

DDS Greater Boston Area Office Children's Services

Family Support Services

DDS Children's Coordinators may make referrals for DDS Family Support based on availability and assessment of need.

DDS Family Support Centers

Family Support Centers across the state provide a local presence and act as a hub for offering a wide range of general family support services and activities to families of children and adults who are eligible for DDS services. There is at least one Family Support Center in each DDS Area, with some Areas having more than one. Broad outreach is the expectation for the centers and provide services to families from diverse cultural, ethnic and linguistic communities in the geographic area they are serving, which may involve creating partnerships with community organizations and other resources in order to provide culturally responsive services. Center staff are expected to be experts in generic resources and services in their respective areas and work with families to maximize natural supports. Centers are expected to encourage active family involvement and consultation to identify interests and needs in developing activities and service options.

Each Family Support Center provides the following array of services and supports for families:

INFORMATION & REFERRAL

- Assistance to families in identifying resources and service options available in their local communities, as well as learning about other financial and/or state services for which families may be eligible (MassHealth, etc.), and provide guidance on how to navigate the service system. This can occur through phone contacts, 1:1 meeting at a variety of locations.
- Use of technology to provide a variety of ways to share information with families.
- A "library" of resources, such as helpful websites, fact sheets, community resources, information technology resource options, books, videos, etc.

FAMILY TRAININGS

Sponsor educational events and trainings on relevant topics of interest to families of both children and adults which are open to all families for participation.

PARENT NETWORKING

Promote parent networking and mentoring, such as parent support groups, parent connections (1:1 matching), and sibling support opportunities, as well as parental involvement in organizing or leading activities, etc.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS & RESOURCES

Foster community affiliations and connections to explore and maximize the use of natural and generic resources and other potential sources of funding.

SERVICE NAVIGATION

Comprehensive and individualized information, guidance, and support to families to address their needs, connect them to potential resources, assist with problem-solving, and help them navigate the service system. The level of involvement with each family will vary based on the needs of the individual and family. There are two types of Service Navigation:

- **Short-Term Service Navigation** The design is for families who will benefit from more individualized assistance for a period of time to obtain information, to receive assistance in accessing other services, or to receive guidance in addressing some specific problems. Development of an action plan with families occurs to focus on specific objectives.
- **Extended Service Navigation** The design is to provide ongoing support and coordination of services. Each Center has the capacity to provide Extended Service Navigation to an identified number of individuals/families. The Area Office must make referrals for this service, but the family, Family Support Center staff, or the Area Office can initiate the request. This service can also assist families to help plan and organize in-home supports they need to support their family member at home. Development of a Family Support Plan is an aid to remain focused on goals.

ADMINISTRATION OF FLEXIBLE FUNDING

The Department may provide individual, flexible funding allocations to families based on the priority of need of the family and available budget resources. This funding must be used for allowable supports, services, or goods as defined in the Department's Addendum to the Family Support Guidelines and Procedures, January 2011.