

## Family Navigator FAQ's

**What is it, exactly, that you do?** We provide emotional support to parents of children who struggle, socially, emotionally, and/or behaviorally. All of the Family Navigators are parents of kids who struggle and we get what it's like to be on that journey. We know that while our children have access to many great supports, as parents, we can feel very unsupported. It can be isolating, exhausting, frustrating or even embarrassing. We often talk about what we do using the acronym, "**LEAN ON ME**". We **L**isten, **E**mpathize, **A**cknowledge, **N**etwork (connections), provide **O**pportunity for hope, **N**ormalize emotional health, **M**eet with families and **E**mphasize partnership.

**So, you're an advocate?** No. Since we are focused on supporting parents we never advocate for any type of outcome or service for a child. Rather, we support parents in being a voice for their own children. You may see us attending a school meeting with a parent, but again, we are there as a support person only. We attend meetings shoulder to shoulder with parents and perhaps take notes during the meeting, but we are not there to speak or advocate in any way.

**Why would a parent want to connect?** Parenting is hard. When our kids struggle, we struggle. Many of us are afraid to talk about it. Sometimes even our closest friends and family members don't understand what we're going through. The Family Navigators "get it". A parent can call a Family Navigator to vent about a hard day, to help prepare for a meeting at school, to connect to additional resources or to simply talk about something that's been on their mind with someone in a judgment free, safe environment. We also know that when parents have better supports in place, their children feel more supported and are more successful in school.

**How does a family qualify?** Families do not have to "qualify" in any way to receive support. We do not require any sort of diagnosis and all of our services are free. Even better, there's no paperwork to fill out. The only "qualification" is that a parent have a desire to connect with us.

**Who refers a family to you?** Anyone can refer a family and the Family Navigator is always willing to make the first call as long as the family has given their permission. It's important to note that we never cold-call anyone. We only connect with people who want to be contacted.

**How does the connection take place?** We connect with families however, whenever and wherever is most convenient for them. We communicate by phone, text, email and in person. We meet with families at schools, in the community and at their homes. We connect during the day, in the evening and even on weekends.

**Can I sign a release to share information?** No. We don't sign releases because we don't share information with anyone. All of our interactions with families are confidential.

**Are you employed by the school?** We are employed by Franziska Racker Centers and contract with the school district to provide support to both families and staff. This has been an important factor in our ability to maintain neutrality and to build trust with families.

**How often are you at the school?** We tend to be at the school only when families are there. We focus on supporting parents and caregivers rather than kids. In fact, we often never even meet the children in the family.

**How many families can you support?** Currently we do not have a specific "caseload". This is because contact with each family is very individual. Some families call us once to help prepare for a school meeting or to ask about a specific resource. Other families we meet with monthly or check in by phone every couple of weeks.

**Why would a staff member want to connect?** One of your students may be struggling and you may want a parent perspective on how to word your concern. We can also help you with thinking about how to increase family engagement, support conversations to work through challenges and barriers, and act as a bridge between families, schools and the community.

**How do I tell parents about the Family Navigator?** Below is a sample script of how you might talk with a family about connecting with the Family Navigator. Please feel free to put this in your own words. Remember that the earlier we can connect with families who might need support, the more connected they might feel in moments of need. If you have any questions, need more clarity or want to talk, please reach out to your Family Navigator by phone, email or text. Thank you for all you do for our families!

"I wonder if you might want some support? We have a partnership called the Family Navigator Partnership. Our Family Navigator is a parent who supports other parents when they could use a listening ear or someone to lean on. Parents often find it helpful and supportive to connect with other parents. She is not a school employee and is employed by the Racker Centers. This Partnership is free, voluntary and totally confidential. Might it be helpful to have her call, email or text you so that you might connect?"

If this parent agrees to talk with the Family Navigator, email or call with the family's contact information.