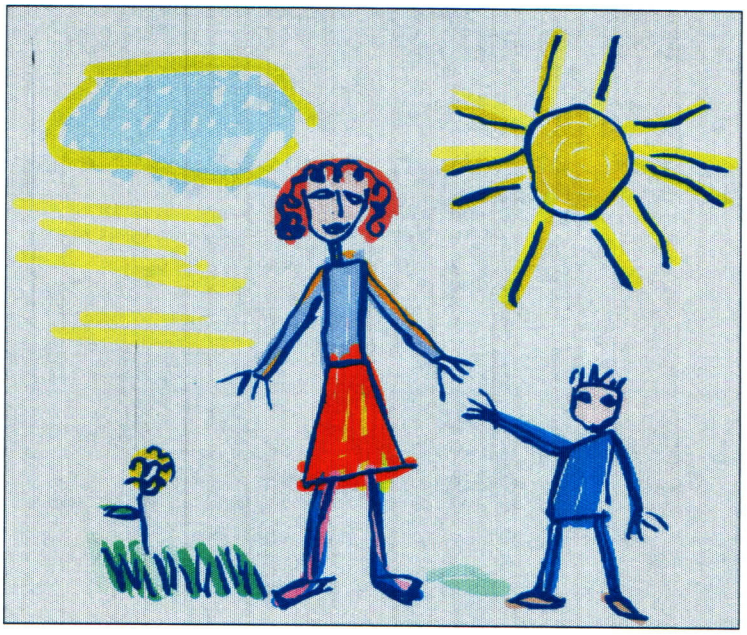
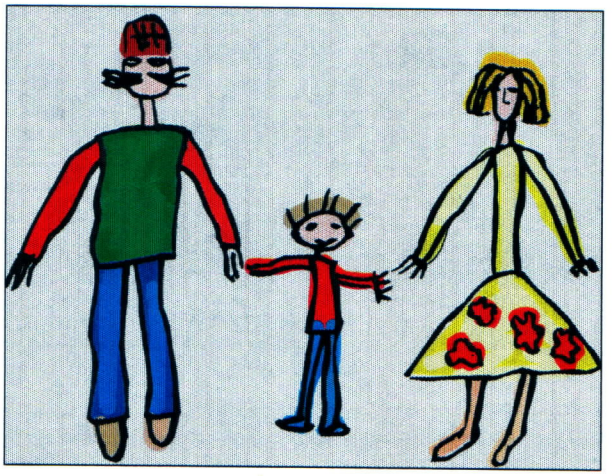


A Look at Tennessee's Family Resource Centers

John G. Morgan
Comptroller of the Treasury
Office of Education Accountability
April 2002



STATE OF TENNESSEE

John G. Morgan
Comptroller

COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY

STATE CAPITOL
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-0264
PHONE (615) 741-2501

April 10, 2002

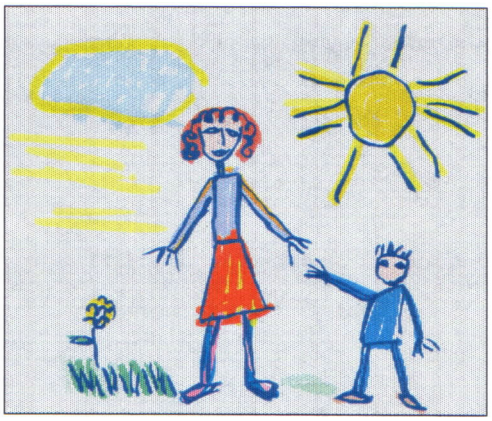
The Honorable John S. Wilder
Speaker of the Senate
The Honorable Jimmy Naifeh
Speaker of the House of Representatives
and
Members of the General Assembly
State Capitol
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Ladies and Gentleman:

Transmitted herewith is a special study prepared by the Office of Education Accountability in response to Public Chapter 343 of 2001 concerning the staffing, funding, location, programming, and effectiveness of Tennessee's family resource centers. The report provides information that may be useful to policymakers in considering ways to improve Tennessee's assistance to K-12 students and their families.

Sincerely,

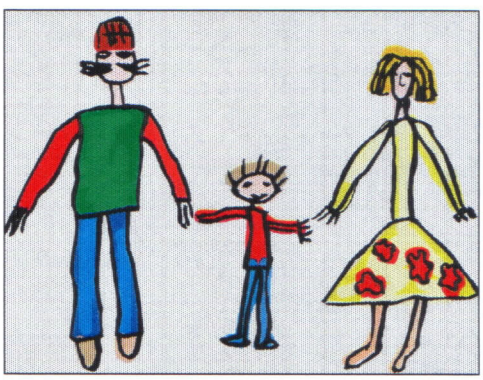
John G. Morgan
Comptroller of the Treasury



A Look at Tennessee's Family Resource Centers

Margaret Rose
Senior Legislative Research Analyst
and
Bonnie S. Adamson
Associate Legislative Research Analyst

Ethel R. Detch, Director
Katie Cour, Assistant Director
Office of Education Accountability
505 Deaderick St., Suite 1700
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0268
615/401-7911
www.comptroller.state.tn.us/orea/reports



John G. Morgan
Comptroller of the Treasury

April 2002

Executive Summary

Many of Tennessee's children come to school unprepared to learn. A child living with poverty, hunger, homelessness, abuse, neglect, loss, mental illness, substance abuse, or family conflict is unlikely to succeed academically and socially in school. Schools are not equipped to address these issues. Additionally, the social service delivery system may be fragmented, confusing, or inaccessible to those most needing help. The family resource center (FRC) program, administered by the Department of Education, was created in 1992 to help local education agencies coordinate state and community services to better meet the needs of families with children.

As of December 2001, the Department of Education provided grant funds to 102 family resource centers in 77 school systems in 63 counties. These centers vary immensely across the state and provide a wide array of services to their communities. For example, some FRC directors solely provide counseling to students and/or their families; some attend only to basic needs such as health care, food, shelter, and clothing; others are educational organizations such as preschools, alternative schools, or adult education providers; still others provide a full array of services. Most, but not all, centers provide some sort of parenting classes.

The Education Reform Act of 2001 (ERA), which was not funded, included provisions to expand the number of family resource centers in Tennessee schools and add to their responsibilities. Because some legislators were concerned about expanding the program without more information about existing centers, the General Assembly amended the ERA to require the Comptroller of the Treasury to examine the staffing, funding, location, programming, and effectiveness of Tennessee's family resource centers.

This report concludes:

Most of Tennessee's family resource centers meet many community needs, but could benefit from a better defined role, greater local direction, adequate resources, and more state monitoring. Families often experience difficulties that affect their children's school attendance and performance. Some highly regarded family resource centers in Tennessee offer programs that fill service gaps and facilitate access to services; however, there is no statewide uniformity in program structure. The General Assembly created family resource centers to help address local needs, but now may need to better define the FRCs' role in supporting school success. (See pages 8-9.)

Although most family resource centers engage in activities that support school-age children and their families, a few LEAs have used FRC resources in questionable ways. At least one center is an alternative school. The director serves as the principal and has little interaction with the families of its students. In another center located in an alternative school, the director spends the majority of his time performing the duties that assistant principals normally provide, such as handling discipline problems. Another FRC director is a guidance counselor for an elementary school two days a week, rather than serving as full-time director as required by statute. One LEA used the 2001 FRC grant for

a new employee who functioned as the bookkeeper for a new preschool program opened by the school system.

In addition to having numerous other duties, the director of School–Based Support Services is the sole staff person in the Department of Education responsible for overseeing the FRC program. The department does not allocate funding in its budget for administrative costs or travel expenses necessary to provide guidance and technical assistance. Neither the statute that created FRCs nor departmental guidelines provide adequate structure and direction for center operations. The department's budget includes no funds to train FRC staff, leaving them without knowledge of best practices and implementation skills. (See pages 9-10.)

Tennessee has not defined minimum services that should be provided by each family resource center, but some other states have. No national standards exist for such programs and Tennessee's legislation and departmental guidelines give little direction. However, analysts determined that other states have developed programs based on one of two designs. In Tennessee, services provided by FRCs are determined locally, based on needs identified in each community. Family resource center programs in other states maintain overarching goals within which a community may identify its specific needs. Washington's program, for example, provides information and referral, and brokering of services. Other states such as Kentucky, Connecticut, and California offer a wide variety of direct services. Most Tennessee FRCs are a combination of the two. (See page 11.)

Most of Tennessee's family resource centers predominantly provide services directly rather than brokering services or referring clients to other appropriate agencies. *TCA* §49-2-115 establishes FRCs to coordinate state and community services and to be a hub for information sharing and resource facilitation. The Select Committee on Children and Youth (SCCY) originally intended FRCs to serve as an information and referral or brokering resource. In practice, however, all FRCs offer some services directly in addition to information and referral. (See pages 11-12.)

In some cases, FRCs address needs that should be, but are not, addressed by other agencies. The purpose of FRCs is not to duplicate services, but rather to coordinate services to help meet the needs of families with children. Analysts found little duplication although FRCs provide mostly direct services. However, FRCs often serve clientele who may not meet eligibility criteria for, or feel comfortable with, accessing the same service elsewhere. Interviewees in many communities reported that before the creation of the FRC, children and their families went without assistance because of the lack of other resources. In some cases, as the FRC staff attempt to address the unmet needs in their area, they must perform duties ideally fulfilled by specifically trained professionals. (See pages 12-13.)

The target population for services varies greatly from center to center according to the assistance offered. *TCA* §49-2-115 merely creates family resource centers to serve families with children and does not explicitly outline other eligibility criteria. Nor do departmental guidelines define the specific population to be served by family resource

centers. On the whole, family resource centers have not established criteria for assistance. Most centers report that they primarily focus on at- risk clients. However, researchers found that "at-risk" can have multiple meanings. (See pages 13-14.)

Most family resource centers employ too few staff to assist the number of families in their service area. According to the 1994 Annual Report on Children's Initiatives from the SCCY, drafters of the original legislation intended that each FRC serve the families of only one school and provide only information and referral or service brokering. FRCs that adopted this model need only one staff person. However, the September 2001 OEA survey of Tennessee FRCs revealed that 81 (83 percent) serve two or more schools; 27 of those report that they serve an entire school system. The Department of Education provides only $33,300 per year to each center, which may not be enough to support even the director's salary. Moreover, most LEAs' matching funds are in-kind and do not provide cash for additional staff. As a result, directors indicate that they are unable to attend to all the schools they serve and generally concentrate on the closest schools. (See pages 14-15.)

FRC staff qualifications vary greatly across the state. Some directors lack expertise to furnish the services they offer. Sixty-two grantees do not specify educational credentials for FRC directors and 70 do not specify any required experience. Additionally, at least five LEAs have hired directors who do not meet the center's own qualifications. Although drafters of FRC legislation left qualifications to the local advisory councils, they envisioned directors to be professional employees such as nurses, educators, or social workers. Dealing with sensitive issues associated with children and families in need and building collaborative relationships requires a certain degree of expertise, knowledge, and skill. Without personnel requirements, some LEAs have hired staff who appear under qualified. Limited funding and/or rural settings may contribute to the difficulty of finding and attracting persons with necessary experience and training. (See pages 15-16.)

Some family resource centers are not prepared to perform new pre-kindergarten tasks proposed in the Education Reform Act of 2002. Some family resource centers likely are not prepared to identify eligible children for pre-kindergarten, as proposed in 2002 legislation. Department officials expressed intent for FRCs to play a major role in identification of at-risk children eligible for pre-kindergarten, as did the Education Reform Act of 2001, which was not funded, and this year's SB3072/HB3136. Although the FRCs' proposed role has been changed from performing assessments to helping find eligible children, some centers do not appear equipped to handle these new responsibilities. Some FRC programs focus on other community needs, such as preventing teen pregnancy or increasing family literacy. Staff may need to have greater expertise in child development. (See pages 16-17.)

