Community Framework for Creating a Family Resource Center (FRC)

S.C. Family Support Network | October 2026

Children's Trust
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Introduction

Children's Trust of South Carolina is a statewide organization focused on preventing child abuse and neglect. Its mission is to strengthen families, organizations and communities to prevent child abuse and neglect, with the vision of creating a South Carolina where every child thrives.

In its commitment to strengthening families and communities through effective, sustainable approaches, Children's Trust serves as the state lead for South Carolina's Family Support Network (Family Support Network), which includes family resource centers (FRCs) and strategic partners. FRCs operate in diverse contexts, take different forms and reflect and respond to the needs and interests of the population and/or community they serve. FRCs may provide childcare, literacy classes, parenting classes, job skills training and prevention programming.

The family support network provides a community of practice where FRCs collaborate, share best practices and focus on quality improvements for families. Network members enhance their work with families by applying the National Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support (the Standards), which were formally adopted and revised by the National Family Support Network. Children's Trust is a member of the National Family Support Network.

The South Carolina Family Support Network builds the capacity of family-serving organizations and promotes quality standards. Its vision is a South Carolina where every caregiver, parent and child can access high-quality family support services. The network provides a community of practice that enables collaborative work, access to shared information and additional resources, capacity building for effective service delivery, and overall better support for families across the state. Children's Trust is committed to strengthening families and communities through the statewide network. Planned areas of focus include providing the Standards training to family-serving organizations, workforce development opportunities, technical assistance and implementation support.

Children's Trust created this community framework as a supportive tool for all communities that aspire to create a family-centered, strengths-based hub where services are accessible to all community members. The goal of this framework is to be adaptable, helping communities design and sustain a community-, school-, or faith-based FRC. It aims to help individuals and collaborative groups think through *how to approach the work*, particularly during the planning and development stages. This work cannot be accomplished in silos.

Children's Trust believes in the power of community. When organizations partner and collaborate, the community of practice serving South Carolina families grows stronger. Children's Trust supports FRCs from their earliest stages through establishment and helps connect them with others in the field. Through these partnerships, Children's Trust works to expand and strengthen statewide support for all families in South Carolina.

Framework Advisory Committee

Children's Trust extends its sincere gratitude to the partners listed below for their time, expertise, and thoughtful feedback on the *Community Framework for Creating a Family Resource Center.* We appreciate their collaboration, dedication and attention to detail throughout this project, and we thank them for their partnership and support for the Family Support Network's vision.

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- Lauren Tinman, formerly of Epworth Children's Home, Columbia

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Family Resource Center Criteria

Under the Supporting America's Children and Families Act[1], "The term 'family resource center' means a community- or school-based hub of support services for families that uses a multi-generational, strengths-based, and family-centered approach; reflects and is responsive to community needs and interests; provides support at no or low cost to participants; and builds communities of peer support for families, including kinship families, to develop social connections that reduce isolation and stress."

FRCs are grounded in strong collaboration among staff, families and the community. They connect families in the community with information, direct services and parenting education, and provide strengths-based, client-focused case management. FRCs may also be known as *family centers, family success centers, family support centers, parent education centers,* or *community resource centers*; they all encompass work to strengthen families and serve communities. FRCs operate in three main settings: community-, school-, or faith-based.

As part of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), the national Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) grant supports efforts to promote family support and prevent child maltreatment through community-based activities and programs. Children's Trust uses CBCAP funds to support prevention services and the FRC network initiative.

As the state lead, Children's Trust convenes the South Carolina Family Support Network. The Network connects FRCs through a shared community of practice, with a collective focus on continuous quality improvement for families by implementing the Standards framework. The Standards are organized into four areas of practice and integrate the Principles of Family Support Practice with the Strengthening Families Framework and its five Protective Factors, providing a practical foundation for quality support practice. The four areas of practice include family centeredness, family strengthening, community strengthening and evaluation. The Standards serve as the foundation of the Network, establishing a shared approach to quality practice that supports and strengthens families. Family Support Network Members are expected to become certified and

[1] Supporting America's Children and Families Act, H.R.9076, 118th Cong. (2025)

maintain certification in the Standards and implement within their work, helping to promote consistent, high-quality family support practices across the Network. More information about FRCs in South Carolina and the South Carolina Family Support Network is available on the Children's Trust website.

FRC Model Fidelity Checklist

The South Carolina Family Support Network adopted the National Family Support Network's (NFSN) Family Resource Center (FRC) Model Fidelity Checklist to help organizations evaluate their alignment with the FRC model's core components. This self-assessment tool focuses on the "*what"* of FRC implementation.

