

FRYSC Quick Start Guide for New Coordinators



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I. Introduction

Welcome to FRYSC!

Congratulations! You have just been hired as the coordinator of a Family Resource Center (FRC), a Youth Services Center (YSC), or a combination FRYSC. Your Regional Program Manager will be visiting you soon, and you will most likely attend the next New Coordinators' Orientation session (offered Fall and Spring). Until that happens, this guide will help you get started in your new role working with students, families, schools and the community!

FRYSC Coordinator's Job Description

Ask your school district for a copy of the FRYSC Coordinator's job description and review it thoroughly. Be sure to request a meeting with your principal(s) to clarify your role and review their expectations for the center. You may want to ask your principal if they have time to sit with you and review the [Principal's Training Module](#) online. It is located on the FRYSC webpage and will provide one EILA training credit for your principal. (It is a requirement that all principals complete this training, so they may have already done so.) You may also want to consider reviewing this training module with your Advisory Council as part of their orientation to help them understand FRYSC and your role as coordinator.

Your job duties will vary from day to day. At times you'll be in your center and at other times you'll be in the school building or out in the community. You may be planning and implementing programs, making referrals, addressing individual student needs, meeting individually with parents, participating in meetings with your principal and other school staff, preparing for FRYSC Advisory Council meetings, attending local community meetings, doing home visits, and attending required regional or state meetings and trainings. These are just a few of the day to day activities for FRYSC Coordinators.

New Coordinator Orientation

Every new FRYSC Coordinator is required to attend a three day New Coordinator Orientation (NCO). The orientation will include an overview of the history of FRYSC as well as the mission and vision. You'll spend time learning about each of the mandated FRYSC Components and ways in which to address them. Sessions are provided on community engagement, school partnerships, and home visit safety. You'll receive information about working with your FRYSC Advisory Council as well as record keeping, budgets, Infinite Campus and FRYSC Counts!. Your Regional Program Manager will be sure you get registration information as soon as it becomes available.

Note: You will attend supplemental new coordinator training approximately six months following NCO.

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FRYSC Regional Program Manager

The FRYSC Program is administered by the Kentucky Cabinet for Families and Children. Each of the eleven (11) FRYSC Regions in Kentucky has a Regional Program Manager.

Within the CHFS, the Division of Family Resources and Youth Services Centers governs the day-to-day functions of the program and provides administrative oversight. In addition to the central office staff, twelve (12) Regional Program Managers are stationed around the state to provide technical assistance to school districts. Your Regional Program Manager will be in touch with you soon after you are hired to arrange a center visit to review FRYSC basics and answer any questions you may have. They'll also make sure that you receive all the information you'll need to register for New Coordinator Orientation and pair you with experienced coordinators who will provide mentoring opportunities. Your RPM is listed on the website under [Regional Information](#). You will quickly become familiar with your Regional Program Manager because (s)he:

Serves as a consultant to local school district personnel regarding fiscal and contractual accountability;

Reviews and approves Continuation Program Plans and non-competitive applications;

Processes amendments to the approved Continuation Program Plan (this includes changes to action components, budgets, advisory council, center operations, etc.);

Approves single purchases that exceed \$500.00, individual purchase orders or subcontracts exceeding \$1,000.00;

Visits centers to provide individual technical assistance; and

Organizes regional meetings of coordinators for information sharing, professional development and identification of issues that need resolution.

Facilitates FRYSC District Contact Meetings.

FRYSC District Contact

Each school district has a FRYSC District Contact who is responsible for district oversight of the FRYSC Program. They will provide you with information regarding local district policies and day to day activities such as the district process for time and travel, making purchases, etc.

Center Space

This may be a new center, and the space may range from a suite of furnished rooms to a bare office that you are expected to furnish yourself. Talk to your Advisory Council,

principal, and FRYSC District Contact regarding plans for furnishing the center and any needs you may have. Prior to relocating a Center, coordinators are required to obtain approval from the Regional Program Manager. You may refer to the [KY School Facilities Planning Manual](#) regarding requirements for space for FRYSCs. This manual is located on the KY Department of Education's website.

