



ENCOMPASS: COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION FOR FOSTER FAMILIES

The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (MSPCC) is the lead agency among a select group of state and community stakeholders working together to support foster parents in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the more than 8,400 children in foster care. Many children in foster care have experienced severe levels of stress and trauma often leading to behavioral and emotional struggles. Well trained and supported foster parents who understand the impact of trauma are better able to provide a safe and loving home for a child in their care.

With funding from the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts (THFCM), **Encompass: Community and Collaboration for Foster Families** aims to deploy specially trained staff to coach foster parents in trauma informed parenting and to engage community volunteers to provide meaningful, tangible supports to foster families.

Encompass serves foster families in the Central MA area. Each family is matched with a Peer Trauma Coach who works with the foster parents to understand how trauma affects a child and to make sense of a child's behaviors and feelings. With insight as to why children behave the way they do, foster parents are more effective in helping a child cope with trauma. Caregivers also have the opportunity to network with other foster parents as part of a virtual group designed to further enhance trauma informed parenting skills and encourage peer-to-peer discussions.

Caring for children in foster care is a community—not the responsibility of just one person or family. While not everyone can be a foster parent, Encompass engages and mobilizes community volunteers, including friends and family members, to play a role in supporting foster parents by giving of their time and donating tangible goods. Community Support Volunteers provide a menu of supports to foster parents including virtual enrichment activities, meal delivery, and themed boxed donations.

With funding from the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts (THFCM) Synergy Grant, **our collaboration has the unique opportunity to revolutionize foster care**, which began in Greater Worcester and is now expanding to include all of Central MA. Our team invested a year of planning to identify and research best practices in the Commonwealth and across the nation, followed by a pilot year to implement our programming. Our commitment is to continue implementing an enhanced foster care system that engages communities, trains caregivers to minimize the impact of trauma, supports the unique role of kinship caregivers, and strengthens information sharing among and between parents, foster caregivers and the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF).

FOSTER CARE FACTS

- In 2020, there were more than 1,400 children in foster care placements in Central Massachusetts
- 70% of Worcester area foster parents indicate a need for trauma-related training.
- In a recent survey conducted by MSPCC, 50% of foster parents say they only receive support from family, friends and neighbors during emergencies, with 17% saying they never receive regular support.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

- CASA Worcester County
- Foster Children Evaluation Clinic (FaCES) at UMASS Memorial Children's Medical Center (UMMHC)
- The Health Foundation of Central Mass (THFCM)
- LUK, Inc.
- MA Department of Children and Families (DCF)
- Massachusetts Alliance for Families (MAFF)

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Central Massachusetts foster, kinship, and pre-adoptive caregivers



1:1 Peer Trauma Coaching
8-10 Weeks



- Weekly in person and remote training utilizing the Resource Parent Curriculum (RPC)
- Coaching with experienced foster/kinship parent
- Number of sessions flexible to meet your needs



Skill Enhancement Peer Support Groups
6 Weeks



- Weekly in person and remote group sessions
- Foster/kinship caregivers meet with two Trauma Coach group facilitators
- Skill enhancement, relationship building, networking

Extended Community Supports
Ongoing

Families are matched with friends, family members, neighbors, volunteers, sponsors, and/or community partners who will provide the following services as requested:



Short-Term Outcomes

- Increase caregiver knowledge of trauma
- Improve foster/kinship parent retention and satisfaction

Long-Term Outcomes

- Decrease placement disruptions
- Improve school attendance
- Decrease emergency department visits and mobile crisis interventions