

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES OVERVIEW	
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Overview:

The following policy and procedure applies to both Family Support Workers who are full time staff of the RHA and persons hired by the authority on a contractual basis. Due to the extensive range of client needs, it is impossible to provide guidelines for every situation. Family Support Workers will need to develop a range of skills and techniques to respond to the different needs of individual clients and families.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidelines for Managers, Social Workers and Family Support Workers in the day to day administration of the Family Support Services Program. This chapter should increase the understanding of responsibilities in the program and ensure uniformity of administration throughout the province.

Definition:

An in-home service that strengthens families of children at risk as defined by Section 10 and 14 of the Child Youth and Family Services Act and promotes greater independence and improved functioning. This is done by assisting parents to develop more appropriate basic life skills and to help them acquire competence and knowledge to perform their child-rearing responsibilities to the best of their ability. Family Support Services is a preventive child protection program.

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.1 PHILOSOPHY	
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Values fundamental to the provision of Family Support Services are consistent with the underlying philosophy of all services of the Child Youth and Family Services Program, protection of the child and promotion of "the best interest of the child".

Only after it has been deemed in the best interest of the child to remain in his own home, is this service to be implemented. The intent of this program is to provide a service that will develop and improve parental and family strengths so as to ensure an environment that is conducive to promoting optimum development and protection of the child.

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.2 OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSE	
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The primary objective of Family Support Services is to assist in the development and protection of children by working with families to improve and develop parental and family strengths.

The immediate purpose is to enable children to remain in their family home with outside supports as long as their parents are willing and able to provide suitable care and protection or it is felt that they are able to do so with the guidance and assistance available within the parameters of the Family Support Services Program.

Parents, who are experiencing difficulties caring for their children or how to provide the kinds of experiences their children need to ensure full growth and development, should be given the opportunity to learn how to perform these tasks. They may need practical suggestions on everyday home management tasks, i.e., nutrition, budgeting, grocery shopping, housekeeping, and hygiene as well as teaching and guidance around issues of child care, appropriate methods of discipline, normal stages of child development and managing children's behaviour. Family Support Services can help parents become more capable in coping with and carrying out their parental responsibilities.

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.3 ROLE OF THE FAMILY SUPPORT WORKER	
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The Family Support Worker is assigned to a family through the recommendation of the CYFS Social Worker. The duties of a Family Support Worker will vary with each family and will change as the family progresses. However, one constant function of the Family Support Worker is to ensure that the children in a family are receiving suitable care and living in a safe environment. The well being of the children in the home is the focus of the service.

It is the Social Worker's role to assess the family's needs and to develop a case plan. Family Support Workers must be sure that an individual plan and an outline of the expectations of their role be in place prior to the commencement of the service. The Family Support Worker and the client(s) should be a part of this planning process.

The Family Support Worker must be cognizant at all times that their role is to develop more appropriate, basic life skills leading to greater independence and improved functioning within the family. This can be accomplished by developing a positive working relationship with the parents, providing positive reinforcement for appropriate behaviour and activities and modelling decision making steps to the parents. It is essential that the Family Support Worker be a role model to the parents – modelling appropriate behaviour, attitudes and skills but most importantly, appropriate and desirable interaction and communication between parent(s) and child(ren).

Family Support Workers will be more effective in their role when not over-identifying with the family's circumstances. The family is to be informed that observations during home visits are to be recorded and shared with the family's social worker and immediate supervisor.

Family Support Workers will be most successful in their work with families if the individuality of families and family members is recognized. Some families will be more capable than others; some will be more motivated than others. The Social Worker should know the family's level of functioning and needs and the Family Support Worker should start from there.

The Family Support Worker must be aware of the need to develop a wide variety of techniques and skills in dealing with individual families, recognizing that what works in one family may not for another family in a similar situation. Each family is unique with individual personalities, personal needs, dynamics and resources.

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.4 ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER	
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In the process of developing the case management plan for a family, the Social Worker determines whether the implementation of Family Support Services is required. In making this determination, the social worker identifies the overall goal(s) to be obtained – whether it is to support a family undergoing a current crisis or to improve a family's functioning through the teaching or role modelling of specific skills.

The focus of the service in any event will be to assist in the protection of the children in the family home and improve overall family functioning. The social worker will advise Family Support Workers of their responsibilities with each assignment and will provide guidance in carrying out their role. The development of the case plan for the family will be coordinated and agreed upon by the social worker, in cooperation with the Family Support Worker and the client(s). The social worker maintains full responsibility for the family as a Protective Intervention Case. Both the social worker and the Family Support Worker will work together, the Social Worker informing the Family Support Worker of any movement or change in plans that might affect Family Support Services for the family and the Family Support Worker informing the Social Worker of observations and events happening in the family home during home visits.