For the most part, FRC directors' salaries are commensurate with those of social service workers in Tennessee. Directors' salaries ranged from $15,920 to $51,311. Directors with high school diplomas averaged $21,316; those with associate degrees averaged $24,786; those with bachelor's degrees earned an average of $28,683; and those

with master's or advanced degrees averaged $34,330. A 2000 salary survey by the Tennessee Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers revealed an average salary of $25,000 - $25,999 for social workers with bachelor's degrees; $30,000 - $34,999 for those with master's degrees; and $35,000 - $39,999 for those with post-master's credentials. (See page 17.)

In most cases, the only operating revenue source for family resource centers is the state grant of $33,300. Most LEAs match state funds with in-kind contributions rather than cash supplements. As a general rule, the Tennessee state grant covers only the director's salary, leaving little, if any, funding for additional staff, supplies, or program materials. (See pages 17-18.)

Other states invest in individual centers at a higher level than Tennessee, but require greater accountability. The average budget of Tennessee centers is $56,587, including local matches. Centers in other states with similar programs receive an average of two to three times that amount in state funding. They also have additional revenue from local matches and other grant sources. FRC program administrators in other states advise that adequate budgets and staffing are key to successful outcomes. Other states measure the impact of their family resource programs to a greater extent than Tennessee. Kentucky, California, and Connecticut have included a statewide evaluation component in the structure of their family resource center programs. Failure to document the impact of family resource centers in Tennessee may lead lawmakers to question the value of the program and result in hesitancy to continue or increase funding. Additionally, FRCs themselves are unable to quantify the results of their efforts in a way that would allow them to adjust as needed. (See pages 18-19.)

Although the majority of FRCs are located in schools, it may be appropriate for some centers to be located in other settings. The original intent in creating family resource centers was to provide a setting in or near a school where families and teachers could seek information and referral assistance. However, researchers identified advantages and disadvantages to locating family resource centers in a school setting. Giving communities the flexibility to decide the location of their family resource center enhances their opportunities to realize their specific goals. (See page 19.)

Although Tennessee's FRC advisory councils seem to have fulfilled their initial start-up role, very few have continued to provide guidance and participation in subsequent years. State guidelines specify that the advisory committees will monitor and evaluate progress toward goal attainment, report to the local school board twice a year, and make specific recommendations for revising the FRC program. However, directors told researchers that in practice, very few advisory councils act in this capacity. Advisory councils generally do not meet frequently enough to serve as directing boards to FRCs; rather, the LEA performs this function. (See pages 20-21.)

The report recommends:

Legislative Recommendations

- The General Assembly may wish to amend *Tennessee Code Annotated* § 49-2-115 to specifically define the role and mission of family resource centers.
- The General Assembly may wish to consider not requiring family resource centers to assist in identifying at-risk children for participation in early childhood programs as required by the Education Reform Act of 2002, unless staff can receive additional training.

Administrative Recommendations

- The Department of Education should increase its support and oversight to family resource centers by increasing staff dedicated to program administration.
- The Department of Education should establish minimum education and experience standards for directors of FRCs that receive state grants.
- The Department should determine which FRCs qualify to identify at-risk pre-schoolers for participation in early childhood programs, and which ones will need additional training and resources.
- The Department of Education should establish a written policy regarding local match requirements.
- The Department of Education should require family resource centers to develop evaluation components that reflect impact outcomes based on measurable goals rather than allowing them to merely report process outcomes.
- Local advisory councils should take a more active role in directing FRCs in their communities.

See pages 22-23 for a full text of the recommendations.

The Department of Education's responses to the conclusions and recommendations as well as additional OEA comments are found in Appendix E.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Many of Tennessee's children come to school unprepared to learn. A child living with poverty, hunger, homelessness, abuse, neglect, loss, mental illness, substance abuse, or family conflict is unlikely to succeed academically and socially in school. Schools are not equipped to address these issues. Additionally, the social service delivery system may be fragmented, confusing, or inaccessible to those most needing help. The family resource center (FRC) program, administered by the Department of Education, was created in 1992 to help local education agencies coordinate state and community services to better meet the needs of families with children. (See Appendix A.) As of December 2001, the Department of Education provided grant funds to 102 family resource centers in 77 school systems in 63 counties. Since that time, grants from two centers that closed this year have been awarded to Perry County and Memphis, bringing the total number of centers to 104. (See Appendix B.)

The family resource center program, administered by the Department of Education, was created in 1992 to give local education agencies an opportunity to coordinate state and community services to help meet the needs of families with children. Public Chapter 343 of 2001 (the Education Reform Act) and the Governor's proposed budget for FY2001-02 included provisions to expand the number of family resource centers (FRCs) in Tennessee schools and add to their responsibilities.

The Education Reform Act (ERA), however, was not funded and, therefore, not implemented in FY2001-02. The ERA would have provided for the establishment of at least one family resource center in each county, but allowed two or more local education agencies (LEAs) to join together to establish a center. The act further added three new roles for centers to fulfill: (1) inform parents about the need for appropriate educational activities and experiences to develop readiness skills in early childhood, (2) assist in identifying educationally at-risk children for purposes of participation in early childhood education programs, and (3) help parents to be active partners in their children's education, pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. The budget proposed by Governor Sundquist included $5.5 million for 110 new family resource centers. This included monies for the 63 new centers needed to fulfill the one-per-county as well as funds for one center per 2,000 families eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch program.

Methodology

Because some legislators were concerned about expanding the program without having more information about existing centers, the General Assembly amended the ERA to require the Comptroller of the Treasury to evaluate the family resource center program. (See Appendix A.) The study sought to examine staffing, funding, location, programming, and the effectiveness of family resource centers.

This report's conclusions and recommendations are based on:

- Interviews with state officials, including legislators, Department of Education staff, and current and former staff of the Select Committee on Children and Youth;

- Surveys of all Family Resource Center directors;[1]
- Surveys of selected principals;[2]
- Interviews with selected Family Resource Center directors and local school officials during on-site visits;[3]
- Reviews of statutes, annual reports, audits, and Family Resource Center guidelines;
- Telephone interviews with officials responsible for Family Resource Centers in other states and review of related documents; and
- Internet search for documents related to Family Resource Centers.

Background

Family resource centers first appeared in the early 1990s in response to growing awareness that factors outside the school walls may hinder children's ability to succeed in school. Many of America's children, particularly those from low-income families, do not have their basic needs met, making it difficult for them to come to school ready to learn. Educators determine a child's level of developmental or educational risk by the number of risk factors present in that child's life. Risk factors affecting a child's ability to succeed in school may include poverty, living in a single family home, abuse, neglect, family conflict, loss of a parent through death or divorce, low parental education, lack of family support, and the presence of parental mental illness or drug abuse. Schools were not prepared to address poverty, neglect, abuse, and lack of overall parental involvement. Furthermore, the social services delivery system was fragmented, confusing, and hard to access especially for immigrants, the poor, and uneducated who often are most in need of help. Educators envisioned family resource centers as a bridge between the family and the school and social service providers.[4]

Office of Education Accountability (OEA) staff identified 19 states with programs designed to increase social service access for school children and families. However, only five states (California, Connecticut, Kentucky, Rhode Island, and Washington) operate programs, specifically school-based and state-funded, similar to Tennessee's.

Flexibility is key to meeting community needs, resulting in a wide array of center types and services. For example, Florida's Full-Service Schools focus on the needs of the families in schools serving primarily low-income communities. Georgia's and Oregon's initiatives are community-based without a formal link to any particular school. Still

---

[1] Office of Education Accountability (OEA) staff surveyed all family resource center directors in September 2001. (See Appendix C). Ninety-eight directors (96% percent) responded to the survey. Four centers' directors did not return the survey: Maplewood High and McKissack Middle Schools in Davidson County, Alcoa City Schools in Blount County, and Dunn Avenue Elementary School in Shelby County.

[2] OEA staff surveyed a sample of principals in schools that FRCs reported that they served. (See Appendix D). Seventy-one principals responded of 100 surveyed.

[3] Researchers visited 22 FRCs in 19 school systems across the state. During the on-site visits, researchers observed the centers' facilities and interviewed center directors and school officials.

[4] David R. Dupper and John Poertner, "Public Schools and the Revitalization of Impoverished Communities: School-Linked, Family Resource Centers," *Social Work,* Vol. 32., September 1997, pp. 416-417.

others, such as Kentucky and California, have a statewide network of full-service FRCs where families can get information and referrals as well as direct services.[5]

Tennessee began its family resource center program in the early 1990s as part of a major state initiative called the Tennessee Children's Plan. The purpose of the Children's Plan was to reform how the state provided services to children and their families. During that time, various state agencies assumed responsibility for implementing a number of innovative programs. The Department of Education assigned the Director of School-Based Support Programs to administer the FRC program.

The Select Committee on Children and Youth (SCCY) was active in developing the legislation tied to the Children's Plan. According to the former Executive Director of the SCCY, legislators envisioned a family resource center as a place in or near a school where both families and teachers would be comfortable seeking information and referral to assist children. The centers would employ one full-time director to serve one school. The state would provide a first-year budget of $50,000 with which to hire a full-time director and to furnish and equip an office. State funding would decrease in subsequent years with local education agencies assuming responsibility for continued funding. The former Select Committee on Children and Youth director recalled that the committee members did not contemplate a matching requirement because they anticipated that the LEAs would eventually fully fund the centers. However, this funding mechanism was not carried out after LEAs told officials that they would have to close their centers if the state no longer provided funding.[6]

Legislative History

The Education Improvement Act of 1992 (EIA) allows local education agencies to establish family resource centers to coordinate state and community services to help meet the needs of families with children (*TCA* §49-2-115). The statute allows the LEA to operate the center or to contract with a locally based, nonprofit agency. The act requires that centers be located in or near schools, and further mandates that local school boards appoint advisory councils for each center comprised of community service providers and parents, with the parents making up the majority of members.

The EIA allows an LEA to use classroom support and pupil contact funds, if approved by the Department of Education, to plan and implement the family resource center. The statute requires the LEA to hire a full-time director and allows it to employ other professional staff from the school or community, such as social workers, counselors, or child care providers. Additionally, the statute authorizes the Commissioner of Education to award grants of up to $50,000 to LEAs to plan and implement centers. However, few LEAs include BEP funds in their FRC budgets.

The Act also gave priority to LEAs with family resource centers for additional state funding for the following services:

---

[5] Interviews with FRC program administrators in Florida, Georgia, Oregon, Kentucky, and California.
[6] Interview with Dr. Karen Edwards, former executive director, Select Committee on Children and Youth, December 14, 2001.

- formal parent involvement programs in elementary schools;
- early childhood programs for children at risk;
- programs for parents with preschool at-risk children;
- learning centers in urban housing projects;
- programs in high schools for pregnant teenagers; and
- "Jobs for Tennessee Graduates" in high schools.[7]

The Appropriations Act of 1992 required: the department to establish eligibility standards and conditions for family resource centers; the Commissioner of Finance and Administration to concur with the standards; and the Select Committee on Children and Youth to approve the standards. The department developed guidelines that cover the following topics:

- mission statement
- principles
- formation of local advisory councils
- functions of family resource center advisory councils
- staffing
- funding

In 1994, the General Assembly amended the statute, specifying that family resource centers are to provide interagency services, resources, and information on issues such as parent training, crisis intervention, respite care, and counseling needs for families of children with behavioral/emotional disorders. The legislation further specifies that family resource centers should function as the center of information sharing and resource facilitation for such families, and help families answer questions regarding funding for the services their child and/or family requires. The amendment doubled the number of centers receiving grants from the previous school year and allowed LEAs to either directly operate their own centers or to contract with a local nonprofit organization to operate the center(s).[8]

In 1995, the General Assembly again revised the statute by authorizing the Commissioner to award the $50,000 grants for three school years and then to evaluate the program to determine progress in attaining its objectives. LEAs receiving satisfactory evaluations would be eligible to continue receiving grants for an additional three school years. That amendment also increased the number of family resource centers to receive grants by 50 percent above the number of centers funded during the 1994-95 school year.[9] Legislation in 1996 and 1999 made minor language changes.