Once the FRC model is implemented, organizations are encouraged to use the Standards to evaluate and strengthen the "*how"* of service and program delivery, supporting continuous quality improvement and effective family support practices.

Please visit NFSN.org to access "The FRC Model: A Unified Framework for High-Quality, Community-Based Family Support."

The FRC Model Generates Impact

Research demonstrates the measurable impact of FRCs on child and family well-being, including social and economic returns and reduced child welfare involvement. Communities with family resource centers experience 26% fewer child abuse and neglect investigations than comparable communities without them (Wulczyn & Lery, 2018).[2] In Teller County, Colorado, substantiated child maltreatment cases fell by 63% between 2015 and 2018 following the implementation of family resource centers (OMNI Institute, 2021).[3] One study found a $4.93 social return for every $1 invested in family resource centers (Community Services Analysis LLC, 2014).[4]

Programs and activities are typically offered at no or low cost and are tailored to the unique needs, cultures and priorities of the communities they serve. This structure ensures families receive the support they need early and locally. By providing early assistance and focusing on prevention, FRCs help build strong, stable family relationships and create safer, healthier communities.

[2] Wulczyn, F., & Lery, B. (2018). Do family support centers reduce maltreatment investigations? Evidence from Allegheny County. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, Center for State Child Welfare Data.

[3] OMNI Institute. (2021). Return on Investment of a Family Resource Center to the Child Welfare System: Community Partnership Family Resource Center, Teller County, CO.

[4] Community Services Analysis LLC. (2014). Social Return on Investment Study.

Nine Principles of Family Support

Developed by Family Support America, formerly the Family Resource Coalition of America (1996)[5], the Nine Principles of Family Support provide a framework for professionals and organizations to partner with families in meaningful ways. These principles emphasize respect, collaboration and empowerment, ensuring that families are treated as capable decision-makers and active participants in the support process. National Family Support Network (NFSN) subsequently adapted the Nine Principles of Family Support. The nine principles, adapted by NFSN and integrated in the Standards, are listed below.

1. Staff and families work together in relationships based on respect.
2. Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members – adults, youth and children.
3. Families are resources for their own members, to other families, to programs and to communities.
4. Programs affirm and strengthen families' culture and enhance their ability to function in society.
5. Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to community-building process.
6. Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive and accountable to the families they serve.
7. Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.
8. Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
9. Principles of family support are modeled across all program activities, including planning, governance and administration.

The Protective Factors Framework

According to the Center for the Study of Social Policy, "Strengthening Families™ is a research-informed approach that increases family strengths, enhances child development and reduces the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs and communities in building five key protective factors."[6]

The Protective Factors Framework is the model or strategy organizations, programs and professionals use to guide their work with families. It focuses on building family strengths rather than merely responding to problems. Within that framework, the Five Protective Factors identify the key areas that reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect and promote healthy family functioning.

1. **Parental resilience:** Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma
2. **Social connections:** Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental and spiritual support
3. **Knowledge of parenting and child development:** Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, and social and emotional development

[5] Adapted from Family Resource Coalition of America, *Guidelines for Family Support Practice*

[6] Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2018). About Strengthening Families™ and the Protective Factors Framework.

4. **Concrete support in times of need:** Access to support and services that address a family's needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges
5. **Social and emotional competence of children:** Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions, and establish and maintain relationships

Foundational Considerations for Developing an FRC

FRCs are designed to reflect the strengths, needs, and priorities of the local communities and families they serve. Although each FRC may differ by county context and capacity, Children's Trust provides recommended criteria, potential service areas, and guiding principles to support consistent, high-quality implementation. Children's Trust adopted the National Family Support Network's[7] definition of a family resource center as the foundation for this framework, aligning with the Supporting America's Children and Families Act.

As **community-, faith-based or school-based hubs** that connect families with support, services and opportunities, FRCs are grounded in an approach that is:

1. **Multi-generational, strengths-based and family-centered** – supporting both children and adults while building on family strengths
2. **Responsive to community needs and interests** – shaped by the voices and priorities of the families they serve
3. **Accessible** – providing supports at **no or low cost** to ensure all families can participate
4. **Community-building** – fostering **peer support and social connections** that reduce isolation and stress for families

Criteria

1. Have a drop-in style space with at least a weekly drop-in time for families or, due to potential limited space, offer the ability for families to schedule a time to visit the center
2. Provides services and support to children and families in their communities
3. When necessary, offer services virtually
4. Provides services to a broad population
5. Contains two or more of the specific service elements listed below
6. Adheres to the guiding principles listed below

Service array

FRCs offer a range of services and supports tailored to the needs of the local community and its cultures. They use a multigenerational approach that supports the entire family. The most common services include:

- **Case management, referrals, and service navigation:** Providing or connecting families to services such as early intervention, workforce development, childcare and after-school programs, housing programs, and child, youth and family mental health programs.

