 57% identified as white; 37% identified as Latinx and 12% spoke Spanish
 - 36% were enrolled in MassHealth as compared to 25% in 2021
- 8% were involved with the courts and 7% were involved with DCF
- 20% of children aged 6 to 17 were CRA or at-risk of becoming CRA

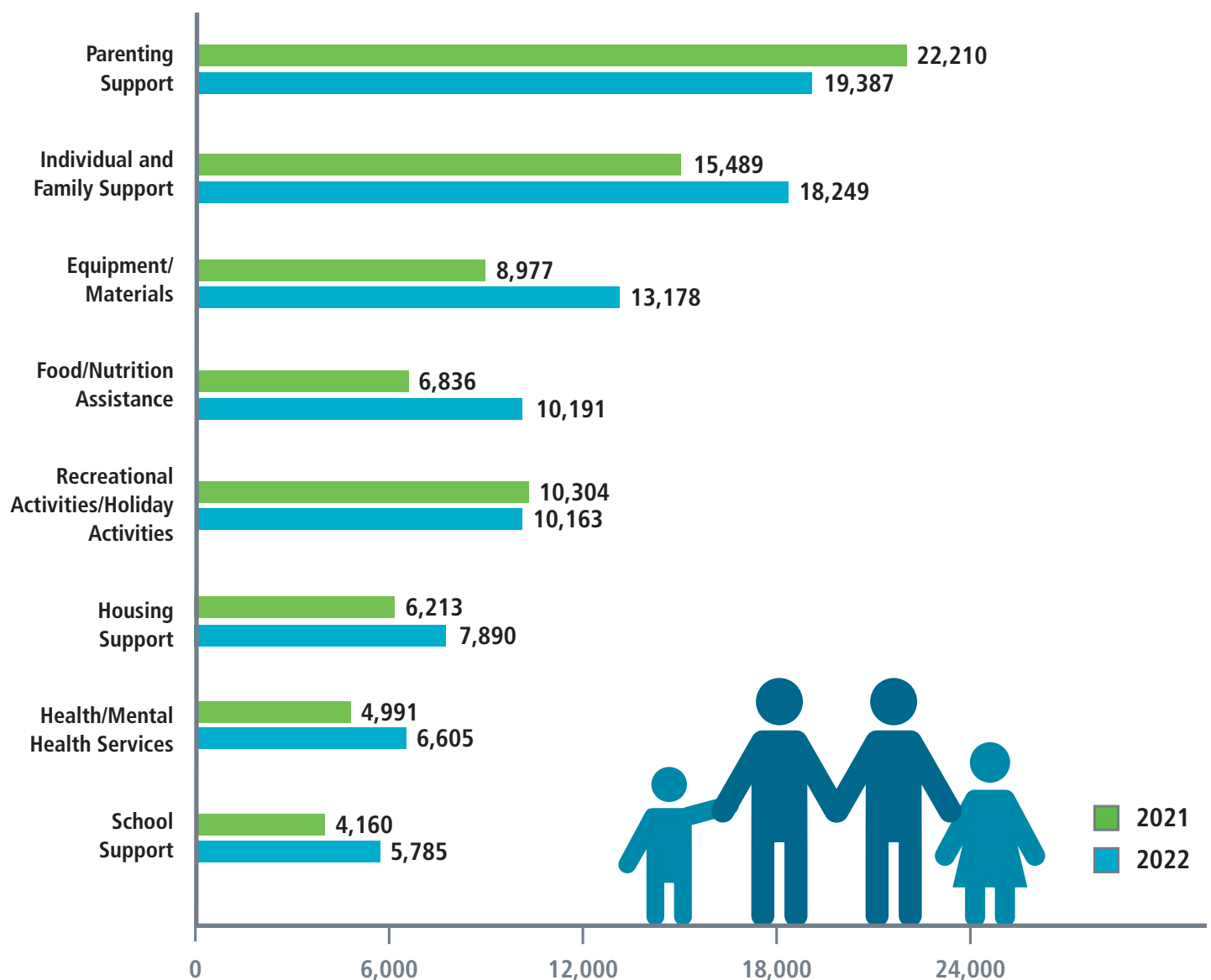


FRC Services and Supports to Families in 2022

FRCs work with families to assess their individual needs, provide direct support, and connect them to other resources in their communities.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 public health emergency, the FRCs have maintained a high level of service and support for families. In 2022, FRCs provided substantially more individual and family support, equipment and materials, and food and nutrition assistance than in 2021. FRCs also provided more housing support, health and mental health services, and school support than the prior two years. The number of overall services for parenting support declined from 2021 to 2022, and the number of recreational and holiday activities provided by the FRCs stayed about the same. Additionally, FRCs provided 5,553 CRA-related services (referrals to clinical services, school support/liaison, youth support groups, referrals to Mental Health Advocacy Program for Kids, etc.) in 2022.