Program Growth

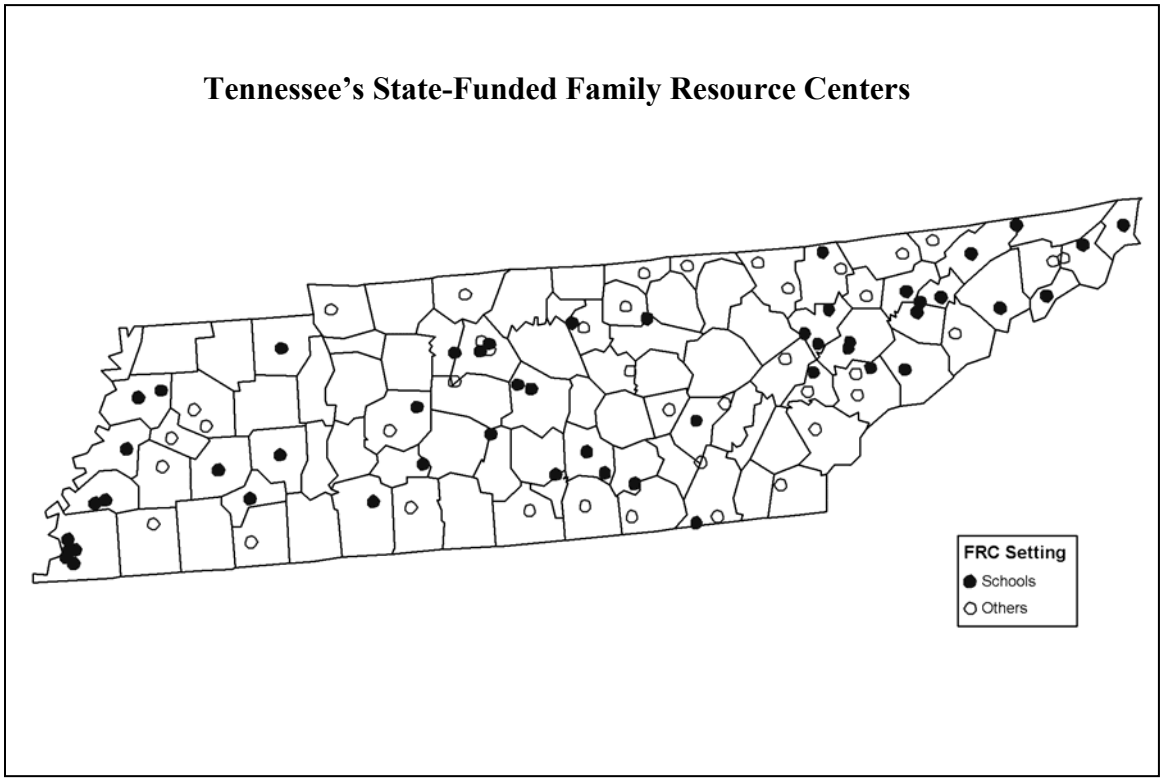
The first 31 family resource centers opened in the 1993-94 school year. The Early Childhood Development Act of 1994 doubled the initial number of centers from 31 to 62. In 1995, the General Assembly funded 93 centers, adding 31 new centers to the existing 62. The 1995 and 1996 Appropriations Acts included language to expand the number of

[7] *Tennessee Code Annotated* §49-2-115.
[8] Public Chapter 985 (1994).
[9] Public Chapter 538 (1995).

centers using state appropriations to match federal Family Support and Family Preservation Act funds. [10] At the end of the 2000-01 school year, the state funded 104 family resource centers. In 2001, Marshall County's new school superintendent closed that system's center and Unicoi County withdrew from the program because it could not afford the match requirement. As of November 2001, 102 state-funded family resource centers operate in 77 school systems in 63 counties. Several other family resource centers operate with grants from United Way without state funds and are not subject to Department of Education oversight. Some of the United Way centers are located in schools and others are in community centers or public housing developments.

Survey respondents report a variety of site settings. As illustrated in Exhibits 1 and 2, 61 Tennessee FRCs (59.9 percent) are located in schools; 11 (10.8 percent) are located in Adult Learning Centers; seven (6.8 percent) are free-standing; five each (4.8 percent) are in community centers and housing developments. The remaining 13 are located in a variety of settings such as early childhood centers, health departments, school administrative offices, and Boys & Girls Clubs.

Exhibit 1: FRC Locations



Current Status

Despite legislation limiting center grants to a total of six years, the department continues its funding with $1.2 million state dollars and $2.3 million federal dollars. Centers now receive state grants of $33,300 ($11,322 in state dollars and $21,978 in federal Social

[10] *A Report from 1987 to 1996,* Select Committee on Children and Youth, p. 19.

Services Block Grant funds) with the Department of Education requiring a minimum of $16,700 in local matching funds. The department allows LEAs to provide the local match in kind rather than with cash. [11] Although a few family resource centers receive additional funds from Title I, Even Start, the 21st Century Community Learning Center program, United Way, or local foundations, most center directors indicated that they struggle to find other resources to serve families.

Defining Tennessee's Family Resource Center program is challenging because of several factors:

- Existing FRC programs are quite different from what was envisioned when the legislation creating them was first written.
- The legislation and departmental guidelines are vaguely and broadly worded.
- Flexibility is key to the program, resulting in every center being different.
- No national standards exist for this type of program.

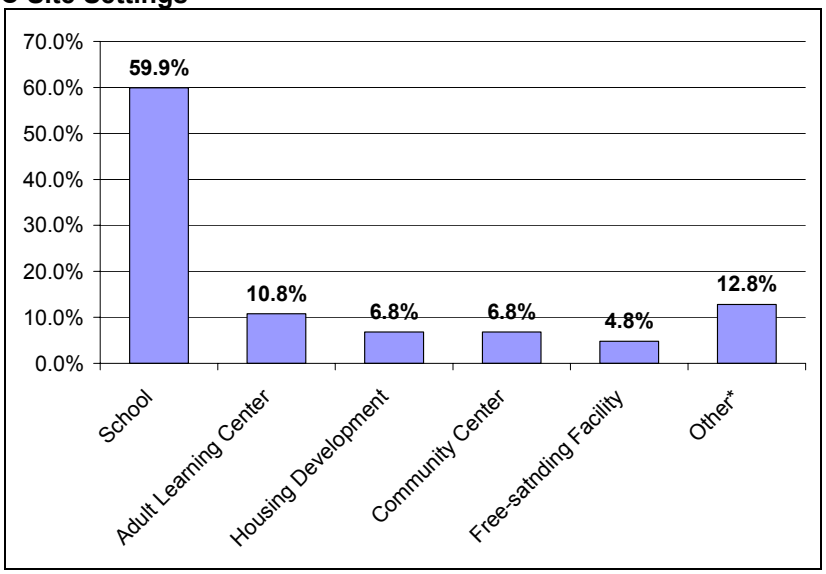
The Department of Education allows FRCs a great deal of flexibility to meet the needs identified in individual communities. This approach, because of the wide variety of center characteristics, makes formulating a general description of the program difficult. In other words, FRC programming, funding, staffing, location, and other components are not universal. For example, some FRC directors solely provide counseling to students and/or their families; some attend only to basic needs such as health care, food, shelter, and clothing; others are educational organizations such as preschools, alternative schools, or adult education providers; still others provide a full array of services including all those mentioned above. Most, but not all, centers provide some sort of parenting classes.

Researchers compiled the following breakdown of statewide services offered by all centers combined:

- education-related services to pre-K and school-aged children – 33.3 percent
- basic physical and health needs – 29.5 percent
- parent education and involvement – 27 percent
- information and referral – 7.3 percent
- adult education and employment training – 2.9 percent

[11] Interview with Jan Bushing, Director of School-Based Support Programs, Tennessee Department of Education, June 28, 2001.

Exhibit 2: FRC Site Settings



*Other includes early childhood centers, health departments, school administrative offices and Boys and Girls clubs.

Source: OEA survey of Family Resource Centers, September 2001

Analysis and Conclusions

Most of Tennessee's family resource centers meet many community needs, but could benefit from a better defined role, greater local direction, adequate resources, and more state monitoring. Families often experience difficulties that affect their children's school attendance and performance. Some highly regarded family resource centers in Tennessee offer programs that fill service gaps and facilitate access to services; however, statewide programs lack uniformity. The General Assembly created family resource centers to help address those needs, but now may need to more specifically define the FRCs' role in supporting school success.

OEA staff identified two distinct successful program designs in other states that could serve as models for Tennessee. The first design is used in Kentucky, where centers provide a variety of direct services. The second design, used by Washington, involves coordination of services furnished by area service providers.

Kentucky appropriates over $48 million annually for its Family Resource and Youth Services Center program, which is administered by nine central office staff and nine regional program managers in the Cabinet for Families and Children. Family Resource Centers serve families with children from birth to age 12 and Youth Service Centers serve middle and high school children and their families. A school is eligible for a center if at least 20 percent of its students qualify for the free and reduced meals program. Funding is based on the number of students who qualified for free school meals in the schools served by a center. In 2000-01, 1,088 schools (83 percent) were served by 710 centers.

Kentucky has established age-appropriate core components for family resource centers and youth services centers as shown below:

<u>Family Resource Centers</u>

- Full-time preschool/childcare for two and three year olds,
- After-school care for children ages four through 12, with full-time care during the summer and whenever school is not in session,
- Support for new and expectant parents through home visits, peer support groups, and monitoring to detect and address problems,
- Parent education and family literacy programs,
- Support and training for child-care providers, and
- Direct supervision of health services or referral to health services.

<u>Youth Services Centers</u>

- Referrals to health and social services,
- Employment counseling, training, and placement for high school students,
- Assistance in identifying opportunities for summer and part-time jobs,
- Counseling for drug and alcohol abuse, and
- Counseling for family crises and mental health.

The Washington Readiness to Learn Program relies on collaborating state agencies to provide services through its centers. Five state agencies are involved in the program including the:

- Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction,
- Department of Social and Health Services,
- Department of Health,
- Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, and
- Employment Security Department.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction employs staff to conduct an annual conference as well as to provide ongoing technical assistance and evaluations based on school grades, attendance, and disciplinary measures.

Local consortia composed of representatives from the five collaborating state agencies govern individual centers. The only paid center staff are coordinators. The coordinators provide brokering or information and referral services to the five state agencies as well as to local nonprofit social service providers. Washington awards grants to 26 consortia to fund 375 FRCs in 118 school districts with a $7.2 million biennial appropriation. The consortia must provide a 25 percent match, half of which (12 ½ percent) must be cash.

Department response:
Please refer to related comments in the following sections.

State Administration of Program

Although most family resource centers engage in activities that support school-age children and their families, a few LEAs have used FRC resources in questionable ways. *Tennessee Code Annotated* §49-2-115 (e) states that FRCs shall

- Provide interagency services/resources information on issues such as parent training, crisis intervention, respite care, and counseling needs for families of children with behavioral/emotional disorders;
- Serve as the center of information sharing and resource facilitation for such families; and
- Help families answer questions regarding funding for the options of service their child and family requires.

At least one center is an alternative school. The director serves as the principal and has little interaction with the families of its students. In another center located in an alternative school, the director spends the majority of his time performing the duties that assistant principals normally provide, such as handling discipline problems. Another FRC director is a guidance counselor for an elementary school two days a week, rather than serving as full-time director as required by statute. One LEA used the 2001 FRC grant for a new employee who functioned as the bookkeeper for a new preschool program opened by the school system.

In addition to problems with the use of funds, analysts noted some funding issues that appear to have been undetected by the department. For example, two centers in one school system have merged and now operate as one center while continuing to receive

two grants. Only one advisory council serves that school system, and one of the directors now serves as a program manager for the center. Analysts found that some centers reported local matches that did not meet the $16,700 minimum required by the department or contained questionable expenses. For example, some FRCs use funds to cover expenditures that cannot be identified, such as "other charges." In other instances, in-kind matches appear to result from expenditures that may not be related to the FRC, such as school personnel time and administrative costs. One center included as matching funds Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) funds distributed by the school system.[12]

These problems appear to be exacerbated by inadequate state guidance and oversight. The Department of Education does not have sufficient staff to provide support and oversight of family resource centers. In addition to having numerous other duties, the director of School-Based Support Services is the sole staff person in the Department of Education responsible for overseeing the FRC program. Moreover, the department does not allocate funding in its budget for administrative costs or travel expenses necessary to provide guidance and technical assistance.[13] Unable to make on-site visits, the department's staff is often unaware of center activities and organizational issues.