II. Organizing and Managing the Center

Center Funding

FRYSC funding allocations are calculated based on a formula using the number of students on free lunch in the schools served by a center and an annual per student amount.

Your center's budget provides you with a spending plan for the school and fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). Spending needs often change throughout the year, so know that you can amend the current budget with prior approval from your advisory council, district contact and Regional Program Manager. This process will be explained to you in detail in New Coordinators Orientation and/or during visits by your RPM.

FRYSC Tools to Review

1. The FRYSC Website

<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dfrcvcs/dfrysc/Pages/default.aspx>

The FRYSC website contains an overview of the Division of FRYSC as well as regional information, training updates, important announcements, sample forms and downloads, and other pertinent information. It is important to check the website on a regular basis.

The tools outlined below provide guidelines and tips for operating the center. Each of these documents should be on file at your center either in hard copy or on the **FRYSC Counts!** data system (see below). If not, be sure to ask the FRYSC District Contact for a copy.

2. FRYSC Administrators' Guidebook

Become familiar with the [FRYSC Administrators' Guidebook](#). It contains information about the required FRYSC Action Components, Needs Assessments, Budgets, and other important information. The most current version is available on the Division of FRYSC Website under the Forms and Downloads tab.

3. The Contract

The district should provide the center coordinator with a copy of the [Contract](#), which is the contract between the school district and the KY Cabinet for Health and Family Services. (This is not the same as the personnel employment contract that the coordinator has with the district.) The contract outlines the responsibilities of the Cabinet and district

and describes the purpose of the center and duties of the coordinator. Coordinators should carefully review this document and maintain a copy on file at the center.

4. The FRYSC Counts! System

All paperwork previously submitted as hard copies (unless directed otherwise) is now submitted on FRYSC Counts! electronically. Each *center* has a center information page plus an individual center page that will house certain center documents. It is imperative that center information page is updated with *your* contact information as soon as possible, as this is the database used by the Division of FRYSC to contact coordinators.

Each *district* has a district information page on FRYSC Counts! and a page that will house certain district documents. The District Contact has access to the district FRYSC Counts! pages as well as each center's FRYSC Counts! pages.

The [FRYSC Counts! Users' Guide](#) is located on the FRYSC website under Forms and Downloads. An introduction to the FRYSC Counts! system will be given during New Coordinator Orientation.

5. Your center's Continuation Program Plan

The [Continuation Program Plan](#) is your center's guide to programming, activities and referrals throughout the year. It was written by the prior coordinator based on parent, student and school staff needs assessment results with the input of the Advisory Council. It has been approved by the Advisory Council, the FRYSC District Contact in your district and the Regional Program Manager with the Division of Family Resource and Youth Services Centers within the KY Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

The Continuation Program Plan is located on your center's Document View/Upload page on FRYSC Counts! If you cannot access FRYSC Counts! right away, or cannot find a hard copy in your center, be sure to ask your District Contact for a copy.

Read the **FRYSC Continuation Program Plan** for your Center, which includes:

- ***Operating Budget and Budget Narrative***

Your center's approved budget and budget narrative is considered part of the Continuation Program Plan. The original budget and any approved amendments are located on the FRYSC Counts! system under the "Budget" tab. Budgets are updated annually based on a funding formula regarding the number of students eligible for free school meals.

- ***Center Operations Form***

The Center Operations form includes information on your center space and hours of operation, the center staffing pattern, and the center's involvement in the school's School Improvement Plan.

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- ***Action Components***

Action Components are the heart of the Continuation Program Plan, as they state what the center will do and when. They are written every two years based on FRYSC needs assessment results and local school data. You will find your Action Components FRYSC Counts! under the “Action Components” tab.

