

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS:

A CRITICAL RESOURCE FOR WISCONSIN FAMILIES



What is a Family Resource Center?

Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are welcoming hubs of services and opportunities designed to strengthen families and to reflect and be responsive to the specific needs, cultures, and interests of the communities and populations they serve. They are community-based or school-based organizations serving families with children of all ages, often with a particular focus on prenatal to age 5, and providing activities and programs at no or low cost.

Research has demonstrated that FRCs strengthen families, enhance child outcomes, and contribute to child abuse and neglect prevention. Studies have shown:

- Participating in programs offered through an FRC has benefits for all families.
- FRC services are especially beneficial to families and children facing risk factors for child abuse and neglect.
- **The return on investment in FRCs generates savings of \$3.65 per dollar invested in the child welfare system alone**, not accounting for additional savings that also accrue in the education, health care, and justice systems.¹



FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
Services available to ALL families

- Parenting support (e.g. workshops, support groups, coaching)
- Evidence-based programming (e.g. Triple P: Positive Parenting Program)
- Developmental screening & referral
- Parent leadership activities (e.g. Parent Café, parent advisory councils)
- Play groups and family fun events
- Access to resources (e.g. diaper banks, carseat programs, referrals to other services)
- Navigation to other services and supports in the community

DEMONSTRATED OUTCOMES

- ✓ Family strengths: Improved parenting skills, parent leadership, family functioning
- ✓ Child well-being: Improved child development, school readiness
- ✓ Prevention: Reduced family stress, child abuse and neglect

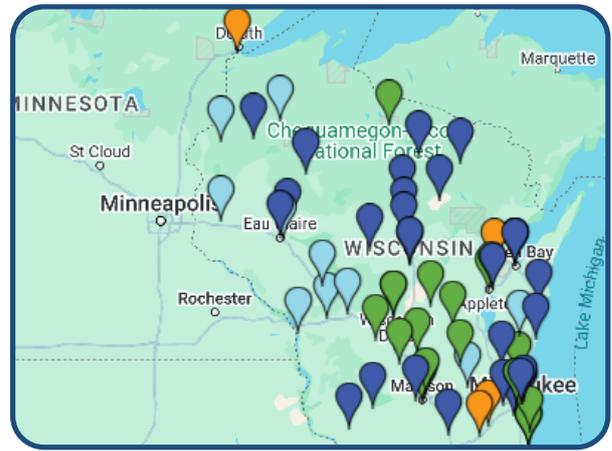
OTHER COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

- Basic needs (e.g. food, shelter, clothing, diapers, formula)
- Early care and education, Head Start, and preschool
- Early intervention (Birth to Three)
- Homeless services, DV shelter
- Human/social services, child welfare
- Job center, vocational training, higher education
- Mental health or substance abuse treatment
- WIC and other economic supports

¹Bayless, S., Richmond, M., Pecora, P., & Ariza, A. (2025). "Returns on Investment of a Family Resource Center to the Child Welfare System: Estimates from a Quasi-Experimental Study from the Western United States." Family Justice Journal, 4 (Winter 2025), 10-16. <https://www.thefamilyjusticegroup.org/family-justice-journal>

WISCONSIN FRCs

- » As of April 2025, there are 45 FRCs in Wisconsin.
- » A strong FRC network, called Thriving Wisconsin, includes 39 of the 45 Wisconsin FRCs.
- » The Thriving Wisconsin network oversees a Family Resource Center of Quality accreditation process.
- » To date, 10 FRCs in the state have been accredited, indicating that they are utilizing best practices in the family support field, including dedicated professional development and an evaluation process.
- » 23 community-based agencies offer limited FRC services but are not yet full FRCs.



Map Legend:

- Thriving Wisconsin FRC Network
- Accredited FRC of Quality
- Community-Based Agency offering some service(s) to all families
- Community-Based Agency

ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY

An FRC is a **one-stop-shop for families** to find and connect to services and supports they need to thrive. Families get access to a wide range of programming and resources on site, as well as referrals and connections to other public agencies and community partners.

In most communities, the FRC is the only organization focusing on **strengthening the whole family** as a means to promote better outcomes for children, youth, and their parents. FRCs are distinct from other service providers in the following ways:

Family Resource Centers:

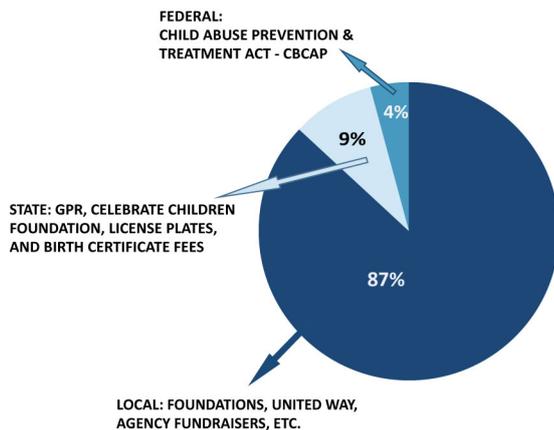
Are for all families, regardless of level of risk
Serve whole family unit, focus on parents/caregivers
Focus on building family strengths and preventing challenges
Provide ongoing services
Tailor their offerings to the needs of each community, informed by parent leaders

Other Community-Based Programs:

Are for families with identified risk factors or already experiencing challenges
Serve individual children, youth, or adults
Focus on addressing risk factors and/or recovering from challenges
Provide one-time or limited-duration services
Follow program models that determine the approach to families

FRC FUNDING

Currently, there is no dedicated federal or state base funding for FRCs. FRCs rely heavily on local funding, which varies by community and can be unreliable due to variability in funder priorities. In 2024, FRCs reported their funding sources as follows:



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND PARTNERSHIPS

All FRCs are 501c3 non-profit organizations. Some are stand-alone organizations, while others are one program within a larger organization.

FRCs are a critical partner and referral source for other service providers in a communities, including human services programs.