Neither the statute that created FRCs nor departmental guidelines provide adequate structure and direction for center operations. For example, the statutes and guidelines establish neither statewide nor individual program goals and objectives. Because center staff generally do not know how to develop measurable goals and objectives, they also do not know how to measure progress or success.

The department's budget includes no funds to train FRC staff, leaving them without knowledge of best practices and implementation skills. Most FRC staff receive some training from the LEA or other sources, but that training may not relate to the functions of a family resource center. For example, some counted only attendance at teacher in-service meetings as training. In interviews with OEA staff, FRC directors expressed a desire for training from the department.

Department response:
The Department was aware that two of the FRCs were focused on alternative schools, however, the code section and the guidelines do not restrict FRCs from focusing on alternative school student needs. The Department agrees that when the FRC focuses on alternative schools, the FRC should implement strategies to meet goals inclusive of family/community needs.

The Department was unaware that two of the new family resource center directors are not administering family resource centers with the same goals and strategies established by their predecessors. These school systems will be notified that the Scope of Services of the FRC contract must be met.

[12]Interviews with FRC directors and on-site visits, Nov. 2001.
[13] Ibid.

The Department agrees that the director of School-based Support Services has numerous other duties and is the sole staff person responsible for overseeing the FRC program. When the Education Improvement Act, which included FRCs, was passed in 1992, no funds were appropriated for implementation of the FRCs. In 1993 the funding for FRCs was appropriated and budgeted to the Children's Plan with the Department of Finance and Administration. However, the responsibility for developing FRC guidelines and FRC implementation was given to the Department of Education. Appropriations for FRC training and technical assistance were not made. The Department makes every effort to provide training with no funds by partnering with other funded conferences and workshops.

Programming

Tennessee has not defined minimum services that should be provided by each family resource center, but some other states have. No national standards exist for such programs and Tennessee's legislation and departmental guidelines give little direction. However, analysts determined that other states have developed programs based on one of two designs. Washington's program, for example, provides information and referral and brokering of services. Other states such as Kentucky, Connecticut, and California offer a wide variety of direct services. Tennessee's FRCs are usually a combination of the two.

In Tennessee, services provided by FRCs are determined locally based on needs identified in each community. The Department of Education does not dictate to the LEAs because this would limit the FRCs' ability to respond to community needs. However, family resource center programs in other states maintain overarching goals within which a community may identify its specific needs. In other words, it is possible to provide a statewide structure without sacrificing the flexibility necessary to respond to local needs.

Department response:

TCA § 49-2-115(a) directs FRCs to coordinate state and community services to help meet the needs of families with children. This is similar to Washington's program. However, Tennessee FRCs are faced with the dilemma of inadequate community services and resources within the FRC geographic service area. Therefore, the FRCs have moved toward service delivery in order to meet the needs of the children at-risk. The other states, described in this comparison, provide a more adequate services and resource base within local communities.

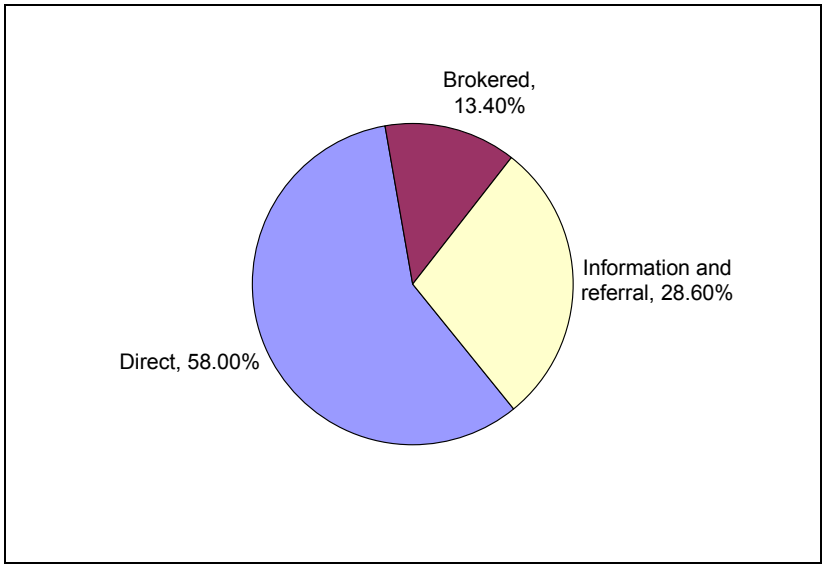
Legislation proposed in SB 3072 (Reading Initiative) will give FRCs specific responsibilities in addition to their current locally determined strategies. The bill directs Family Resource Centers to (1) inform parents about the need for appropriate educational activities and experiences to develop readiness skills in early childhood; (2) assist in identifying "educationally at-risk" children for purposes of participation in early childhood education programs; (3) assist families in fulfilling their responsibility to be an active partner in their child's education, pk-12.

Most of Tennessee's family resource centers predominantly provide services directly rather than brokering services or referring clients to other agencies. The statute establishes FRCs to coordinate state and community services and to be a hub for

information sharing and resource facilitation. As stated previously, the Select Committee on Children and Youth originally intended for FRCs to serve as an information and referral or brokering resource. Additionally, the department's guidelines suggest that eligibility counselors, health services personnel, counseling services, or job training (all direct service-providers) could be located with the FRC.

In practice, however, all FRCs offer direct services in addition to information and referral. Directors reported on the survey that FRCs provide 58 percent direct services and broker 13.4 percent of services. The remaining 28.6 percent of assistance consists of information and referral.

Exhibit 3: Types of FRC Service Delivery Methods



Source: OEA survey of Family Resource Centers, September 2001

Department response:
As previously stated, the FRCs provide services because the services are not available or accessible. The FRC cannot act as a broker if the services are not available in the local community.

In some cases FRCs address needs that should be, but are not, addressed by other agencies. The purpose of FRCs is not to duplicate services, but to coordinate services to help meet the needs of families with children. Actual duplication of services appeared to be rare. However, FRCs often serve clientele who may not meet eligibility criteria for, or feel comfortable with, accessing the same service elsewhere.

The guidelines state that coordination through the family resource center is necessary to avoid duplicating services. Interviewees in many communities reported that prior to the creation of the FRC, children and their families went without assistance because of the lack of other resources. In some cases, as the FRC staff attempt to address the unmet

needs in their area, they must perform duties ideally fulfilled by specifically trained professionals.

For example, one of the most common services provided by FRCs is lice treatment. Center directors reported that they spend an inordinate amount of time visiting homes to dispense shampoos and educate parents on how to eradicate lice and prevent re-infestation. Perhaps public health professionals could address such public health issues more effectively and appropriately than FRC personnel.

In some cases, FRC staff provide direct services because other providers are not available nearby or are not adequate to meet the need. For example, some directors told OEA staff that they transport TennCare clients to health care providers in neighboring counties because health care professionals in their communities do not accept TennCare. Such transportation is often in personal vehicles, a potential liability for the LEAs. Other centers offer services, such as counseling, that exist within the community, but are unaffordable for low-income clients.[14]

Department response:
Yes. The FRC guidelines, as adopted by the Joint Select Committee on Children and Youth, call for the development and implementation of FRCs to prioritize local needs, adopt goals and implement strategies to meet needs in order to remove barriers to school success.

The target population for services varies greatly from center to center according to the assistance offered. *TCA* §49-2-115 merely creates family resource centers to serve families with children and does not explicitly outline other eligibility criteria. Nor do departmental guidelines define the specific population to be served by family resource centers. On the whole, family resource centers have not established criteria or priorities for assistance; they purportedly offer help to anyone in the service area requesting the programs they offer.

The most common eligibility criteria reported on the survey was enrollment in a particular school or school system or sometimes residence within the school district. However, during site visits analysts discovered that distance from the center more often determined whether assistance was sought and accessed. Additionally, the site of the center influences the target population; i.e., FRCs located in preschool settings are apt to have programs designed to serve preschool age children and their families. Likewise, FRCs located in high schools tend to focus on issues affecting teenagers and their families.

Most centers report that they primarily focus on at- risk clients. However, researchers found that "at-risk" can have multiple meanings. For example, some centers provide counseling services to parents upon order of a juvenile court, while others offer counseling to divorcing parents for chancery or circuit courts as part of the parenting plan required by state law. Some centers provide preschool programs while others are

[14] Ibid.

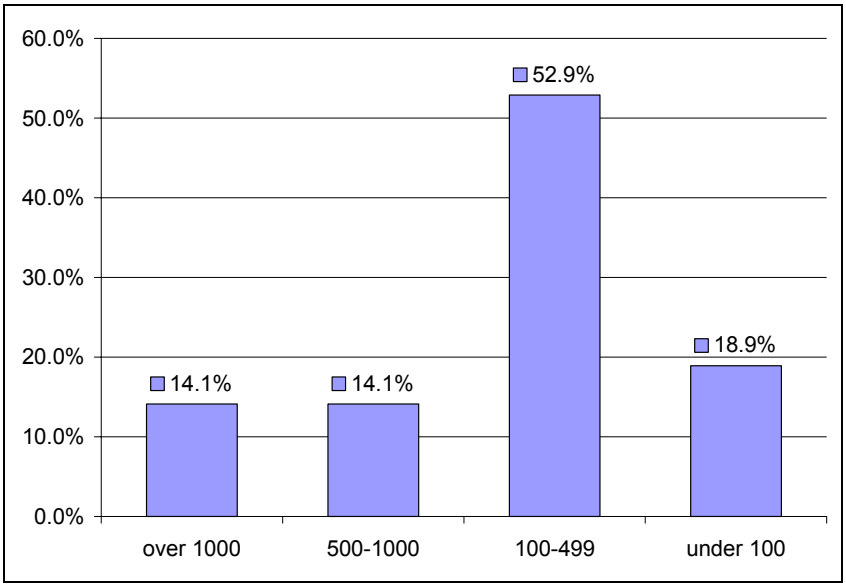
alternative schools. Some provide food or health services to families; still others focus on family literacy.

Department response:
Yes. The FRC gives local discretion in determining geographic area to be served. The flexibility of the guidelines for FRC development and implementation was purposeful in order to meet the diverse needs unique to local communities.

Staffing

Most family resource centers employ too few staff to assist the number of families in their service areas. According to the 1994 Annual Report on Children's Initiatives from the SCCY, drafters of the original legislation intended that each FRC serve the families of only one school and provide only information and referral or brokering of services. FRCs that adopted this model need only one staff person. However, the September 2001 OEA survey of Tennessee FRCs revealed that 81 **(**83 percent **)** serve two or more schools; 27 of those report that they serve an entire school system. Exhibit 4 shows 12 FRCs reported that they served over 1,000 families during the previous 12 months; 12 reported serving between 500 and 1,000; and 45 reported between 100 and 499 families served.

Exhibit 4: Families Served in Previous 12 Months



Source: OEA survey of Family Resource Centers, September 2001

Other states with direct service family resource center programs advise that adequate budgets and staffing are the key to successful outcomes. In Tennessee, 42 centers reported employing only one staff person; 44 centers reported two to four employees; and four reported employing five or more.[15]

[15] Family Resource Center Survey, Sept. 2001.

The Department of Education provides only $33,300 per year to each center, which may not be enough to support even the director's salary. Moreover, most LEAs' matching funds are in-kind and do not provide funds for additional staff. As a result, directors indicate that they are unable to attend to all the schools they serve and generally concentrate on the closest schools.

Seventy-eight Tennessee FRCs reported using volunteers for a variety of tasks involving literacy, tutoring, mentoring, open houses, health fairs, and clerical assistance.