Action Components include:

Mandated FRYSC Action Components	
Family Resource Centers	Youth Services Centers
<i>Full time child care for 2 and 3 year olds</i>	<i>Career Exploration and Development</i>
<i>After School Child Care for children age 4-12</i>	<i>Summer and Part-time Job Development for High School Students</i>
<i>Families in Training</i>	<i>Substance Abuse Education and Counseling</i>
<i>Family Literacy</i>	<i>Family Crisis and Mental Health Counseling</i>
<i>Health Services or Referrals to Health Services</i>	<i>Health and Social Services Referrals</i>

- ***Job Descriptions for Coordinator and Center Staff***
- ***Advisory Council Membership List***
- ***School District Assurances and Certification***
- ***SBDM Council/Principal Policy Agreement***
- ***Advisory Council Assurances and Certification***

6. New Coordinator Mentoring Checklist

Your Regional Program Manager will provide the [Mentoring Checklist](#) to you and review it with you during their first center visit. A copy can also be found in your NCO binder. Your Regional Program Manager will recommend experienced coordinators/mentors for you to visit to discuss various topics as outlined in the Mentoring Checklist and the coordinator will initial areas they’ve covered with you. The completed checklist should be returned to your Regional Program Manager six months after the date you receive it.

Center Organization and Management, continued:

Recordkeeping Documents

An overview of recordkeeping will be provided at New Coordinator Orientation. A [Recordkeeping PowerPoint](#) is located on the FRYSC website under Forms and Downloads. Documents include:

- ✓ Budget and Budget Narrative
- ✓ Fiscal Records (Purchase Orders, Budget Balance Spreadsheet)
- ✓ MUNIS Reports
- ✓ Daily Logs
- ✓ Referral Forms
- ✓ Infinite Campus Records (see below)

Infinite Campus Records

Infinite Campus is the data collection system used by all school districts. FRYSCs are required to utilize this system for recordkeeping and data collection. School districts provide basic training on using Infinite Campus. You may also check with your Regional Program Manager to see if there are regional training opportunities for Infinite Campus and FRYSC.

Please refer to the [FRYSC Infinite Campus Manual](#) on the FRYSC website. It is located on the Forms and Downloads page on the right under “Frequently Requested Forms”.

Training Requirements for FRYSC Coordinators

FRYSC Coordinators are required to receive training that is approved by the FRYSC Training Council. All coordinators are required to receive 24 hours of approved training every year (June 1 – May 31). As a *new* coordinator, you can expect to experience the following your first year:

- New Coordinator Orientation
- Approved statewide conference
- Mentoring: Completion of the FRYSC Mentoring Checklist
- Other relevant training opportunities provided by our office, your district or other organizations

In addition to these trainings, Center Coordinators must complete all trainings required by their school district such as confidentiality, blood borne pathogens, etc.

Coordinators must annually electronically complete a Professional Development Tracking Form, located on FRYSC Counts!. Coordinators must maintain the certificates

they receive from trainings onsite in their center. These may be reviewed by a visiting RPM and serve as documentation for FRYSC future monitoring visits.

For more details on training requirements and documentation, please refer to the [Training Section](#) on the FRYSC Website.

FRYSC Advisory Council

The main role of the Advisory Council is to provide the center coordinator with input, oversight and recommendations with regard to the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of center services, programs and activities. As the FRYSC program is built upon the foundation of collaboration, the Advisory Council is a major vehicle for linking home, school and community. The Advisory Council keeps the FRYSC community-centered!

Please see the [Advisory Council Toolkit](#) for a more detailed overview of the role of the Advisory Council and helpful tools.

Link to Online Advisory Council Training Module

After you have registered to attend NCO, you will receive a letter from the Division of FRYSC with a link to the online Advisory Council Training Module. New coordinators are required to complete this online training prior to NCO, and should bring their training printout to NCO where they will receive their training certificate. The link is: <http://traintest.chfs.ky.gov/FRYSC/html/index.html>

Advisory Council Membership

Review the Advisory Council Membership list (located on your center's FRYSC Counts! document page) to see who is on the existing council and determine if there are other representatives you may want to add to the council. Refer to the FRYSC School Administrators' Guidebook for detailed information on the required composition of FRYSC advisory council and an overview of their role and responsibilities.

Center coordinators and staff are the employees of the local school district, thus are not considered voting members of the advisory council.

If a FRYSC serves more than one school, it should include school and parent representatives from all schools served, as well as students if it is a YSC or combined FRYSC.

