

# FEDERATION OF FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

## PRINCIPLES ON FAMILY SUPPORT

Family Support is a constellation of formal and informal services and tangible goods that are defined and determined by families. It is “whatever it takes” for a family to care for and live with a child or adolescent who has an emotional, behavioral or mental disorder. It also includes supports needed to assist families to maintain close involvement with their children who are in out-of-home placement and to help families when their children are ready to return home.

### PRINCIPLES:

- Decisions must be based on a family's preferences, choices, and values and not on administrative expediencies;
- Families must be recognized as the primary resource and decision-makers for their child;
- Families must have access to a flexible, affordable, individualized array of supports, services and material items that provide “whatever it takes” to maintain themselves as a family;
- The family's strengths, including the social networks and informal supports already available to and within the family, should be the foundation upon which new supports are designed or provided. Furthermore, if (but only if) the family wishes it, family support services should help to expand and strengthen the informal resources available to the family;
- Support services must be culturally and geographically sensitive and able to meet the diverse needs of families;
- Family supports must be affordable, well-coordinated, accessible, and available to all families who need them, when and how the need them;

### FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO THE FOLLOWING COMPONENTS:

- Family self-help, support, and advocacy groups and organizations;
- Information and referral;
- Education that will support families and becoming active, informed decision-makers on behalf of their family and the child;

- Advocacy with and on behalf of the family if needed;
- Capacity to individualize, provide flexible support services, and meet unplanned needs quickly and responsively;
- In-home and out-of-home respite care, with an emphasis on neighborhood and community participation for the child, and conceptualized not as a clinical service but as a support for the whole family;
- Cash assistance;
- Assistance with family survival needs (housing, food, transportation, home maintenance, etc.);
- Other supports, as determined by the family.

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