Department response:
Expansion in the number of FRCs would decrease the demand on each FRC, which serves multiple school communities. SB 3072 (Reading Initiative) calls for the expansion in the number of family resource centers and an increase in the funding level for FRCs.

FRC staff qualifications vary greatly across the state. Some directors lack expertise to furnish the services they offer. Sixty-two grantees do not specify educational credentials for FRC directors and 70 do not specify any required experience. Additionally, at least five LEAs have hired directors who do not meet their own centers' qualifications.[16] While drafters of FRC legislation left qualifications to the local advisory councils, they envisioned directors to be professional employees such as nurses, educators, or social workers.[17] The FRC guidelines indicate that the director profile should be tied to an ability to meet the goals of the program.

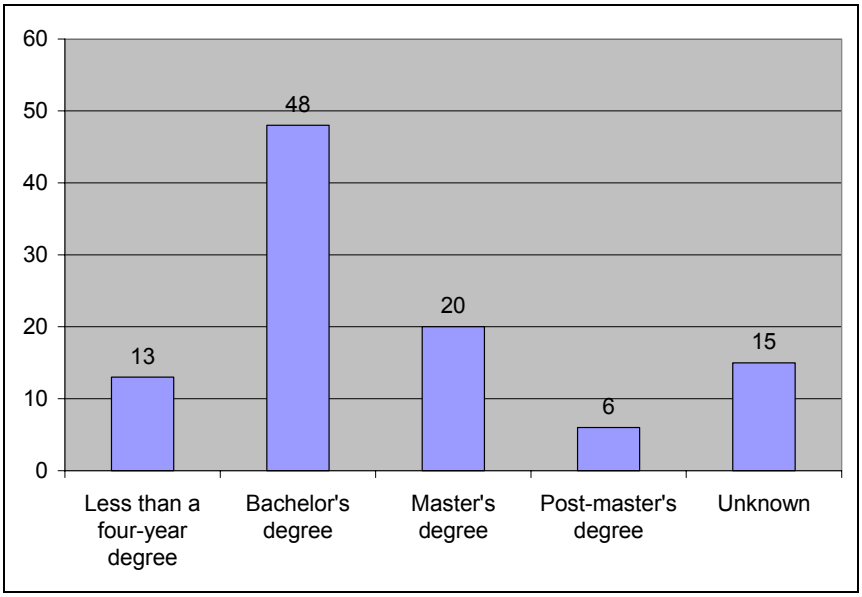
Dealing with sensitive issues associated with children and families in need and building collaborative relationships requires a certain degree of expertise, knowledge, and skill. Without personnel requirements, some LEAs have hired staff that appear under qualified. Limited funding and/or rural settings may contribute to the difficulty of finding and attracting persons with necessary experience and training.

Thirty-two LEAs, however, require bachelor's degrees and four require master's degrees. Persons without four-year college degrees direct 13 FRCs. Of those directors with higher education credentials, 48 have bachelor's degrees, 20 have master's degrees, and six have post-master's degrees. (See Exhibit 5.) However, some of the degrees (such as interior design, fashion merchandising, wildlife and fisheries, and zoology) do not prepare a person for work in the social service or educational fields.

Only a few LEAs require experience working with children and families. However, researchers found that most directors have applicable work histories. Forty-two directors have social service experience, 38 have experience in educational settings, six have backgrounds in nursing or counseling. However, seven have only clerical or retail experience. Twenty did not provide documentation of qualifications.

[16] Ibid.
[17] Interview with Dr. Karen Edwards, former Executive Director, Select Committee on Children and Youth, December 14, 2001.

Exhibit 5: FRC Directors' Education Levels



Source: OEA Survey of Family Resource Centers, September 2001

Department response:
FRC directors hold a variety of degrees. The study was insufficient to prove that requiring specific qualifications would improve the program. One very effective director holds a degree in zoology but directs an excellent program.

Some family resource centers likely are not prepared to perform new pre-kindergarten tasks proposed in the Education Reform Act of 2002. Some family resource centers likely are not prepared to identify eligible children for pre-kindergarten, as proposed in 2002 legislation. Department officials expressed intent for FRCs to play a major role in identification of at-risk children eligible for pre-kindergarten, as did the Education Reform Act of 2001, which was not funded, and this year's SB3072/HB3136. Although the FRCs' proposed role has been changed from performing assessments to helping find eligible children, some centers do not appear equipped to handle these new responsibilities. Some FRC programs focus on other community needs, such as preventing teen pregnancy or increasing family literacy. Staff may need to have greater expertise in child development.

The state's existing preschool initiative appears more suitable than the family resource center program to perform the responsibilities because it is designed to address the educational, health, and social service needs of children who are not otherwise eligible for or do not have access to similar programs. *Tennessee Code Annotated* §49-6-101(f)(2) states that the departments of education, health, children's services, and human services should collaborate to establish all early childhood education and pre-kindergarten programs for at-risk children. Professionals in these agencies should have the expertise to identify this population. If FRCs are to have a greater role in identifying preschoolers, the

department should determine which ones are already qualified for that task, and which ones will need additional training and resources.

Department response:
The FRC is in an excellent position to know the "at-risk" children within the community and to encourage enrollment of those children in the preschool programs.

For the most part, FRC directors' salaries are commensurate with those of social service workers in Tennessee. Directors' salaries ranged from $15,920 to $51,311. Directors with high school diplomas averaged $21,316; those with associate degrees averaged $24,786; those with bachelor's degrees earned an average of $28,683; and those with master's or advanced degrees averaged $34,330. A 2000 salary survey by the Tennessee Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers revealed an average salary of $25,000 - $25,999 for social workers with bachelor's degrees; $30,000 - $34,999 for those with master's degrees; and $35,000 - $39,999 for those with post-master's credentials.

Exhibit 6: Average Yearly Salaries in Tennessee

Degree	FRC Directors	Social Workers
H.S. Diploma	$21,316	Not applicable
Associate's	$24,706	Not applicable
Bachelor's	$28,683	$25,000-25,999
Master's or higher	$34,330	$30,000-39,999

Source: OEA Survey of Family Resource Centers, September 2001 and Salary Survey Provided by the Tennessee Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers

Analysts did not determine whether LEAs based director salary levels on the credentials of the persons hired or other factors such as funds available. Therefore, it is unknown whether LEAs that hired persons with less than bachelor's degrees were limited by the salary offered or by the applicant pool in a particular community.

Department response:
The Department agrees.

Funding

In most cases, the only operating revenue source for family resource centers is the state grant of $33,300. Most LEAs match state funds with in-kind contributions rather than cash supplements. As a general rule, the Tennessee state grant covers only the director's salary, leaving little, if any, funding for additional staff, supplies, or program materials. [18]

Most family resource centers attempt to provide a wide range of services to meet the needs in their communities, but cannot because of the meager funding. In those centers

[18] FRC Budget Reviews.

that provide comprehensive services and collaborate with other agencies, staff spend a disproportionate amount of time seeking additional funding sources and managing the grants they receive. The staff of those centers use time and energy writing grants or soliciting donations for programs, limiting the time they have to work with children and their families.

Some of the multi-service centers such as those in Hamilton and Davidson Counties and in Memphis and Murfreesboro have sought and received outside funds to supplement the state grants. These FRCs use dollars from Title I, Even Start, the 21st Century Community Learning Center program, United Way, or local foundations for direct service programs. District level personnel are responsible for administration, allowing the center directors time to manage FRC programs. In some instances, community service agencies (e.g., the Department of Human Services or Labor and Workforce Development) are located in the same facility as the FRC to offer additional assistance to FRC clients.[19]

Department response:
The Department agrees.

Other states invest in individual centers at a higher level than Tennessee. FRC program administrators in other states advise that adequate budgets and staffing are key to successful outcomes. Moreover, they strongly recommend that centers pursue outside grants to supplement state and local funds. Some state administrators, in fact, provide technical support to help centers write grant proposals.

The average budget of Tennessee centers is $56,587, including local matches. Exhibit 7 illustrates funding in California, Connecticut, Kentucky, Rhode Island, and Washington.

Exhibit 7: Funding for FRCs in Other States

State	Annual State Funding per FRC Site	Required Match	Outside Grants
California	up to $133,300	50% (cash only)	yes
Connecticut	$100,000	no	yes
Kentucky	$33,825-92,250($205 per child eligible for free or reduced lunch)	yes (varies)	yes
Rhode Island	$65,000	50%(mostly cash)	yes
Washington	$75,000-350,000	25%(12.5% cash)	yes

Source: Telephone Interviews by OEA Staff, Summer 2001

[19] Interviews and on-site visits, Nov. 2001.

Department response:
The Department agrees.

Location

Although the majority of FRCs are located in schools, other settings may work as well. The original intent in creating family resource centers was to provide a setting in or near a school where families and teachers could seek information and referral assistance. This design's ideal location is on a school campus.

Analysts identified advantages and disadvantages to locating family resource centers in schools. Persons interviewed expressed different viewpoints about ideal locations for FRCs. Giving communities the flexibility to decide the location of their family resource center enhances their opportunities to better realize their specific goals.

Most of the FRCs attempt to offer a variety of direct services, which may necessitate more space than a school has available. Some parents also find schools to be threatening or uncomfortable environments, making school locations undesirable. In other instances, the distance between the school and the family home might present a barrier. However, close proximity to the school allows teachers and other school personnel greater chances of collaborating with the centers and enhances the link between schools, families, and community services.

Department response:
The Department agrees.

Effectiveness

Other states measure the impact of their family resource programs to a greater extent than Tennessee. Kentucky, California, and Connecticut have included a statewide evaluation component in the structure of their family resource center programs.[20] Failure to document the impact of family resource centers in Tennessee may lead lawmakers to question the value of the program and result in hesitancy to continue or increase funding. Additionally, FRCs themselves are unable to quantify the results of their efforts in a way that would allow them to adjust as needed.

Department guidelines provide a mission and principles for family resource centers and suggest possible goals, but omit strategies for attaining those goals. In some cases, the center director has neither the personal expertise nor an active advisory committee with the proficiency to develop measurable goals or appropriate strategies to attain those goals. Without specific goals, program directors cannot evaluate their impact. Additionally, a lack of updated community needs assessments often exacerbates FRCs' inability to define methods for meeting community needs.

For the most part, FRC goals are general in nature, such as "identify the needs of the community" or "serve at-risk" families. Goals like "families are safe" are subject to multiple variables outside the influence of FRC interventions.

[20] Interviews with State FRC Administrators, Summer 2001.

Most FRCs document process outcomes (e.g., the number of persons served or referred) or anecdotal accounts rather than impact outcomes. On the other hand, a few programs use data to tie some targeted efforts to outcomes such as improved school attendance, reduced behavioral incidents, increased parental involvement, and enhanced academic performance. Factors related to the failure to assess program performance include a lack of technology, resources, staff time, awareness, and "know-how."

During on-site visits, OEA staff observed that many directors were uninformed of the importance of documenting the impact their programs have on the clients served. Most evaluations were simply questionnaires that clients completed. In some cases, directors revealed that they often neglected or forgot to ask clients to fill out the questionnaire.

Department response:
The report criticizes that most FRCs document process outcomes (e.g., the number of persons served or referred). Access to certain basic resources such as food, warm clothing, eyeglasses, and physical and mental health care, have been proven to be essential to school success. Therefore, the FRC should not spend limited resources on expensive and time consuming evaluation of such strategies. The FRC is correct to document process outcomes for proven (research-based) strategies.

The Department agrees that outcomes for non-research based strategies should be defined and support documentation collected.

Advisory Councils

Although Tennessee's FRC advisory councils appear to have fulfilled their initial start-up, very few have continued to provide guidance and participation in subsequent years. The guidelines specify that the advisory committees will:

- monitor and evaluate progress toward goal attainment,
- report to the local school board twice a year, and
- make specific recommendations for revising the FRC program.

However, directors told researchers that in practice, very few advisory councils act in this capacity. For example, none of the directors interviewed indicated that the advisory council reports to the LEA as required.[21]

Advisory councils do not generally meet frequently enough to serve as governing boards to FRCs; rather, the LEA performs this function. The survey of FRCs shows that 46 advisory councils meet four or more times a year; 22 meet twice a year, two meet "as needed"; six meet annually; the remaining councils vary, but meet infrequently. At least two center directors admitted that their councils did not exist at the time of the on-site visits.