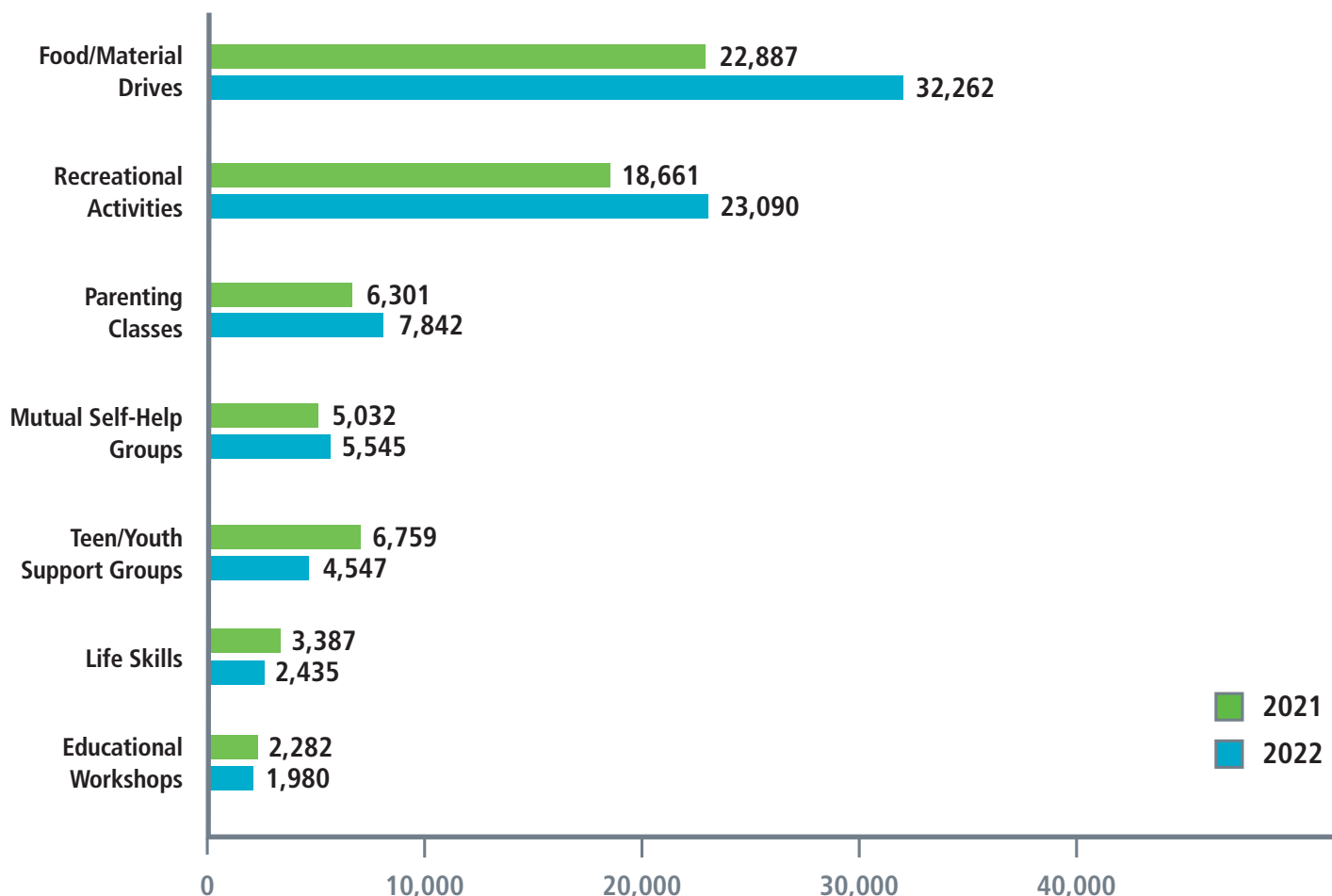
Individualized Services Provided by FRCs from 2021 to 2022



In addition to individualized services, the FRCs offer several classes, groups, and events for the families and communities they serve.

In 2022, as the COVID-19 public health emergency wanes and the network continues to expand, there was a considerable increase in participation in food and material drives and recreational activities (even as the number of activities offered stayed the same) from attendance levels in 2021. Attendance in evidence-based parenting classes also increased in 2022 from the levels observed in 2021.

