



## 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 8,300 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 teams to coach foster parents in trauma informed parenting and to engage community volunteers to provide meaningful, tangible supports to foster families.

In spring 2021, **Encompass** will kick off, serving forty foster families in the greater Worcester area. Each family will be 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 a child behaves the way he/she does, foster parents are more effective in helping a child cope with trauma. Caregivers will 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** will engage and mobilize community volunteers to play a role in supporting foster parents by giving of their time and donating tangible goods. Volunteer Coordinators will recruit two teams of 40 Community Support Volunteers to provide a menu of supports to foster parents including virtual enrichment activities, meal delivery, and themed boxed donations. Coordinators will work with foster parents to match requests with skills and availability of volunteers.

With funding from the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts (THFCM) Synergy Grant, **our collaboration has the unique opportunity to revolutionize foster care**, beginning in Worcester County. Our team invested a year of planning to identify and research best practices in the Commonwealth and across the nation. Our commitment is to implement 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)

# ENCOMPASS:

## Community and Collaboration for Foster Families



Worcester-area foster and kinship families



### 1:1 Peer Trauma Coaching 6 Weeks



- Weekly in-home training utilizing the Resource Parent Curriculum (RPC)
- Coaching with experienced foster/kinship parent



### Skill Enhancement and Case Consultation Groups 8 Sessions



- Bi-weekly virtual group sessions
- 10 foster/kinship caregivers meet with 2 group facilitators
- Skill building, informal support and networking

### Extended Community Supports Ongoing

- Community Support Volunteers that match with families



### 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