The statute requires the majority of council members to be parents. The former executive director of the SCCY indicated that the intent was for these parents to be prospective

[21] Interviews with FRC Directors, Nov. 2001.

clients to keep the FRCs responsive to families in the school. The guidelines stipulate that councils should include public and private service providers. Although most councils comply with the provider agency inclusion, researchers found that many of the "parent" members are school or provider personnel who happen to also be parents rather than representatives of the FRC consumer population.[22]

Department response:
The Department is aware that the advisory councils vary from center to center in size, in number of meetings per year and in member composition. The Department has noted that in those advisory councils with "parent" members, who are employed by the school system or other agencies, the councils are serving schools throughout the school system if not all of the schools within the school system. Technically, these "parent" members are within the service district.

The Department notes that the governing body of the school system is the local Board of Education, whose members have been elected to represent the communities. The Department supports development of a more structured member appointment to the advisory council, as well as, a structured communication and reporting relationship between the FRC advisory council and the local Board of Education, however, another "governance" system should not be created. The FRC advisory council structure should be efficient and effective without generating a great demand in staffing time and funding resources to maintain.

[22] Family Resource Center Survey, Sept. 2001.

Recommendations

Legislative

The General Assembly may wish to amend *Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-2-115* to specifically define the role and mission of family resource centers. Lawmakers should determine whether they intend for the programs to merely provide information and referral; broker services; or provide direct services communities lack. If the latter is the case, centers need opportunities for additional federal, state, local, or private grant funding to accomplish specific goals. The statute that creates family resource centers to "coordinate state and community services to help meet the needs of families with children," results in multiple interpretations of program structure. With specific direction and adequate resources to support the chosen model, family resource centers would be better prepared to respond to families' needs.

The General Assembly may wish to consider not requiring family resource centers to assist in identifying at-risk children if early childhood programs are funded. Because FRC director qualifications are controlled locally, not all directors have expertise to conduct early childhood assessments. Many would require extensive training in this field. Identifying at-risk children could be accomplished under the preschool initiative. The preschool initiative is designed to comprehensively address the educational, health, and social service needs of children who are not otherwise eligible for similar programs or who do not have access to similar programs. *Tennessee Code Annotated* § 49-6-101(f)(2) says that the departments of education, health, children's services, and human services should collaborate to establish all early childhood education and pre-kindergarten programs for at-risk children. Professionals in these agencies should have the expertise to identify this population.

Administrative

The Department of Education should increase its support and oversight to family resource centers. The department has dedicated insufficient staff time and resources to adequately administer the program. Because only one person, who has various other duties, manages the FRC program, the department is unable to adequately supervise the numerous grantees across the state. Department officials are often unaware of funding and organizational issues.

Overall accountability should be a priority. For example, the department should verify local matches, monitor advisory council composition and reporting responsibilities, and ensure that evaluations reflect the impact of the program interventions rather than process outcomes.

Because the department does not budget funds for administrative support of the program, department staff is neither able to monitor activities in the field nor provide training and technical assistance to FRC directors and advisory councils. Several family resource center directors, particularly recently hired directors, have indicated that they need greater direction from the department.

The Department of Education should require all FRCs to have the following characteristics:

- Written job descriptions with minimum qualifications to include education or training in a social services or education-related field;
- An advisory council composed of parents who are potential consumers, regional directors of state agencies that serve children and families, and other local non-profit social service organizations;
- An advisory council that serves as a directing body for the FRC and is accountable to the board of education;
- A business plan that includes an annual needs assessment, goals that can measure program impact and not merely process outcomes;
- Location in or near a school; and
- Funding adequate to support the strategy for meeting the centers' goals.

Additionally, If FRCs are to have a greater role in identifying at risk preschoolers for participation in early childhood programs, the department should determine which ones are already qualified for that task, and which ones will need additional training and resources.

The Department of Education should establish a written policy regarding local match requirements, including required amounts, allowable expenditures, and a verification process. Although department staff indicate that the department requires a local match of $16,700, OEA staff found neither documentation of any such requirement nor any instructions for compliance. Researchers noted many debatable match items and sources while reviewing FRC budgets. In addition, not all local matches totaled the department's requirement of $16,700.

The Department of Education should require family resource centers to develop evaluation components that reflect program outcomes based on measurable goals rather than allowing them to merely report process outcomes. Moreover, the department should provide training and technical assistance in setting goals and program evaluation**.** A review of annual reports and responses to evaluation-related questions on the OEA's survey revealed a lack of knowledge about the importance of documenting impact and expertise in evaluation methodology. Evaluation techniques could be incorporated into the recommended training previously mentioned.

Local advisory councils should take a more active role in the directing of the FRCs in their communities. FRC advisory boards should have adequate service provider and client representation as indicated in the departmental guidelines. Additionally, they should meet frequently enough to respond to operating issues and perform regular needs assessments to keep the center's limited resources focused on critical areas of need.

Department of Education responses to these recommendations as well as additional OEA comments are located in Appendix E.

Appendix A
Tennessee State Law Governing Family Resource Centers

49-2-115. Family resource centers.

(a) Family resource centers may be established by any local education agency in order to coordinate state and community services to help meet the needs of families with children. A local education agency may directly operate its own family resource centers or may contract with a locally based, nonprofit agency, including a community action agency, to operate one (1) or more such centers on behalf of the local education agency. Each center shall be located in or near a school. The local school board shall appoint community service providers and parents to serve on an advisory council for each family resource center. Parents shall comprise a majority of each advisory council.

(b) Upon approval by the department of education, classroom support and pupil contact funds may be expended by a local education agency to plan and implement a family resource center. The application for such approval shall identify a full-time director and other professional staff from the school and/or community, which may include psychologists, school counselors, social workers, nurses, instructional assistants, and teachers. In establishing family resource centers, the department shall consult with the departments of health, mental health and mental retardation, and children's services.

(c) The commissioner of education is authorized to award grants of up to fifty thousand dollars ($50,000) to local education agencies for the purpose of planning, implementing, and operating family resource centers. All local education agencies, upon receiving such grants for a period of three (3) school years, shall be evaluated by the commissioner to determine progress in attaining objectives set forth within this section. Those local education agencies awarded satisfactory evaluations shall be eligible to continue receiving such grants for a period of three (3) additional school years. Beginning with the 1995-1996 school year, the number of family resource centers receiving such planning, implementation, and operation grants shall be increased at least fifty percent (50%) above the number of centers receiving grants during the 1994-1995 school year.

(d) Local education agencies with state approved family resource centers may be given priority in receiving additional state funding for:

(1) Formal parent involvement programs in elementary schools;

(2) Early childhood programs for children at-risk;

(3) Programs for parents with preschool at-risk children;

(4) Learning centers in urban housing projects;

(5) Programs in high schools for pregnant teenagers; and

(6) "Jobs for Tennessee Graduates" in high schools.

(e) (1) Family resource centers shall provide interagency services/resources information on issues such as parent training, crisis intervention, respite care, and counseling needs for families of children with behavioral/emotional disorders.

(2) Family resource centers shall serve the function of being the center of information sharing and resource facilitation for such families.

(3) Family resource centers shall also serve the function of helping families answer questions regarding funding for the options of service their child and/or family requires.

[Acts 1992, ch. 535, § 85; 1994, ch. 974, § 5; 1994, ch. 985, § 2; 1995, ch. 538, § 2; 1996, ch. 1079, §§ 140, 142; 1999, ch. 367, § 5.]

Appendix B
Tennessee's Family Resource Centers

County	LEA	Site Name	Physical Setting	Year opened
Anderson	Anderson County	Norwood Middle	School	1993-94
		Lake City Middle	School	1995-96
	Oak Ridge City	Willow Brook School	School	1993-94
Bledsoe	Bledsoe County	Pikeville Elementary	School	1996-97
Blount	Blount County	Everette School	School	1995-96
	Alcoa City	Alcoa City Schools FRC	School Board Office	1993-94
	Maryville City	Maryville City Schools FRC	School Board Office	1993-94
Campbell	Campbell County	Jellico Elementary	School	1995-96
		Parent Resource Center	FRC	1994-95
Carter	Carter County	Hampton Elementary	School	1996-97
	Elizabethton City	Elizabethton FRC	FRC	1993-94
Chester	Chester County	North Chester Elementary	School	1994-95
Claiborne	Claiborne County	Claiborne County FRC	FRC	1994-95
Clay	Clay County	Clay County Health Dept.	Health Department	1994-95
Cocke	Cocke County	Ben W. Hooper Vocational School	Vocational School	1993-94
Coffee	Coffee County	East Coffee Elementary	School	1995-96
		Hillsboro Elementary	School	1994-95
		Hickerson Elementary	School	1993-94
	Tullahoma City	East Lincoln Elementary	School	1993-94
	Manchester City	Westwood Elementary	School	1994-95
		Westwood Junior High	School	1995-96
Crockett	Crockett County	Crockett County FRC	Early Childhood Center	1993-94
Cumberland	Cumberland County	Gateway Educational Center	Adult Learning Center	1996-97
Davidson	Metro Nashville	James Cayce Homes	Housing Complex	1995-96
		Caldwell Early Childhood Ed.	Early Childhood Center	1993-94
		Maplewood High School	School	1995-96
		Pearl-Cohn High School	School	1993-94
		McKissick Middle	School	1995-96
Decatur	Decatur County	Parsons Junior High	School	1994-95
Dyer	Dyer County	Newbern Elementary	School	1995-96
		Dyer County Central Elem.	School	1994-95
	Dyersburg City	Community Resource Center	Community Center	1994-95
Fayette	Fayette County	Adult Learning Center	Adult Learning Center	1996-97
Franklin	Franklin County	Campora FRC	Other	1993-94
Gibson	Humbolt City	Humboldt FRC	FRC	1995-96
	Trenton Special	Community Resource Center	Community Center	1993-94
Grainger	Grainger County	Old Rutledge Middle	School	1994-95
Greene	Greeneville City	Greeneville Middle	School	1994-95
		Housing Authority FRC	Housing Complex	1993-94
Grundy	Grundy County	Old High School Building	School	1995-96
Hamblen	Hamblen County	Lincoln Heights Elementary	School	1993-94
		Hillcrest Elementary	School	1995-96
Hamilton	Hamilton County	West Side FRC	Community Center	1994-95
		Piney Woods FRC/Eastside Elementary	School	1993-94
		Sequoyah Vocational Tech. Center	Vocational School	1993-94
Hancock	Hancock County	Hancock County Even Start	Early Childhood Center	1994-95

