

FAMILY PEER SUPPORT SERVICES DEFINITION

Family Peer Support Services (FPSS) are an array of formal and informal services and supports provided to families raising a child up to age 26 who is experiencing social, emotional, developmental and/or behavioral challenges in their home, school, placement, and/or community. FPSS provide a structured, strength-based relationship between a Family Peer Advocate and the parent/family member for the benefit of the child/youth. The purpose of this service is to support the parent/family member and enhance their skills so they can promote positive youth functioning and their child's ability to live successfully in their community. FPSS are provided by a trained and credentialed Family Peer Advocate (FPA) who is uniquely qualified to work with families based on his/her personal experience parenting a child with similar needs and the specialized training they receive (see below). FPSS can be provided through individual and group face-to-face work in various settings (e.g. family's home, community, office, telephone or Skype contacts, etc).

TYPES OF FAMILY PEER SUPPORT SERVICES

There are six categories of Family Peer Support Services. Within each category are several examples of activities specific to that category. These examples are not intended to be exhaustive. A family peer support provider will have the capacity to offer all six categories of services based on the individual needs and preferences of the family.

Outreach and Information

- Empower families to make informed decisions regarding the nature of supports for themselves and their child through:
 - sharing information about resources, services and supports and exploring what might be appropriate for their child and family;
 - exploring the needs and preferences of the family and locating relevant resources.
 - helping families understand eligibility rules;
 - helping families understand the assessment process and identifying their child's strengths, needs and diagnosis.
- Develop resource directories to identify relevant formal services and informal resources for families.
- Conduct general and individual outreach in the community to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and engage families in services.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff a ‘warm line’ that families can call for information.
<p>Engagement, Bridging and Transition Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the strengths and needs of the youth and family, connect them with appropriate services and supports. Accompany the family when visiting programs. • Facilitate meetings between families and service providers. • Assist the family to gather, organize and prepare documents needed for specific services. • Address any concrete or subjective barriers that may prevent full participation in services. • Serve as a bridge between families and service providers, supporting a productive and respectful partnership by assisting the families to express their strengths, needs and goals. • Support and assist families during stages of transition which may be unfamiliar (e.g.: placements, in crisis, and between service systems etc.). • Promote continuity of engagement and supports as families’ needs and services change.
<p>Self-Advocacy, Self-Efficacy and Empowerment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate on behalf of and in collaboration with families to promote shared decision-making. • Regularly consult with families and providers to ensure that the family’s perspectives are included in all planning and decision-making. • Coach and model shared decision-making and skills that support collaboration. • Model strengths-based interactions by accentuating the positive. • Support the families in discovering their strength and concerns. Assist families to identify and set goals and short-term objectives. • Prepare families for meetings and accompany them when needed. • Empower families to express their fears, expectations and anxieties to promote positive effective communication • Assist families to frame questions to ask providers • Provide opportunities for families to connect to and support one another. • Support and encourage family participation in community, regional, state, national activities to develop their leadership skills and expand their circles of

	<p>support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide leadership opportunities for families who are receiving Family Peer Support Services.
<p>Community Connections and Natural Supports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the quality of life by integration and supports for families in their own communities. • Help the family to rediscover and reconnect to natural supports already present in their lives. • Utilize the families’ knowledge of their community in developing new supportive relationships. • Help the family identify and get involved in leisure and recreational activities in their community. • In partnership with community leaders, encourage families who express an interest to get more involved in faith or cultural organizations. • Arrange support and training as needed to facilitate participation in community activities. • Conduct groups with families to strengthen social skills, decrease isolation, and provide emotional support.
<p>Parent Skill Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the efforts of families in caring for and strengthening their children’s mental, and • physical health, development and well-being of their children. • Helps the family learn and practice strategies to support their child’s positive behavior. • Assist the family to implement strategies recommended by clinicians (e.g. medication management, behavior support, crisis plan) and talk to clinicians about their comfort with these plans. • Provide emotional support for the family on their parenting journey to reduce isolation, feelings of stigma, blame and hopelessness. • Link to and provide workshops and courses on parenting that are matched to families’ individual needs. • Advocate whose child is coming out of placement by equipping the family with skills, knowledge and resources to support the child at home, ensuring the greatest likelihood of success. • Assist families to access transportation.

<p style="text-align: center;">Promoting Effective Family- Driven Practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate on teams that manage access to care, evaluate and work to improve quality of care. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conduct training for service providers on topics including, strategies for partnering with families, engagement, family-centered care, and family-driven decision-making. ○ Attend and/or facilitate meetings to promote family voice and infuse a family perspective at all levels: individual provider, agency, local planning, state and national policy-making.
---	--

Family Peer Support Specialist Qualifications

Family Peer Support services are delivered by a New York State Credentialed Family Peer Advocates (FPA). To be eligible for the FPA Credential, the applicant must:

- Demonstrate ‘lived experience’ as the parent or primary caregiver who has navigated multiple child serving systems on behalf of their child(ren) with social, emotional, developmental, health and/or behavioral healthcare needs.
- Have a high school diploma or GED (or document comparable skills).
- Complete the Parent Empowerment Program (PEP) training (40 hours plus 6 months of group coaching phone calls).
- Submit three letters of reference attesting to proficiency in and suitability for the role of Family Peer Advocate.
- Complete a Professional Development Plan.
- Document 1000 hours of experience providing Family Peer Support services.
- Agree to practice according to the Family Peer Advocate Code of Ethics.
- Complete 30 hours of continuing education and renew their FPA credential every three years.

DEFINITIONS:

Advocacy: The spirit of this advocacy work is one that promotes effective parent-professional-system partnerships. Advocacy in this role does not include legal consultation or representation. It is defined as constructive, collaborative work with and on behalf of families to assist them to obtain needed services and supports to promote positive outcomes.

Parent/Family: Family is defined as the primary care-giving unit and is inclusive of the wide diversity of primary care-giving units in our culture. Family is a biological, adoptive or self-created unit of people residing together, consisting of adult(s) and/or child(ren), with adult(s) performing duties of parenthood/caregiving for the

child(ren). Persons within this unit share bonds, culture, practices and a significant relationship. Biological parents, siblings, and others with significant attachment to the individual living outside the home are included in the definition of family. For the purposes of this service, "family" is defined as the persons who live with, or provide care to a child and may include a parent, spouse, sibling, children, relatives, grandparents, guardians, foster parents or others with significant attachment to the individual.

Service Provider: Refers to individuals/organizations that provide formal services to the youth and family from all child/family serving systems (mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare, substance abuse treatment, education, health, etc.).

Natural Supports: Natural supports are individuals and resources a family can access "naturally," independent from formal services. These supports are a significant source of culturally relevant emotional support and caring friendships for children and families. Natural supports can be short-term or long-term and are usually sustainable and available to the child and family after formal services have ended.