Prior to the assignment of the family to a Family Support Worker, even if the referral has been initiated by the family, the family members must be informed of what the service has to offer and their cooperation ascertained by the social worker. If the family is not in agreement to the service, the social worker must attempt to resolve any concerns the family may have and promote the benefits of implementing this service. The family may refuse the service unless there is court ordered implementation. However where a referral is made, family involvement in the planning is critical to identifying what service will be.

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.5 ROLE OF THE SUPERVISOR	
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It is the responsibility of the program supervisor to ensure the provision of adequate supervision for the Family Support Services program. It is essential that each Family Support Worker, full time and contractual, have a supervisor within their office to whom they must report.

The designated supervisor will carry the major responsibility of administering the Family Support Services program at the health authority level. Responsibilities will include:

- Orientation of Family Support Workers to the program
- Assignment of Family Support Workers to individual families
- Review of Family Support Workers' daily visit recordings
- General supervision, including periodic performance evaluations
- Coordination of case consultations with social workers
- Scheduling of Family Support Workers' workload
- Identification of ongoing training needs, such as First Aid, CPR, Child Development, etc.
- Promotion and provision, where possible, of in-service training opportunities
- Consultation prior to termination of ongoing cases.

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.6 PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION - OVERVIEW	
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Careful consideration of the family's needs must be given prior to the implementation of this service. Family Support Services have proven to be very successful when introduced properly to families where the service is determined to be appropriate, either solely or with a combination of other services/supports. Assessment is of key importance, both in initially guiding the intervention and in evaluating the results that the service produces. It must be an ongoing process by the social worker.

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.7 ASSESSMENT OF FAMILY FOR SERVICES	
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In developing a case management plan, the social worker assesses the family with a view to the implementation of Family Support Services as a potential service. To make this decision, certain conditions must exist.

The Social Worker must assess whether it is in the best interest of the child(ren) to remain in the home, that there are potential strengths and sufficiently healthy relationships in the home on which to build, that the parents have the capacity, with supports and guidance, to function as parents, and that the parents are reasonably motivated to attempt to improve their situation.

In compiling the narrative referral to the supervisor of Family Support Services, the following information should be documented:

- **reason for CYFS involvement:**
the presenting problem as seen by the social worker, other professionals, and the family
length of time CYFS involvement
previous services and results
- **the family:**
strengths, limitations and stresses
capacity as parents
quality of relationship between parent and child
attitudes of the family, towards each other, the children, the RHA
mother's role in the home, father's role, children's responsibilities
family's resources - financial and emotional
motivation to change situation
- **the service:**
preliminary goals and objectives
duration of the service
family's response to the service
other services to be implemented

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.8 DEVELOPMENT OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	
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A case plan, with clearly defined goals and objectives, must be in place prior to the commencement of the Family Support service and agreed upon by all parties involved. The Family Support Worker must know beforehand as much as possible about the needs of the family. The Social Worker and the Family Support Worker should meet to review the family's circumstances and to clarify the Family Support Worker's role with the family - to ensure the role falls within the mandate of the service. It is suggested that in identifying the goals and developing the objectives and tasks to achieve those goals, that all key players, the social worker, the Family Support Worker and the adult caregiver(s), take a participatory role. Also, other adult relatives and older children in the home may have in planning services.

The Family Support Worker is introduced to the family and a working session scheduled whereby the plans for the service - the goals, objectives and individuals' tasks - will be formulated and committed in writing (as per *Contract for Service-Form 14-842*). The social worker is responsible for the direction of the service and must ensure that the goals and objectives for this service are consistent with and complement those of the overall case management plan.

It is advisable to bear in mind at all times the resources of the family, to ensure that goals are kept realistic and within the family's capabilities. Ensure that the roles are clearly defined and specific and not philosophically vague.

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.9 CONTRACT FOR SERVICE	
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The *Contract For Service* must be a time-limited and goal-oriented contract, the recommended range of time being three to six months. Any longer than this and the family may see the goals to be met during the contract as overwhelming and/or impossible. With a three to six-month time limit and realistic goals set out, the family will feel more capable of fulfilling the contract and thus more highly motivated. By beginning with the basics and working on concrete goals, the client will also be more successful. Set time limits will also ensure that dependency upon the service is not created.

The *Contract For Service* must be signed by the family head(s), Family Support Worker, and Social Worker. Schedules are to be set regarding home visitation by the Family Support Worker and must be adhered to at all times. If for some reason, the Family Support Worker and/or Social Worker is unable to keep a scheduled visit, the family must be contacted and advised accordingly. It is of utmost importance that the Family Support Worker be punctual for home visits. Thus, schedules must be developed with travel time kept in mind. The Family Support Worker should strive to work with the family while the child(ren) are in the home. Therefore, it may be necessary to periodically arrange flexible work hours with the program supervisor.

