



Family Support is not a single service, but rather a flexible constellation of services and supports which are customized to meet the varied and changing needs of each participant and family. A family support program recognizes and values the contribution of natural or informal supports such as extended family members, friends, neighbors, church congregations, and community organizations. In addition to utilizing natural supports, a family support program helps participants and families to access existing formalized services such as the Child Care Assistance Program, Children's Miracle Network, Energy Assistance, Children's Special Health Services, Home-Based Services, Independent Living Centers, etc.

A family support coordinator assists participants to identify and access a broad range of natural and formalized services to meet their identified needs. One of the "hats" frequently worn by the family support coordinator is that of advocate on behalf of the participant. The role of advocacy is best accomplished by someone independent of any agency or entity that might also be providing services for a participant. Otherwise, a family support coordinator might be placed in the precarious position of advocating for the desires of a participant that are in direct conflict with the desires of one's employer.

Another very essential tenet of a family support coordinator is a pool of flexible funds that can be utilized to purchase services for supports not otherwise available and to assist participants with extraordinary expenses. For example, rather than establishing a formal program to provide for home modifications, the flexible funds might be utilized to purchase the needed modifications from private contractors.

In lay terms, family support is often conveyed in the phrase "whatever it takes" to maintain and strengthen the participant's ability to remain in their own home. Families receiving family support services often comment that it allows them to "just be a family."



## Guiding Principles:

Family Support 360 encourages individual **choice** to create a unique plan for accessing supports and services.

- Enhancing the ability to make decisions concerning necessary, desirable, and appropriate services and supports across the lifespan.
- Reinforcing choices to live and work in the community.
- Building relationships and developing a role in the community.
- Recognizing and valuing the contribution of natural or informal supports such as family members, friends, neighbors, church congregations, and community organizations.
- Encouraging and supporting self-direction.
- Learning from the families, participants, and professionals.

Family Support 360 is **responsive** to the needs of people with developmental disabilities.

- Listening and responding respectfully.
- Assisting during crises and responding to changing needs.
- Focusing on the needs of the entire family.
- Advocating for the person and their family.
- Respecting cultural preferences.
- Providing, advising, and designing accessible services.
- Using public dollars efficiently.

Family Support 360 is a **flexible** constellation of services and support.

- Building a budget around the needs of the person.
- Assisting with changes in services and supports.
- Exploring community resources and services.
- Organizing resources in ways that are life-enhancing and meaningful.
- Utilizing funds to purchase services or supports not otherwise available.
- Assisting with extraordinary expenses.

Family Support 360 is **progressive** in the pursuit of helping people live the lives they want.

- Researching options for services and supports.
- Meeting needs creatively.
- Implementing best practices.
- Treating people equitably.
- Sustaining Family Support 360 for the future.