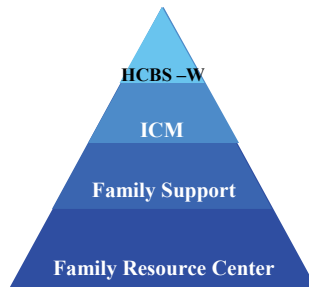




Focus on Families First

Highlight: Family Resource Center

Last month the Home and Community Based Waiver (HCBS-W) program was highlighted. This month's newsletter will describe Families First's Family Resource Center (FRC).



Families First's levels of care are structured on a pyramid design. There are four levels of care, beginning with the most intense HCBS Waiver program, which is the top of the pyramid. The next lower level is the Intensive Case Management (ICM) program, then Family Support Services and finally the Family Resource Center, which is the foundation upon which all of Families First's services are built.

Families First holds 12 HCBS Waiver slots. These community-based services are intended for Essex County's highest needs children who are most at risk of being removed from their homes and communities because of severe emotional disturbances (SED). A set of criteria must be met in order for a child to qualify for these intense services.

ICM services are a bit less intense, but still intended for high-needs children. Families First holds 24 ICM slots. At this level, children must qualify for these services and struggle with SED.

The Family Support level of care is governed by regulations developed by the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH), as are the HCBS-W and ICM programs, but the rules are less restrictive and intend to serve the families of SED children. This level of care is intended to reach as many families with children who struggle with emotional and/or behavioral issues as possible.

In order to qualify for Family Support Services a Family Support Specialist (FSS) must perform a

strength and needs assessment with the family then present the results at Families First's admissions committee, which meets two times per month. At admissions, a group of Families First staff members discuss the strengths and needs of the family and decide if they qualify for either Family Support Services or FRC services.

Families First's FRC is part of a New York State network of FRCs funded by the William Hoyt Trust Fund and overseen by New York State's Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). Further, Families First's FRC is a subcontractor of the Child Care Coordinating Council of the North Country, which holds a contract that funds 4 FRCs in the North Country (Families 'R Us in Malone, Family Matters in Tupper Lake, Family Connections in Plattsburgh and Families First in Elizabethtown).

As part of the NYS network of FRCs, Families First is obligated to operate within certain parameters that are reported on quarterly. The categories that Families First reports to the Trust Fund on are:

- Total number of participants
- Improved Parenting Skills
- Improved Interaction Between Parent/Caregiver and Child
- Increased Family Empowerment/Parent Leadership
- Improved Social Support
- Improved Healthcare
- Increased Family Self-Sufficiency

The services that Families First provides under these categories are:

Group Activities

- Adult Education (such as Brown Bag Workshops)
- Advocacy (strength and needs assessments, representation at admissions committee requesting higher level of care)
- Family Social Programs (Cider Pressing Party, Holiday Party, Family Fun Days, etc.)
- Structured Playgroup (for parents and children 0-5)



FRC continued

- Group Support (Monday Night Bistro Family Support Group)
- Info/Referral (on the phone or in person)
- Parenting Education (Formal/Informal)
- Childcare (Children's Program during Monday Night Bistro)

Youth Services (Must be referred for higher level of care)

- Skill Building
- Advocacy
- Transportation
- Respite

Adult/Family Services

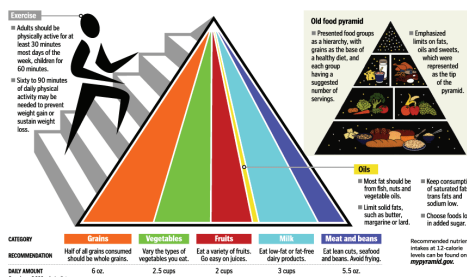
- Advocacy
- Basic Needs (Food Shelf and Children's Clothing Exchange, Thanksgiving drive, holiday drive)
- Family Support Services (through referral)
- Home Visiting (Strengths and Needs Assessments)
- Info/Referral
- Educational Meeting Support
- Life Skills (Brown Bag Workshops)
- Parenting Education (formal/informal)
- Transportation (with higher levels of care)
- Resource Library

March is National Nutrition Month

It's common knowledge that a healthful diet is an

important part of a healthful lifestyle, but most people have trouble figuring out what to do when planning a complete diet overhaul. During National Nutrition Month®, the American Dietetic Association reminds everyone that an easy way to focus on eating better is to start with the basics: build your nutritional health from the ground up.

"By starting slowly and giving yourself a good foundation, you can work towards a healthier life," says registered dietitian and ADA spokesperson Toby Smithson. "Change doesn't have to be dramatic to make a difference."



Smithson suggests ways to improve your nutrition from the ground up:

Focus on fruits and veggies: "Take a good look at your current diet you'll probably realize you're not eating enough fruits or vegetables," says Smithson. "Add a serving each day to one meal and increase it every few weeks. Adding more of these foods into your diet is important whether you buy frozen, fresh or organic."

Look locally: From farmer's markets to community-supported agriculture, you have many options to find new, fresh foods in your area. "This can be a great way to eat well and support your community at the same time," Smithson says.

Make calories count: "Too often, people think of foods as good or bad and that only those on the 'good foods' list are okay to eat," says Smithson. "When you're choosing between options, focus instead on the one with more of the vitamins and nutrients that you need. Sometimes, foods with fewer calories aren't always the healthiest options." To figure out how many calories you need to achieve a healthy weight, visit www.mypyramid.gov.

Test your taste buds: A healthy eating plan emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy and includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans and nuts. "Those are the basics, but within this wide range there are always opportunities to try new things and find new favorites," Smithson says.

"Expand your horizons. Try a fish you've never eaten before or find a new vegetable recipe. By testing yourself, you might find new healthy favorites to add to your regular grocery list."

Trick yourself with treats: "A healthful diet doesn't mean deprivation," says Smithson. "If you have a sweet tooth, have fruit and yogurt for dessert. If you want a snack in the afternoon, have some trail mix or nuts. There is no reason to go hungry just because you're making healthful changes."

For more tips on building your healthful diet from the ground up, during National Nutrition Month and all year long, visit www.eatright.org and click on "For the Public."

The American Dietetic Association is the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. ADA is committed to improving the nation's health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy. Visit the American Dietetic Association at www.eatright.org. (from <http://www.eatright.org/Media/content.aspx?id=4294968000>)