Orientation for Advisory Council Members

It is important to provide orientation to your advisory council regarding the purpose of FRYSC, as well as their role as advisory council members. You may want to share the online Advisory Council Module with them, and/or the online training module for

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principals. There is also an [Advisory Council PowerPoint](#) presentation that is posted on the FRYSC website that you may want to use for orientation.

The prior coordinator should have left a notebook or folder with current advisory council bylaws, and past advisory council meeting Minutes that will be helpful for you to review. Reviewing sign in sheets will help you see who regularly attends meetings.

You will need to schedule a meeting soon to introduce yourself to the council and address any center business needed at this time. Reviewing the Agenda and Minutes of the last meeting, along with the AC Bylaws, will help you prepare. Remember advisory council meetings must be scheduled no less than 5 times a year, every other month August – May. Advisory council meetings in June and July are optional.

Local FRYSC advisory councils are made up of parents, school staff, community representatives, and in the case of Youth Services Centers, at least two students. Advisory councils provide advice, design and delivery of programs and referrals that will be offered to students and parents. Please see the [Advisory Council Assurances Page](#) regarding advisory council duties.

Center Staffing and Supervision

Does the continuation plan staffing pattern really fit the needs you may find after learning the lay of the land, the principal's priorities, and the advisory council's input? You may have no funds with which to hire center staff. If you do, there are a variety of positions that may best address the needs of the center, such as an Assistant Coordinator, Family Advocate, Outreach Worker, etc. Learn your district's personnel and hiring procedures—they differ from place to place. The center coordinator supervises and evaluates any center staff.

FRYSCs with more than one school are considered a district program. The FRYSC coordinator will report to and be evaluated by the superintendent or his/her designee [note: the designee may be a principal(s)]. If a FRYSC serves a single school, the center is considered a part of the school's total program. The coordinator will report to and be evaluated by the school's principal.

Additional Staffing Tips

Please note that FRYSC funds for nursing staff (including health aides, etc.) are being phased out. As nursing staff retire or leave, these positions will not continue to be funded through FRYSC.

Know the difference between certified and classified personnel.

In school systems it is very difficult to dismiss a staff person, so you must take adequate time to consider a job candidate before hiring. Check references, talk to the person about

his/her service philosophy and about how they feel about working with children and families in close proximity. The individual must actively contribute to the welcoming atmosphere at your center, and so they must share many qualities identified for coordinators.

When supervising staff, you will want to aim for “less is more” rather than micro-managing. Hire good people and let them work, but set aside time to talk with them about the team, the goals, and anything they need to bring up.

III. Integrating into the School

The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) was a comprehensive effort to improve the academic achievement of Kentucky’s students that came about through judicial and legislative action. In 1989, the Supreme Court of Kentucky ruled that the education system was unconstitutional. Consequently, the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 was passed resulting in sweeping changes to the entire educational system.

FRYSCs were created as a result of KERA. Centers were set up to remove personal and environmental non-cognitive barriers to learning by coordinating services available through existing community agencies and providing additional services when necessary.

Administrative Overview

FRYSC represents a collaborative effort of many different agencies and individuals. The Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) administers the FRYSC program, with financial collaboration from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). The Division of FRYSC is headquartered in the CHFS building in Frankfort. Division staff includes a Director, Assistant Director, Administrative Assistant, Training Facilitator, Data Manager, Project Planner, two FRYSC AmeriCorps Coordinators, a Budget/Contracts Administrator and 12 Regional Program Managers.

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is the legal entity that contracts with local school districts for funding-and operation of individual FRYSCs.

Linking to the Education System

As part of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), it is critical that you establish close partnerships with your school(s) to develop a mutual understanding of the FRYSC mission.

Working with the School Principal(s)

It is imperative that coordinators cultivate a positive working relationship with the principal(s) of the school(s) served by the center. Communicate regularly with the

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principal to keep them informed of center requirements, goals and activities. Inquire about being part of the school's administrative team. Talk with the principal about being involved in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) which is a requirement of the FRYSC contract.