Attendance at FRC Classes, Groups and Events, 2021 to 2022



Evidence-Based Parenting Classes

The most attended evidence-based parenting classes provided by FRCs in 2022 included:

- Parenting Journey I and II
- Nurturing Families and Nurturing Fathers
- Active Parenting and Active Parenting of Teens
- Parenting in America



Serving Families with Children Requiring Assistance (CRA)

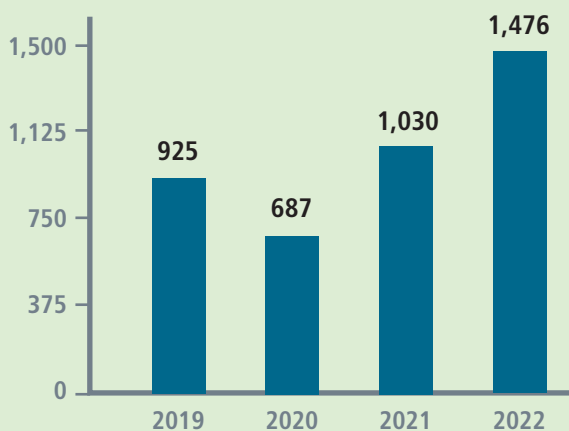
With courts and schools operating remotely during much of 2020, FRCs saw a substantial drop-off in the number of CRA referred to the centers.

As courts began to re-open and schools returned to in-person instruction, the FRCs strengthened and rebuilt their relationships with courts and schools to identify and serve families with CRA and children “at-risk” of becoming CRA.



FRCs served 1,476 CRA or CRA-related cases in 2022. About 20% of all children aged 6 to 17 served by the FRCs in 2022 were CRA or at-risk of becoming CRA.

Number of CRA or CRA-related Cases



DCF and the ASO have encouraged FRCs to develop approaches to intervene early to assist these at-risk families. In many instances, the work of the FRCs has helped to divert children and families from the formal CRA process.

It Takes a Village: the Great Barrington FRC Works to Support Kids at Home and School

In this community, it is rare to see a CRA in court as the schools feel it can sever the relationship with the parents and caregivers. By collaborating with the FRC, the schools find they can get families' support and develop a better relationship with the family.

After developing relationships with counselors at local schools, the Great Barrington FRC educational liaison connects with them at least biweekly to check in on kids that may be at risk of CRA. The FRC clinician also meets with the kids and parents or caregivers to assess anxiety, depression, and other factors that contribute to truancy.

By helping families understand that “it takes a village,” the FRC then develops a plan that can include engagement with a child and their interests, visits with the clinician, an appointment and conversation with their physician, or consult on their 504 or IEP. It also offers parent support groups or participation in our Parenting Journey classes and Nurturing Fathers classes.

Fall River FRC Works on CRA Prevention

The Fall River FRC has a collaborative relationship with Fall River Public Schools (FRPS), with Guidance Counselors, School Adjustment Counselors, and Family Support Specialists working together with a focus on prevention. The Fall River FRC is also part of the FRPS truancy intervention plan and the truancy officers encourage families to work with the FRC and make referrals when students are beginning to struggle with attendance. The Clerk Magistrate holds weekly meetings at his hearing office with families and truancy officers in an integrated multidisciplinary team meeting. When possible, representatives from Fall River FRC attend hearings at the court as another engagement opportunity with families. Additionally, the FRC holds weekly brainstorming meetings with the juvenile probation team, court clinic, DCF, and FRPS truancy school to court liaison to identify resources together.

FRC Spotlights and Successes

Innovative Approaches to Serving Families in 2022



Innovations in Housing Support

Worcester FRC Housing Clinic

In late fall, the FRC saw an increase in referrals for housing-related needs in the Worcester community. As available rentals decreased, there was an increase in average rents, accounting for the large number of referrals seen. The FRC swiftly sprang into action and connected with community partners to brainstorm the best way to unite and assist families. With a common goal, the partner began holding weekly one-hour housing clinic sessions. The goal of the housing clinics is to provide a one-stop shop. The FRC hosts the clinics and provides onsite support and the partners provide fuel and housing assistance. The housing clinic calendar was booked through the winter, the FRC hopes to expand the clinic when staffing challenges are addressed.

New Bedford FRC Helps Raise Awareness of Housing Challenges Facing Spanish-speaking Families

In collaboration with their Homeless Providers Network Alliance Racial Equity Committee and a local church providing Spanish language services, the New Bedford FRC facilitated a Spanish-speaking focus group around the challenges of homelessness and housing stability. The focus group was held at the church so that participants could feel comfortable. There were 10 participants who spoke about the challenges of organizations not having language capacity to support them and not being able to access services in a timely manner.

Acknowledging the Contributions of our Youth

Everett FRC Recognizes the Impact Our Youth Can Make

The Everett FRC nominated some of their younger volunteers for the *New England Patriots Difference Maker Award*, and one of the teenagers was selected as a recipient. This individual began volunteering at the Everett FRC during the pandemic; she donated blankets she had knitted while at home during the pandemic. She has continued to take on additional volunteer opportunities with the FRC since then, including dressing as Olaf at a holiday party.