[7] National Family Support Network. (2024). Family Support Program

- **Parenting education:** Evidence-based and research-informed programs, classes and one-time workshops
- **Support groups:** Specialized groups or programs for targeted populations or needs, such as postpartum parents, fathers, and parents of toddlers and children with disabilities.
- **Information sharing:** Pamphlets, online resources, and referral systems; how to access resources; a library of information on baby and child/adolescent development milestones, nutrition, breastfeeding, financial education, family well-being, etc.
- **Parent-child activities:** Storytimes, music-and-movement sessions, structured playgroups, home visitation programs and child development-focused activities.
- **Peer connection:** Community Cafés, informal opportunities for relationship-building and peer-to-peer learning.
- Delivering services and supports that increase protective factors, strengthen families, and help them meet identified needs, such as childcare, food assistance, and counseling. Examples include providing direct services or making referrals to programs such as Early Head Start or home visiting programs.
- Medical care, referrals to and coordination of services (e.g., mobile health clinics, health screenings)
- Literacy classes
- Developmental screenings
- Teen pregnancy services, including prevention
- Provides crisis services and supports to stabilize a family, either directly or through a formal community partner.
- Concrete supports to meet basic needs, including:
    - Food and nutrition
    - Items for infants, such as diapers, wipes, formula, and baby food
    - Internet access for families
    - Phones and past due phone bills for families
    - Emergency funds for housing, including rent and mortgage payments, household repairs, and extermination
    - Childcare and after-school programming assistance for parents returning to work or searching for jobs
    - Car seats and other safety items for children
    - School supplies and clothing for children, pregnant women, and work clothing

Transportation assistance (bus or gas-only gift cards). To ensure accountability and streamline financial oversight, it is strongly recommended that all gift cards be tracked in a management system.

Guiding principles

Although the specific services provided by an FRC may vary by center capacity and community needs, FRCs typically follow these guiding principles:

- Community-based and flexible to meet the needs of those living there
- The organization has a focus on creating an environment that is welcoming and respectful, where everyone has a sense of belonging

- Family-centered collaboration and families/community guide services and service provision
- Family-focused
- Provides services using both indirect and direct models
- Strengths-based, using a non-bureaucratic, non-judgmental approach

Considerations for Developing an FRC

For anyone interested in opening an FRC, following the order outlined below is not required, but all sections should be considered.

Step 1: Identify Needs in the Community through Community Engagement

- **Conduct surveys and focus groups**: Talk to families and local organizations to understand which services are needed and identify the community's current or traditional strengths. The following questions should be considered when conducting a community assessment:
    - Where in the community can parents and caregivers go for support?
    - Do supports include primary prevention services? Who offers or provides those services, and what is the reach (service area)?
    - Is support available/accessible for all parents and caregivers?
    - Are there groups of families with less access to support? (Single-parent families, extended families, multigenerational households, foster families, adoptive families, informal or formal kinship care families, unmarried couple/partner households, etc.)
    - Where are services needed? Gather perspectives from parents, family-serving organizations, and the community.
    - When and how do families prefer to access services (day, evening, weekends, in person, virtually)?
- **Analyze existing resources:** Identify gaps in current support systems and services. Consider using The Community Opportunity Map by Casey Family Programs.

Step 2: Define the Mission and Goals

This step is continuous and should be integrated into every step to ensure the mission remains central to decision-making.

- **Mission statement:** Clearly articulate the purpose of the FRC and the community it will serve.
- **Goals:** Set specific, measurable objectives aligned with your mission.

Step 3: Develop a Plan

- **Services offered:** FRCs offer a range of services and supports tailored to the needs of the local community and its cultures. They use a multigenerational approach that supports the entire family. Decide which services to provide, such as counseling, parenting education, childcare or financial assistance. Review the service array section for a list of commonly offered services.

- **Funding plan:** Explore funding options such as grants, donations, sponsorships and fundraising events.
- **Budget:** Create a detailed budget covering staffing, facilities, program costs and other expenses.

Step 4: Build a Team

- **Staffing: Recruit qualified staff or volunteers passionate about supporting families.** Consider hiring professionals such as social workers, counselors or educators.
    - Develop plans for employee recruitment, hiring, onboarding and professional development. Include the Standards as a professional development opportunity for staff to support a shared understanding of quality practice across Family Strengthening and Family Support programs. Staff who complete the Standards Certification Training receive certification valid for two years and should participate in recertification training to maintain it. Determine how many staff are needed to provide quality services. If considering childcare services, review state childcare licensing requirements.
- **Advisory board: Form a board of advisors or a steering committee with community leaders, parents and experts who can guide the center's development.**
    - Define the role of the community advisory board, including the group's term and goal.
    - Revisit and refine the mission statement and goals to ensure they serve as a clear north star for the organization. Present the proposed service model, implementation plan, and overall approach to the board, outlining how the work will be executed and how it aligns with the mission and objectives.