Attend staff meetings when possible and email every month or so to keep staff up to date on center activities. Send written reports to the SBDM and attend at least one meeting per year.

Keep the principal informed! You may want to send a weekly calendar of your priorities, meetings, and activities. Remind the principal of what you are doing, what you plan to do, and how important they are to your success.

Consider sending a monthly summary of activities completed so that they're aware of all of the work that is being done!

Ask the principal for a brief meeting to review priorities for the year and how they coordinate with the identified activities and strategies in the Continuation Program Plan.

Tips from Veteran Coordinators on Integrating into the School:

Learn the lay of the land. Know the politics of your school system. Who does what? Who is really in charge? Who writes the checks? Get to know their personalities and how to deal with each of them.

Learn who is in charge of programs that can help you make your center a success. For example, Title I and FRYSC have overlapping missions as Title I has funding, and has parent involvement requirements also. Other programs and components that you should coordinate with in order to increase the educational impact of everyone involved include Extended School Services (ESS), Primary Program, Preschool Program, GED, Special Education, 21st Century Learning Centers, School Based Decision-Making (SBDM), the PTO or PTA, and local Board of Education.

Attend PTO or PTA, School Board, Faculty and SBDM meetings, etc. Be present for school open houses.

At every opportunity:

Present to an audience,

Send announcements of programs,

Put items in the school newsletter and on the website; and

Make reports to your school board and faculty at their regularly scheduled meetings.

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Be visible. Be seen at functions, activities, school-based meetings and in hallways. Drop by classes and greet children and staff as they arrive at school.

Pursue positive public relations through newsletters, bulletin boards and social media. Remind staff, parents and students of center programs and activities.

Make sure you follow-up with referrals, which may include reporting back to a referral source (while maintaining confidentiality).

Keep the faculty informed about community resources that may help their students – for example, Big Brothers/Big Sisters or Medicaid and KCHIP. Educators may not have extensive knowledge about community resources. Coordinators who come from the educational community have reported that they were shocked to learn what was available in the community. In this area, coordinators who come from human service backgrounds have an advantage.

Show immediate results with students and families. Don't wait for 2 – 3 days after the request to begin action. Give some feedback to the person who made the referral as quickly as possible to let them know where things stand. If you can't help them achieve the original request, let them know what you can help with.

What kinds of things can you do directly for the principal and teachers?

Get the message across to school staff; “Let me deal with the non-cognitive factors so you can deal with the cognitive factors.”

Work with teachers to find out what they're addressing in the classroom and if you can be of assistance in finding guest speakers and activities.

Principals have identified some specific assistance they have received from coordinators, including: the initiation of specific programs that are helpful to the school community; visits to the homes of students, which provide a complete family picture; providing an environment for families and students to use that doesn't have the same stigma that the principal or counselor's office does; providing a clearinghouse of resources for families and students that was unavailable before; giving parents the experience of the school as a caring place; improving relationships and partnerships with the community; and help in writing grants.

How do you get teachers involved in your program?

Consider having an Open House throughout the day, provide food and let teachers come in a few at a time during their planning period to meet you and let teachers know what you can offer and how they can make referrals. An Open House is also good time to have teachers sit down and fill out a teacher survey to identify student needs.

Offer to assist teachers with speakers on topics such as health issues or teen parenting; activities related to the school-to-work program; or school aged childcare programs.

Another way to get them involved is to ask them personally for help with a short, specific project or activity. Let them know, “I really need your help with this project.”

When planning activities, include teachers to ensure that the Kentucky Core Academic Standards (formerly the Program of Studies) are supported and enhanced.

How do you connect what you are doing with the school’s goal and mission?

Identify children who are not doing well and target them for special attention – e.g. a mentoring program in collaboration with the local community college. If your school has a 21st Century Community Learning Center, make an effort to create a strong in-school partnership with them.

Activities such as family reading nights and book exchanges clearly communicate the connection to education.

Broker in-house counseling and health programs, which will increase the capacity of children to learn.

Identify and get involved with families whose children have poor attendance or behavior problems. Be careful not to cross the line and assume the activities of the attendance clerk or the Director of Pupil Personnel.