Hawkins	Hawkins County	Rogersville Middle Campus	School	1995-96
Haywood	Haywood County	Anderson Early Childhood Center	Early Childhood Center	1995-96
Henderson	Henderson County	Lexington High School	School	1994-95
Henry	Paris SSD	W.G. Rhea Primary	School	1995-96
Henry	Henry County	Central School	School	1993-94
Hickman	Hickman County	Hickman County FRC	School Board Office	1993-94
		East Hickman Middle	School	1995-96
Jackson	Jackson County	Jackson County Schools FRC	Adult Learning Center	1993-94
Jefferson	Jefferson County	Piedmont, Dandridge and Jefferson	School	1994-95
		Rush Strong	School	1993-94
		Talbott & White Pine Elementary Schools	School	1995-96
Johnson	Johnson County	Mountain City Elementary	School	1995-96
Knox	Knox County	West View Elementary	School	1993-94
Lauderdale	Lauderdale County	Ripley Primary	School	1993-94
Lawrence	Lawrence County	Adult Education Center	Adult Learning Center	1995-96
Lincoln	Lincoln County	Lincoln County FRC	FRC	1995-96
Loudon	Loudon County	Lenoir City Elementary	School	1994-95
		Loudon County FRC	Housing Complex	1996-97
Madison	Madison County	Washington-Douglas School	School	1995-96
Marion	Marion County	The Family Center	Adult Learning Center	1994-95
Maury	Maury County	Columbia Central High School	School	1994-95
		J.E. Woody Mt. Pleasant Elementary	School	1994-95
		Whittmore Middle	School	1995-96
McNairy	McNairy County	Adult Learning Center	Adult Learning Center	1999-2000
Monroe	Monroe County	Monroe County FRC/Madisonville Middle	School	1996-97
Pickett	Pickett County	Pickett County FRC	Adult Learning Center	1994-95
Polk	Polk County	Polk County School FRC	FRC	1996-97
Putnam	Putnam County	Parkview Elementary	School	1994-95
Roane	Roane County	Emory Heights Center	Community Center	1996-97
Robertson	Robertson County	Robertson County FRC	FRC	1994-95
Rutherford	Rutherford County	McFadden Middle	School	1995-96
		Smyrna Primary	School	1993-94
	Murfreesboro City	Franklin Heights Housing Authority/Bellwood	Housing Complex	1995-96
Scott	Oneida SSD	Family Resource Center	School	1994-95
	Scott County	Scott Co. Alternative Learning Center	Alternative Learning Center	1995-96
Sevier	Sevier County	Sevierville Primary School Building	School	1995-96
Shelby	Memphis City	Orange Mound/Hanley Elementary	School	1995-96
		Dunn Avenue Elementary	School	1994-95
		Douglass Elementary	School	1995-96
		Northside High	School	1993-94
		Frayser High	School	1995-96
Smith	Smith County	Smith County FRC	Vocational School	1995-96
Stewart	Stewart County	School and Family Resource Center	Center for Teaching and Learning	1996-97
Sullivan	Kingsport City	Theodore Roosevelt Elementary	School	1993-94
Sumner	Sumner County	Union Elementary	School	1996-97
Tipton	Tipton County	Munford Elementary	School	1994-95
		Crestview Middle or Brighton Elementary	School	1993-94
Union	Union County	Union County FRC	School	1995-96
Van Buren	Van Buren County	Courthouse Square	Other	1996-97

Washington	Johnson City Public	Keystone FRC	Community Center	1993-94
	Washington County	Asbury FRC	FRC	1993-94
Wayne	Wayne County	Collinwood Elementary	School	1993-94
White	White County	White County School Superintendent's Office	Other	1994-95
Williamson	Williamson County / Franklin SSD	Williamson County FRC	Boys and Girls Club	1994-95
Wilson	Wilson County	Watertown Elementary	School	1995-96
	Lebanon Special	Sam Houston	School	1994-95

Appendix C
OEA Survey of Family Resource Centers

FRC Survey

Please complete and return this survey in the enclosed self-addressed envelope by September 18, 2001.

I. GENERAL

A. Name of FRC _____

B. Address_____

_____ Phone_____

C. Director_____

D. School(s) Served _____Principal_____

_____Principal_____

E. Is the center located in or adjacent to a school building? Yes___ No___

F. Year Opened_____

G. During what months of the year does the center operate?_____

II. ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A. Membership

Member's Name	Affiliation	Years of Service

Use additional sheets as needed.

B. How often does the Advisory Committee meet? _____

C. When did the Advisory Committee last meet? _____

D. Describe the extent of the Advisory Committee's continuing involvement with the FRC.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

III. STAFF

A. Paid Positions:

Name_____Title_____FT__PT__
Name_____Title_____FT__PT__
Name_____Title_____FT__PT__
Name_____Title_____FT__PT__
Name_____Title_____FT__PT__
Name_____Title_____FT__PT__
Name_____Title_____FT__PT__
Name_____Title_____FT__PT__
Name_____Title_____FT__PT__

B. Please list all training received by staff, including formal or informal training given by supervisors, during the last twelve months.

_____
_____
_____
_____

C. Does the center involve volunteers? Yes__ No__

D. If yes, approximate # involved during 2000-2001 _____

E. If yes, in what capacity?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

IV. FUNDING

A. Please list all sources of funding for school year 2000-2001:

Source_____Amount_____Cash__In-Kind__
Source_____Amount_____Cash__In-Kind__
Source_____Amount_____Cash__In-Kind__
Source_____Amount_____Cash__In-Kind__
Source_____Amount_____Cash__In-Kind__
Source_____Amount_____Cash__In-Kind__

B. If additional funds were available, how would you use them?

_____
_____
_____
_____

V. PROGRAMMING

Target Population:

A. Grades Served during 2000-2001_____

B. Describe any special eligibility criteria for receiving services such as family income, geographic boundaries, or school enrollment.

_____
_____
_____

C. What are the center's primary sources of referral?

_____
_____
_____

D. Describe the involvement of other school personnel such as the principal, guidance counselors, teachers, and school nurses. For example, does the principal supervise the center coordinator; do guidance counselors, teachers, and school nurses make referrals to the center; does the center director have a close working relationship with other school personnel?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

E. Services Provided in 2000-2001

Type _____Direct__Brokered__I&R*__
Type _____Direct__Brokered__I&R__
Type _____Direct__Brokered__I&R__
Type _____Direct__Brokered__I&R__
Type _____Direct__Brokered__I&R__
Type _____Direct__Brokered__I&R__
Type _____Direct__Brokered__I&R__
Type _____Direct__Brokered__I&R__

*Information and Referral

F. How many families were served during school year 2000-01? _____

G. How many children were served during school year 2000-01?_____

H. What were the three most frequently provided services?

1._____
2._____
3._____

I. What is the average length of involvement with child/family?

_____

J. List other state/local agencies that the center collaborates with.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

VI. EFFECTIVENESS

A. Has the center undergone any formal evaluation from any source in the last year? Yes__ (Evaluator_____) No__

B. Has the center undergone a self-assessment in the last year?
Yes__No__

C. How does the center measure its effectiveness?

_____
_____
_____
_____

D. What, if any, barriers reduce the effectiveness of the FRC?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Please send copies of the following documents:

1. The Advisory Committee's initial needs assessment submitted to the state Department of Education and any subsequent needs assessment not included in the most recent annual report.

2. The goals and objectives developed by the Advisory Committee.

3. The director's Job Profile developed by the Advisory Committee

4. The director's application/resumé.

5. Each paid staff member's job description and application/resumé.

6. The most recent annual report sent to the state Department of Education.

7. Any evaluation tools used by the center to assess the center's effectiveness.

Appendix D
OEA Survey of Principals

Office of Education Accountability
Family Resource Center
Survey of Principals

Name of School_____

Principal _____

Phone_____

Name of FRC Serving this School_____

1. Does a Family Resource Center (FRC) serve your school?
___ Yes ___ No

If you answered "Yes" to question number 1, please continue the survey. If you answered "No," the following questions do not apply. Please return the survey in the enclosed envelope.

2. Where is the FRC located?
___ In this school
___ In another school (please name)_____
___ Other site (please name)_____

3. How often does the FRC assigned to your school assist the children/families of your school?
____Never
____On an as-needed basis
____Occasionally
____On a regular and consistent basis

4. In your opinion, how effective is the FRC in meeting the needs of students and families?

_____ Very effective
_____ Somewhat effective
_____ Not effective

5. Do you consider the FRC director to be part of the school staff/faculty?

_____Yes
_____No

6. How often do you meet with the FRC director?

_____ Never
_____ Daily
_____ Weekly
_____ 2-4 times a month
_____ Only as the need arises

7. Do you supervise the FRC director?

_____Yes
_____No

8. How many referrals have you personally made to the FRC in the last twelve months?

_____ None
_____ 1-5
_____ 6-10
_____ Over 10

9. In your opinion, has the FRC improved any of the following in your school? (Check all that apply)

_____ Scholastic achievement
_____ Attendance
_____ Parental involvement
_____ Student behavior resulting in disciplinary measures
_____ Access to community services
_____ Other (please list) _____

10. In your opinion, is the FRC adequately funded?
___ Yes ___ No

11. If not, which areas do you see as needing improvement?
____Staffing
____New or existing programs
____Equipment/supplies
____Additional school sites
____Other (please list) _____

12. How important are FRC programs to your school and community?
____ Very Important
____ Somewhat Important
____ Unimportant

13. Do you believe the Advisory Committee is adequately involved in FRC operations?
____ Yes
____ No

Reason for opinion:
_____
_____
_____
_____

14. Are you a member of the FRC Advisory Committee?
____Yes
____No

15. If not, how often do you meet with the Advisory Committee?
____ Never
____ Occasionally
____ On a regular basis

16. Please feel free to add any additional comments regarding Family Resource Centers:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Please return by November 16, 2001 to:
Margaret Rose
Office of the Comptroller
Office of Education Accountability
17th Floor, James K. Polk Building
505 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37243-0268

Appendix E
Department of Education Response

TENNESSEE
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-0375

MEMORANDUM

To: Ethel Detch

From: Jeff Roberts
Deputy Commissioner

Date: March 28, 2002

Please find enclosed the response to the report on Family Resource Centers, completed by the Office of Education Accountability.

Department of Education's Responses to the Comptroller's Office of Education Accountability Report on Family Resource Centers

Analysis and Conclusions

Most of Tennessee's family resource centers meet many community needs, but could benefit from a better defined role, greater local direction, adequate resources, and more state monitoring.
Department Response: Please refer to related comments in following sections.

Although most family resource centers engage in activities that support school-age children and their families, a few LEAs have used FRC resources in questionable ways.
Department Response: The Department was aware that two of the FRCs were focused on alternative schools, however, the code section and the guidelines do not restrict FRCs from focusing on alternative school student needs. The Department agrees that when the FRC focuses on alternative schools, the FRC should implement strategies to meet goals inclusive of family/community needs.

The Department was unaware that two of the new family resource center directors are not administering family resource centers with the same goals and strategies established by their predecessors. These school systems will be notified that the Scope of Services of the FRC contract must be met.

The Department agrees that the director of School-based Support Services has numerous other duties and is the sole staff person responsible for overseeing the FRC program. When the Education Improvement Act, which included FRCs, was passed in 1992, no funds were appropriated for implementation of the FRCs. In 1993 the funding for FRCs was appropriated and budgeted to the Children's Plan with the Department of Finance and Administration. However, the responsibility for developing FRC guidelines and FRC implementation was given to the Department of Education. Appropriations for FRC training and technical assistance were not made. The Department makes every effort to provide training with no funds by partnering with other funded conferences and workshops.

Tennessee has not defined minimum services that should be provided by each family resource center but some other states have.
Department Response: *TCA* § 49-2-115(a) directs FRCs to coordinate state and community services to help meet the needs of families with children. This is similar to Washington's program. However, Tennessee FRCs are faced with the dilemma of inadequate community services and resources within the FRC geographic service area. Therefore, the FRCs have moved toward service delivery in order to meet the needs of the children at-risk. The other states, described in this comparison, provide a more adequate services and resource base within local communities.

Legislation proposed in SB 3072 (Reading Initiative) will give FRCs specific responsibilities in addition to their current locally determined strategies. The bill directs Family Resource Centers to (1) inform parents about the need for appropriate educational activities and experiences to develop readiness skills in early childhood; (2) assist in identifying "educationally at-risk" children for purposes of participation in early childhood education programs; (3) assist families in fulfilling their responsibility to be an active partner in their child's education, pk-12.

Most of Tennessee's family resource centers predominantly provide services directly rather than brokering services or referring clients to other agencies.
Department Response: As previously stated, the FRCs provide services because the services are not available or accessible. The FRC cannot act as a broker if the services are not available in the local community.

In some cases FRCs address needs that should be, but are not, addressed by other agencies.
Department Response: Yes. The FRC guidelines, as adopted by the Joint Select Committee on Children and Youth, call for the development and implementation of FRCs to prioritize local needs, adopt goals and implement strategies to meet needs in order to remove barriers to school success.

The target population for services varies greatly from center to center according to the assistance offered.
Department Response: Yes. The FRC gives local discretion in determining geographic area to be served. The flexibility of the guidelines for FRC development and implementation was purposeful in order to meet the diverse needs unique to local communities.