As part of this recognition, the Kraft family, the New England Patriots Foundation, and Gillette made a \$5,000 donation to support the FRC. The volunteer and her father received tickets to a Patriots game and attended a brunch where they were honored for their commitment, service, and dedication.



FRCs Respond to the Needs of the Communities They Serve

In 2022, communities across the Commonwealth were experiencing an increase in migrant populations and families seeking asylum. The FRCs have played a critical role in providing services to these families, including immigration and citizenship support.



Springfield FRC Welcomes a New Citizen

A mother completed her citizenship classes and shared that she recently became a citizen of the United States. She was very thankful to the FRC for helping her and empowering her to meet her needs.

Lending a Helping Hand to Refugees, From One FRC to Another

In September, the Martha's Vineyard FRC was able to assist and support refugees from Venezuela during their arrival to Massachusetts. They provided initial shelter and the basic supports the families needed, including food, clothing, and medical attention. The FRC also worked with the Cape Cod FRC to support the families once they were sheltered at the Joint Base Cape Cod. Thank you so much to the Martha's Vineyard and Cape Cod FRCs for providing this crucial support!

Fitchburg and Plymouth FRCs Provide Basic Support to Immigrant Families

The Fitchburg FRC was able to provide new infant/toddler car seats to a group of families from Afghanistan. They also assisted new refugee families from Haiti in connecting to Department of Housing and Community Development for housing stabilization. The FRC staff joined forces to assist homeless individuals in having a warm safe temporary shelter during inclement weather days.

For the month of October, the Plymouth FRC assisted more than 100 Haitian refugees with diapers, wipes, baby formula, period, and hygiene products.

Support to FRCs

Ongoing Training of FRC Staff

Current training efforts focus on ensuring that FRC staff have a strong base of knowledge and skills to provide services to families. This includes the new Orientation and Foundational Training Series, facilitator trainings for Evidence-Based Parenting Education Programs, and additional supplemental trainings to allow staff to address the challenges faced by FRC families.

There were 82 individual trainings offered to FRC staff in 2022.

- All trainings were conducted virtually except for one in-person training on the evidence-based parenting program, "Parenting in America."



The total number of trainings offered included:

- 36 **Orientation and Foundational** trainings
- 25 **Evidence Based Parenting Education Program (EBP) facilitator** trainings
- 21 **skill-building** trainings

Staff attend multiple trainings each year.

- There were more than 900 instances of attendance at staff trainings in 2022

126 FRC staff have graduated since launching the series in Spring 2021.

- 39 FRC staff graduated in 2022

Website Updates

Several updates to the frma.org website were made in 2022:



- A new "Join Our Team" section has been added to share employment opportunities at the FRCs.
- A video on the website shares examples of how the FRCs and their staff stepped up to help families during the pandemic, including building collaborations with other community partners and creating many fun, inventive ways to support and engage with their families.



Workplan Trainings and Technical Assistance



To support FRCs in accomplishing their goals and effectively serving the families in their communities, DCF and the ASO prepared and implemented a series of workplan trainings and technical assistance sessions for FRC leadership and staff.

- Conducted six workshops with the FRC leadership to review the workplan format and answer questions
- Implemented weekly office hours for seven weeks to provide technical assistance and support
- Offered individual meetings to all sites to assist in the development of their individualized workplan



Summary

While the COVID-19 public health emergency began to subside in 2022, the Massachusetts Family Resource Centers (FRCs) remained steadfast in their continued support of families and communities across the Commonwealth. As courts began to re-open and schools returned to in-person instruction, the FRCs strengthened and rebuilt their relationships with courts and schools to identify and serve families with children requiring assistance (CRA) and children “at-risk” of becoming CRA.

The number of new families served has continued to increase each year and more families returned to the FRCs in 2022 than in prior years. Communities across the Commonwealth were also experiencing an increase in migrant populations and families seeking asylum. The FRCs have played a critical role in providing services to these families, including immigration and citizenship support.

These factors demonstrate how the FRCs remain a critical community resource. Such demand has resulted in expansion efforts with at least five new FRCs scheduled to begin operations in 2023.

To support FRCs in accomplishing their goals and effectively serving the families in their communities, DCF and the Administrative Services Organization at the UMass Chan Medical School continue to provide training and technical support opportunities to FRC staff.

Recommended Citation:

Swan, H., Pratt, C., Henry, A. D., Tedesco, R., & Kamins, K. (2023, March). Massachusetts Family Resource Center 2022 Program Evaluation Report. Shrewsbury MA: ForHealth Consulting at the UMass Chan Medical School.

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