Become a member of a committee that will create your schools’ School Improvement Plan. (This is a requirement of the contract.)

Additional Tips

Talk with the school secretary about methods used for in-school accounts, purchase requests, check-in and check-out procedures, etc. Coordinators are responsible for initiating purchases made with FRYSC funds.

It’s important to get to know the faculty and school staff. Attend a faculty meeting and request time on the agenda to explain the FRYSC Action Components and how staff can make referrals to the center.

Keep teachers (your internal customers) pleased by doing things such as thank you notes when they help with activities. Oftentimes school staff may not understand the flexibility of your job and your ability to leave the building. Let people know where you are! Your job as a coordinator will often require you to be out of the building on a home visit, at a community meeting, a regional meeting, conference, and other events. Let an assistant,

the school secretary or principal know where you are and when you plan to return. This helps to ensure not only accountability but your safety as well.

Meet with the guidance counselor and principal to develop an understanding of the difference between the roles of the school counselor and the center coordinator and present this to the entire faculty. Providing a clear understanding of role responsibilities will help avoid inappropriate referrals and job assignments.

Realize that coordinators don't have the same duties as teachers.

One way to set parameters is to "think components". If what you are doing doesn't fit in one of the FRYSC components, ask yourself why are you doing it, or ask your principal what component you should list the activity under. This will help you to stay focused. It may also lead you to develop optional components.

IV. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Knowledge of Community Resources

You may be replacing a coordinator in a center who may or may not be around to orient you. If you came from an educational background, you may need to learn a great deal about the community and its resources and gaps. If you come into this position with a background in education, you may have the advantage of being familiar with the vast array of education jargon and acronyms. You may need to familiarize yourself with the community and its resources to address some of the family and environmental issues that you know have been affecting your students' learning.

Reach out to the community

Become familiar with your regional Community Collaboration for Children group. This program is an initiative of the KY Cabinet for Health and Family Services and focuses on child abuse and neglect prevention. These regional groups meet monthly. Ask your Regional Program Manager for contact information so that you can become involved. In addition to providing a forum for information sharing with other community agencies, there are small grants that FRYSCs may apply for regarding child abuse and neglect prevention.

Know your community and its capacity. It's important that coordinators reach out to the community to identify resources and not try to meet all needs by themselves. This will consume your time and budget and take away from prevention services and programs. Engaging community agencies and businesses is much more efficient in the long run.

Also, it is important not to concentrate most of your time and resources providing basic needs such as food and clothing. The community can meet these if there is plan for

organizing such services and you can make referrals for these needs. You will come to depend on the community for in-kind contributions such as basic needs.

Establish relationships within the community

Many coordinators have a background in community service and already have relationships and contacts with local agencies. If this is not the case, it is very important to establish these relationships. Find people who know the community and ask for their help. Your Advisory Council members can be very helpful in this area. When you need to recruit new members, try to choose members who can help gain access to community resources needed as identified in your Needs Assessments.

Once you have a sense of the agencies in the community, make it a point to visit each one so that they and you can put names with faces. Agency personnel will appreciate the extra effort you have put forth to meet them and to learn more about the operations of their organization. Pointers in this process include:

- ✓ Do your homework. Get background information on the agencies and their mission and begin to think of ways you can best work with them for a “win-win” result.
- ✓ Be clear about what the FRYSC is all about. Provide a brochure that includes your mission.
- ✓ Go at a time that is most convenient for the agency contact person. This may mean an early morning or lunch time visit.
- ✓ Be on a learning mission. Ask how you can help them serve their clients. Recognize their expertise rather than telling them how you will serve their clients.
- ✓ Offer something; don’t just ask for things. FRYSC can provide parent training programs, do home visits, participate in cooperative grant writing, purchase materials or programs that can be used jointly, develop a community resource directory, provide resource materials on parenting or health issues, etc.
- ✓ Leave a needs assessment survey if you can.
- ✓ Become involved in local collaborative efforts such as an Interagency Task Force, or Early Childhood Council.