Most family resource centers employ too few staff to assist the number of families in their service areas.
Department Response: Expansion in the number of FRCs would decrease the demand on each FRC, which serves multiple school communities. SB 3072 (Reading Initiative) calls for the expansion in the number of family resource centers and an increase in the funding level for FRCs.

FRC staff qualifications vary greatly across the state. Some directors lack expertise to furnish the services they offer.
Department Response: FRC directors hold a variety of degrees. The study was insufficient to prove that requiring specific qualifications would improve the program. One very effective director holds a degree in zoology but directs an excellent program.

Some family resource centers likely are not prepared to perform new pre-kindergarten tasks proposed in the Education Reform Act of 2002.
Department Response: The FRC is in an excellent position to know the "at-risk" children within the community and to encourage enrollment of those children in the preschool programs.

The Department of Education will also request the assistance of other departments in notifying their client populations about enrollment in the pilot preschool programs.

For the most part, FRC directors' salaries are commensurate with those of social service workers in Tennessee.
Department Response: The Department agrees.

In most cases, the only operating revenue source for family resource centers is the state grant of $33,300.
Department Response: The Department agrees.

Other states invest in individual centers at a higher level than Tennessee.
Department Response: The Department agrees.

Although the majority of FRCs are located in schools, other settings may work as well.
Department Response: The Department agrees.

Other states measure the impact of their family resource programs to a greater extent than Tennessee.
Department Response: The report criticizes that most FRCs document process outcomes (e.g. the number of persons served or referred). Access to certain basic resources such as food, warm clothing, eyeglasses, and physical and mental health care, have been proven to be essential to school success. Therefore, the FRC should not spend limited resources on expensive and time consuming evaluation of such strategies. The FRC is correct to document process outcomes for proven (research-based) strategies.

The Department agrees that outcomes for non-research based strategies should be defined and support documentation collected.

Although Tennessee's FRC advisory councils appear to have fulfilled their initial start-up, very few have continued to provide guidance and participation in subsequent years.
Department Response: The Department is aware that the advisory councils vary from center to center in size, in number of meetings per year and in member composition. The Department has noted that in those advisory councils with "parent" members, who are employed by the school system or other agencies, the councils are serving schools throughout the school system if not all of the schools within the school system. Technically, these "parent" members are within the service district.

The Department notes that the governing body of the school system is the local Board of Education, whose members have been elected to represent the communities. The Department supports development of a more structured member appointment to the advisory council, as well as, a structured communication and reporting relationship between the FRC advisory council and the local Board of Education, however, another "governance" system should not be created. The FRC advisory council structure should

be efficient and effective without generating a great demand in staffing time and funding resources to maintain.

Recommendations

The General Assembly may wish to amend *TCA* § 49-2-115 to specifically define the role and mission of family resource centers. Lawmakers should determine whether they intend for the programs to merely provide information and referral; broker services; or provide direct services communities lack.

Department Response
A mission statement and guidelines were adopted for family resource centers by the General Assembly's Joint Select Committee on Children and Youth in 1993: "*Through collaboration and cooperation with other service agencies, the local education agency may take a leadership role in planning and establishing a system of coordinated state and community services to help meet the needs of families with children within the community served by each school by providing family resource centers."*
The FRC guidelines were structured to provide maximum flexibility in developing programs to meet the problems unique to the children and families within Tennessee's varying school communities both urban and rural. Legislation mandating specific directions would yield programs with a narrowed mission and may not address the needs of specific local communities. The vast array of program designs among Tennessee's FRCs is testimony of the vast differences in need among the diverse communities. Passage of additional statutes defining specific goals should proceed with caution. To assume that all communities face the same needs and have the same pool of services available to address those needs would be ignoring the realities within Tennessee communities.

OEA Comment
The OEA finds that neither state law nor Department of Education guidelines are adequate to provide FRCs with sufficient direction to define the roles of centers and their strategies to link schools, families, and community services. Greater guidance and planning may enhance flexibility.

The General Assembly may wish to consider not requiring family resource centers to assist in identifying at-risk children if early childhood programs are funded.

Department Response
The previous recommendation calls for statutes defining a specific role and mission for family resource centers. This recommendation would appear to be contradictory to the previous recommendation. Legislation proposed in SB 3072 (Reading Initiative) will give FRCs specific responsibilities in addition to their current locally determined goals. The bill directs Family Resource Centers (FRC) to (1) inform parents about the need for appropriate educational activities and experiences to develop readiness skills in early childhood; (2) assist in identifying "educationally at-risk children for purposes of participation in early childhood education programs"; (3) assist families in fulfilling their responsibility to be an active partner in their child's education, pk-12.

The family resource center program was created to address the needs of students who are most likely to face school failure as a result of dysfunctional families and/or community environments. The FRC is in an excellent position to know the "at-risk" children within the community and to encourage enrollment of those children in the preschool programs. The FRC networks and collaborates with other agencies and service organizations. The FRC is the school entity that most frequently interacts with health, children's services, and human services. Therefore, the FRC should be called upon to coordinate efforts to identify those children most in need of preschool.

OEA Comment
The OEA believes that the FRC program should be clearly defined as a whole before adding new duties.

Furthermore, OEA staff found some centers focus on other target populations serving teens or pre-adolescents. These staff have little or no contact with families of young children and may need to redirect limited resources to fulfill this duty.

The Department of Education should increase its support and oversight to family resource centers.

Department Response
Allocation of funds and staff to the Department of Education for family resource center oversight were never made. The Department conducts the contracting process, reimbursement process and review of all annual reports. Contracts with local education agencies for the implementation of FRCs are audited along with all other programs with each school system audit. The Department will hire staff to provide training and technical assistance to FRCs when positions and funds are allocated for that purpose.

Response to the specific requirements suggested:
"Written job descriptions with minimum qualification to include education or training in a social services or education-related field"

The study was insufficient to prove that requiring specific qualification would improve the program. Many excellent FRC programs, including those recognized by National Awards, are directed by personnel with degrees in areas other than social services and education. *TCA* §49-2-115(b) states "The application for such approval shall identify a full time director and other professional staff from the school and/or community, which may include psychologists, school counselors, social workers, nurses, instructional assistants, and teachers."

OEA Comment
OEA staff examined the resumes of all directors and found that some did not show training or experience in a social services or education-related field. OEA staff also found that several FRCs had not specified any qualifications for the directors. Qualifications do not necessarily need to include specific degrees; relevant experience could be substituted.

"An advisory council that serves as a directing body for the FRC and is accountable to the board of education"

The local boards of education are responsible for establishing the advisory council appointment process. The local boards of education establish the responsibility of the council to the board.

OEA Comment

Department of Education guidelines suggest that FRC advisory councils should monitor the activities of the FRC and report twice a year to the local board of education. OEA staff found that in some cases advisory councils did not exist and that few submit reports to the local boards.

"Location in or near a school"

Physical location of the FRC should be determined by the needs of the community. The school site may be inaccessible (due to lack of transportation) to the majority of the families served by the FRC.

OEA Comment

OEA staff found that in some cases teachers and other school personnel were not aware of FRC services when the center was located miles from the school. Location at distant sites impedes accessibility for school personnel, making collaboration between center staff and teachers difficult.

"Funding adequate to support the strategy for meeting the centers' goals."

In SB3072 (Reading Initiative) the funding level for each FRC is proposed to be increased from $50,000 per center, including local match, to $65,000 per center with the local match based on the state and local percentage as would be derived from BEP funding calculations.

OEA Comment

Regardless of the amount of funds received by FRCs, each center's budget should include sufficient funds to support the programs offered. OEA staff found that in many cases, FRCs attempt to offer services without adequate staff or resources.

"Additionally, if FRCs are to have a greater role in identifying at-risk preschoolers for participation in early childhood programs, the department should determine which ones are already qualified for that task, and which ones will need additional training and resources."

The FRC will not be conducting an assessment of the preschool children. The FRC will be assisting in the identification of those 4 year old children whose families would qualify for free and reduced lunch status within the community.

OEA Comment

As stated previously, OEA staff found some centers focus on other target populations serving teens or pre-adolescents. These staff have little or no contact with families of young children and may need to redirect limited resources to fulfill this duty.

The Department of Education should establish a written policy regarding local match requirements, including amounts, allowable expenditures, and a verification process.

Department Response
The Department agrees.

The Department of Education should require family resource centers to develop evaluation components that reflect program outcomes based on measurable goals rather than allowing them to merely report process outcomes.

Department Response
Access to certain basic resources such as food, warm clothing, eyeglasses, and physical and mental health care have been proven to be essential to a child's school success. The FRC should not spend limited resources on expensive and time consuming evaluation of such strategies. The most cost efficient determination of program success in these areas is to document process outcomes. The Department of Education has an extensive accountability system to track student success; expenses to develop and to implement additional evaluation components is not cost effective.

OEA Comment
Process evaluation merely reports on the number of persons served. Impact evaluation is key to proving program value and measuring program progress.

Local advisory councils should take a more active role in directing the FRCs in their communities.

Department Response
The Department agrees.

Appendix F
Persons Interviewed

Christine Archer
Director, Westwood Jr. High Family Resource Center
Manchester, Tennessee

Bonnie Benson
Director, Douglas Elementary Family Resource Center
Memphis, Tennessee

Ann Bush
Director, Westwood Elementary Family Resource Center
Manchester, Tennessee

Jan Bushing
Director of School-Based Support Programs
Tennessee Department of Education

Melissa Chapman
Program Manager, Greeneville City Schools Family Resource Center
Greeneville, Tennessee

Betsy Cheatwood
Director, Lawrence County Family Resource Center
Lawrenceburg, Tennessee

Michelle Counts
Director, Campora Family Resource Center
Winchester, Tennessee

Deborah Dunn
Director, Claiborne County Family Resource Center
Tazewell, Tennessee

Karen Edwards
Former Executive Director, Select Committee on Children and Youth
Nashville, Tennessee

Sandra Fair,
Principal, The Asbury Family Resource Center
Johnson City, Tennessee

Angelina Forby-Rodriquez
Greeneville City Schools Family Resource Center
Greeneville, Tennessee

Sarah Hailey
Director, Hickerson Family Resource Center
Tullahoma, Tennessee

Rhonda Hargrove
Director, Tullahoma City Schools Family Resource Center
Tullahoma, Tennessee

Wanda Kirby
Director, Sumner County Family Resource Center
Gallatin, Tennessee

Emily Mack-Mahe
Director, Kittrell Family Resource Center
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Ann McGintis
Coordinator, Hamilton County Schools Family Resource Center
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Connie Middleton
Franklin Heights Family Resource Center
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Vicki O'Gwynn
Director, Smyrna Primary Family Resource Center
Smyrna, Tennessee

Cindy Perry
Executive Director, Select Committee on Children and Youth
Tennessee General Assembly

Brian Pankey
Roane County Family Resource Center
Harriman, Tennessee

Lisa Reynolds
Dyer County Schools Family Resource Center
Dyersburg, Tennessee

Sonja Smith
Special Projects Coordinator, Northside High School
Memphis, Tennessee

Sherian Summers
Director, Marion County Family Resource Center
South Pittsburg, Tennessee

Patricia Taylor
Humboldt Family Resource Center
Humboldt, Tennessee

Yolanda Vaughn
Director, Cayce Family Resource Center
Nashville, Tennessee

Joetta Yarbrough
Community Resource Center
Dyersburg, Tennessee

Various Principals and Guidance Counselors from Schools Served by Family Resource Centers

Offices of Research and Education Accountability Staff

Director
◆Ethel Detch

Assistant Director (Research)
Douglas Wright

Assistant Director (Education Accountability)
◆Katie Cour

Principal Legislative Research Analyst
Dan Cohen-Vogel
◆Kim Potts

Senior Legislative Research Analysts
Denise Denton
Phil Doss
◆Margaret Rose
Greg Spradley

Associate Legislative Research Analysts
◆Bonnie Adamson
Brian Doss
◆Richard Gurley
Emily Ogden
Melissa Jo Smith
Karen Tolbert
Emily Wilson

Executive Secretary
◆Sherrill Murrell

◆indicates staff who assisted with this project