Step 5: Secure a Location

- **Find a space:** Look for a location that is accessible to the community and meets your needs. It could be rented office space, a community center, a partnership with a faith community, or a shared space with another organization. Other considerations include:
    - Is the location close to public transportation?
    - Does the location have space that ensures recipients' confidentiality of recipients?
    - Does the space allow for programmatic expansion?
    - Does the space allow families to gather?
    - After establishment, a mobile FRC could be considered part of an expansion plan. For more information, consult NFSN's Mobile Family Resource Centers (FRCs) National Learning Brief.
- **Principles of service delivery:**
    - Strengths-based and trauma-informed practice
    - Voluntary, non-stigmatizing access
    - One-stop and warm handoffs
    - Drop-in, warm, welcoming
    - Cultural and linguistic responsiveness
    - Physical and emotional safety
    - Facility setup: Ensure the space is welcoming and equipped with the necessary resources and materials.

- **Legal requirements:** Ensure you meet all legal and regulatory requirements, including non-profit status, liability insurance, policy and protocol development and safety regulations. This step is a continuous process.

Step 6: Develop Programs and Services

Programs and services should be responsive and tailored to the local community's specific needs. Insights from the community assessment should directly inform the design of the service menu, while the team's capacity to deliver effectively is also considered.

- **Program design:** Create programs and services aligned with your community needs assessment and mission. Develop workshop curricula, participate in training on relevant prevention models, create resource materials, and plan outreach activities.
    - Determine how many staff members it will take to provide quality services and implement programs.
    - What funding is available to support programming? What additional funding opportunities may there be, including federal, state, private funds, and foundations?
    - What process/plan is in place for continuous quality improvement (CQI-quality measures)?
    - How to evaluate service delivery and plan for the material costs associated with the ongoing data management system?
- **Partnerships**: FRCs are hubs, not silos. Collaborate with local organizations, other FRCs, schools, businesses, and parents to enhance your offerings and expand your reach. To build strong formal and informal partnerships, consider the following:
    - Building and maintaining strong, collaborative relationships with community partners, including parents, to achieve shared goals. Partners may include schools, health providers, parent leaders, nonprofits, faith groups and more. Children's Trust defines a parent as a person who has a biological, adoptive, legal or supportive relationship with a child and is responsible for the child's care and well-being.
    - Shared referral and communication practices
    - Memorandums of Understanding and data-sharing considerations
    - Avoiding duplication of services
    - Building trust across systems
    - Engaging with and formally joining the South Carolina Family Support Network

Step 7: Market Your Center

- **Outreach:** Use flyers, social media, community events and local media to inform families about your services. Consider claiming your program on scParents.org. (Contact Children's Trust for additional information.)
- **Engagement:** Build relationships with community leaders and organizations to spread the word and create a network of support.

Step 8: Launch

- **Soft launch:** Begin with a pilot phase to test programs and gather feedback.
- **Grand opening:** Plan a launch event to introduce the center to the community. Consider holding a ribbon-cutting event and inviting families, community leaders and news media to celebrate the opening.

Step 9: Sustainability and Growth

- **Funding and grants**: Continuously pursue funding opportunities and develop strategies for long-term financial sustainability.
- **Community involvement**: Keep the community engaged through feedback mechanisms and adapt to changing needs.

Step 10: Compliance, Evaluation and Regulations

- **Legal requirements**: Ensure you comply with all legal and regulatory requirements, including nonprofit status, liability insurance and safety regulations.
- **Continuous evaluation**: Regularly assess your programs and services to ensure they meet community needs and adjust, as necessary.
- **Record keeping**: Maintain accurate records of finances, services rendered, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Ensure records are stored securely to protect confidential information.

Launch Loop for Establishing a Family Resource Center

While not all steps are required to establish an FRC, this continuum outlines a process for getting started. This model can also support continuous quality improvement.



Resources

Parent Engagement

- NFSN Parent Leadership Development (Webinars)
- South Carolina Parent Advisory Council

Workforce Development

- Children's Trust Trainings and Events
    - Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening Virtual Training
    - Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect
    - Early Childhood
    - Middle Childhood
    - Promoting Protective Factors
    - Adverse Childhood Experience
    - NFSN Webinar Library

Sources

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