Factors to consider when working within the community

Sometime it is difficult to gain access to an agency. Caseloads can often be demanding so be persistent. It is important to make those contacts.

Never share negative information about agencies with other community personnel. If an agency is not doing its job, advocate for change through the chain of command.

Communicate to agencies that you will be making referrals to them and helping them to meet their clients' needs. You do not want to be in the direct service business. After you are established, agencies will come to you for help with clients and program development.

Involve local businesses

Contact businesses and industries in your area for inclusion in programs such as mentoring or volunteering.

You can also approach businesses for in-kind contributions. While one-time contributions are welcome, it is generally inefficient to keep approaching businesses and merchants for one-shot contributions. Instead, the following strategy is suggested: Identify a need, such as a service, fundraiser, etc.

Develop and maximize resources in the community

The secret to developing a resource is ASK, ASK, AND ASK AGAIN. We often miss resources if we fail to ask for them. If you are in a resource-poor community, you can expect to spend a lot of time for the first few years pushing to develop community resources. This is a critical long-term strategy.

Because you are not competing for clients and not trying to provide direct services, you may be in the best position to be a "community quarterback". Take the initiative to be the catalyst for improving the capacity of the community to respond to needs.

In response to needs you identify, or requests you receive from families, try to use existing organizations such as the Salvation Army, ecumenical ministries, community action agencies, etc. If resources to meet the need do not exist, try to involve community businesses and/or agencies with similar missions in planning and implementing a solution.

For example, organize a regularly scheduled roundtable that includes lunch and time for socialization, a presentation of interest to the community and a brief and well-planned specific pitch for an identified need. Make sure the meeting concludes within the scheduled time.

Another example is a collaborative summer program, which is set up in a local housing project. The program provides free lunches, arts, crafts and recreation activities. This is provided in cooperation with the housing authority and the city parks and recreation organization and also provides for the employment of community members to deliver the programs.

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Join with other FRYSCs in the area to provide joint programs. Pooled resources of the centers and the community will reach larger numbers and reduce duplication of effort in the community, which is more efficient.

Make lists of existing and potential resources for each need including:

- ✓ Physical resources – equipment, spaces in buildings and land available for program use. Examples include meeting rooms, churches and auditoriums used at no charge for parenting classes, GED classes, or other programs.
- ✓ Service resources – including social, health, recreational, cultural and educational. Check with your community college, as they have an obligation to provide educational services to the community.
- ✓ Human resources – including community leaders and volunteers who are willing to donate their time to your center. Keep constant watch for such persons.
- ✓ Fiscal resources – such as grants, in-kind contributions and donations. This may be the most difficult resource to obtain. However, because FRYSCs are a non-categorical agency, you may be in the best position to lead coalitions to obtain funding.
- ✓ Schedule organized fundraisers for specific needs at specific times of the year.

V. Involving and Empowering Families

There are a variety of strategies for involving and empowering families. More important than strategies is a clear philosophy about involvement and empowerment.

If you really believe in these principles and are always looking for ways to implement them, you will come up with many creative strategies on your own. The first step is to become familiar with the evidence for the positive impact of family empowerment and involvement in the educational process. All of the evidence cannot be reviewed here, but the essence of what research and experience has shown so far is included below.

For family involvement, research has shown clear connections between family involvement in the school and their children's schoolwork and the child's school performance. The most accurate predictor of a student's success in school is based on the ability of their family to:

Create a home that encourages and supports learning,

Express high, but realistic expectations for their children's academic achievements and careers, and

Become involved in their children's education at school and in the community.

This is true of later as well as earlier grades. At age 14, home and family factors remain twice as powerful in determining school performance as school based influences.

The essence of empowerment is captured in the oft quoted saying that if you give someone a fish, you feed them for a day, but if you teach them to fish, you feed them for lifetime. Empowerment means helping and encouraging families to discover and learn to use their internal (competencies, assertiveness, determination, etc) and external (natural supports, such as family and friends and community resources, ranging from clergy to agencies) resources.

Initially, it takes longer to work this way with families than to give them things and do things for them, but ultimately that independence saves you precious time and resources and provides families with more long term solutions.

We all like to be appreciated, but for each interaction with a family, ask yourself, "Do I want this to be a success for me or for the family?" If you remain their first option for assistance over time, you are not empowering.

Research has shown that working with families this way, in addition to being the only way that you can have impact with your limited resources, is associated with greater customer satisfaction, enhanced sense of personal control, and elevated feelings of self-worth. Research also shows a sense of self efficacy (the belief that you can solve a given problem) is a strong predictor of success.

What are some ways of promoting family involvement in the center and in the school?

For Parents:

Involvement with the center is often a good place to start to overcome families' hesitancy to get involved with the school.

Make sure that people feel comfortable in the center, not just coming there for specific issues. Center support staff is very important for creating a friendly, inviting atmosphere. The center environment tends to be less formal than a typical classroom or office. Staff needs to be comfortable with a healthy flow of students and parents in and out of the center.

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Turn as much as possible over to parents rather than doing it yourself. This could include routine center activities (production and distribution of a newsletter, stocking supplies, sorting and organizing donations for a clothes closet) as well as getting families involved in the distribution of resources or fundraising activities. Ask parents to review materials that you are thinking of using.

Take advantage of or initiate athletic or other student events/performances, or displays of students' work as a means of bringing parents into the school. Take advantage of the parents' presence to do a quick needs assessment.

Schedule events that parents and students can participate in together such as a FRYSC sponsored educational field trip linked to a FRYSC Component.

Touch base with parents and let them know about the center when parents are in the school on other business.

Solicit ideas from the FRYSC Advisory Council about how to improve parent involvement.

Reach out to parents with home visits or meetings in other locations such as housing complexes and churches.

When parents serve as volunteers, convey the same expectations that they will get the job done as you would with paid staff.

Many centers have a policy that encourages or requires some assistance from parents and students in return for services provided.

For Students:

Again, make sure that your center is a student friendly place and that center staff are comfortable working around students.

Go to classrooms, student clubs, organizations, wherever there is a captive audience, and tell them about the center. Find out about their needs. Solicit student assistance with center functions. This may include acting as volunteers, performing routine center functions, reviewing proposed program materials, etc.

Build programs into existing classes instead of exclusively using pull out programs. For example, many teachers will appreciate help with their health curriculum or career development.

For Youth Services Centers, especially those serving high school students, you may want to form a student advisory council that meets regularly, has specific functions, and to which you report, just like your regular advisory council.

Form a council of representatives of student organizations and promote coordination among them, just as you try to promote coordination among community agencies.

Reach out to ALL students. Do not let your center be known as a place for troubled students.

How do you work with families in an empowering way?

Always look for and address the strengths in a family and student when working with them and when discussing them with school personnel.

Use a “fading” approach. You may need to offer direct assistance to the family to meet their needs initially, e.g., making calls to set up appointments with community agencies, but gradually turn over the responsibility to the family as they learn about resources and how to access them.

Ask for assistance from the family in return for center assistance.

The acronym PRIDE captures some of the elements of engaging families:

Prepared

Coordinators need to be prepared with a basic understanding of family dynamics. You need to remember the incredible power of the family, as well as its resiliency. If you fail to factor these in, you will experience frustration as interventions and resources fail to achieve the desired results.

Risk Taker

At risk families need coordinators who are risk takers. It is important to remember that change is risky. We are often asking families to go against generational patterns and peer norms that may have encouraged dependency. As risky as it seems, families often need only one person to join in the risk with them, primarily with an attitude of understanding of the anxiety and pressure that a family experiences during change.

Inclusive

We cannot function as family helpers while we segregate ourselves from the community and its resources. This is addressed in the Community Engagement section of this document.

Determined

You must be a problem solver who understands how to be problem focused, not people focused. That is, in the process of family support, you will encounter a variety of personalities (both within families as well as with service providers) that can distract you from your goal. You must resist the temptation to attack the person and discipline yourself to address the problem. This is a good skill to model to families as they negotiate resources for themselves in the school and community.

Empowered

Empowerment of a family remains your overarching goal.