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.10 ONGOING REVIEW AND CONSULTATION	
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The *Contract for Service* is to be reviewed periodically during its life. This is to ensure that goals, objectives and tasks continue to be realistic for all parties concerned, to give an opportunity to revise the content - whether it be to further simplify assigned tasks, to increase/decrease the Family Support Worker's involvement in the family, or to move on to new goals if ones contracted have been accomplished.

It is imperative that the Social Worker and the Family Support Worker meet regularly (weekly suggested and more frequent if necessary) to review what is happening with the family, to discuss Family Support Worker's observations, to identify any problems and to note progress. It is important to keep in view the impact of the service, any changes being observed, whether goals/objectives/tasks need revision, and feedback from other professionals/agencies involved with the family.

The Family Support Worker must, without delay, report to the immediate supervisor any unusual events, suspicions or concerns that arise from home visits. Information given to the Family Support Worker by a client is not to be kept in confidence if it adversely affects the family members in any way.

The social worker will continue to work with the family as a Protective Intervention Case. Thus, Family Support Service is not in any way a substitute for regular and on-going casework. Rather, the service is an enhancement and support to regular casework.

It is further required that the Social Worker hold a meeting with the family and the Family Support Worker at least monthly to discuss how the service is progressing. The social worker should also make monthly contact with the family specifically to discuss the service and their satisfaction with it.

The service, and its goals and objectives, is to be reviewed regularly throughout the contract, not to exceed three (3) months after implementation, with a report submitted to the program supervisor on the prescribed form *Report on Case Receiving Family Support Service-Form 14-843*.

If the Family Support Service is to be continued after the initial contract time period, a new contract must be entered into, following the aforementioned procedure.

In accordance with Section 15 of the *CYFS Act*, any person having information that a child is or may be in need of protective intervention, shall immediately report this information to a director, social worker or peace officer.

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.11 TERMINATION OF SERVICES	
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When the Family Support Service is terminated, this is done with the full co-operation and awareness of the family. With the use of the service contract, the family will know from the beginning the time limits placed on the service.

Either of the parties can initiate termination of the service themselves if it is agreed that the goals set down in the contract have been met, and it is agreed that no further involvement is required at that time. Likewise, either party can initiate the re-opening of the service, if and when deemed necessary.

Upon termination, a final review session should be held by all parties to assess the degree of attainment of goals and objectives set out in the contract. A *Report on Case Receiving Family Support Service-Form 14-843* should be completed at that time.

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.12 ADMINISTRATION OF SERVICE - OVERVIEW	
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The program supervisor maintains the authority to assign families to the Family Support Worker. A Social Worker referral for Family Support Services must be supported with a narrative assessment of the family's needs and capabilities.

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.13 ASSIGNMENT AND SCHEDULING OF CASES	
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Assignment of new/reopened cases should be done as active cases close or service is being reduced according to a case management plan. Current client's service hours should not be reduced without prior notification and planning to accommodate these changes. If Family Support Workers have a full workload and are unable to take on additional families, in an emergency, consideration should be given to purchasing short-term services in the community, following the required procedure. As movement takes place in the Family Support Worker's workload, new/reopened cases can be assigned.

Children and families on the Protective Intervention caseload will require more frequent and longer periods of service than others. This is to be kept in mind when assigning and scheduling.

Scheduling is recommended to be done on a weekly/monthly basis with flexibility built in for case movement, regarding closing and adding of cases. It is recommended that a constant block of time (amount to be determined by Family Support Worker and Program Supervisor) be set aside every week for office work, for supervisory sessions, consultations with Social Workers, compiling statistics, etc. Families should be given a copy of their schedule as it is completed. It is recommended that days and hours be consistent so that the family members can make plans for other activities. Family Support Workers must strictly adhere to the set schedule. If unable to keep a scheduled home visit due to sick leave, personal emergencies, etc., the Family Support Worker must advise her supervisor who in turn will ensure that the family is notified. Family Support Workers should strive to work with families at times when the children are in the home wherever possible, the children being the focus of the service. This may require the implementation of flexible work hours for the Family Support worker, eg. to work with a family in the early morning getting the children ready for school or working with a family in the evening while children are completing homework, preparing for bedtime, etc.

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.14 REPORTING AND RECORDING	
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Recording of home visits by the Family Support Worker are to be completed on a per visit basis, using the *Family Support Services Visit Form 14-845*. The Family Support Worker is to record objectively, write observations (facts) and/or information given by family members, not opinions or speculation. These records become part of the file and, as such, may be used in court. The Family Support Worker may be required at any time to appear in court to substantiate and explain their recordings.

The Family Support Worker's recordings are to be a part of the file on the family - they are not to be kept in a separate file. This is to ensure that the family's current Social Worker is kept updated and any new Social Workers can review what has happened in the past.

Workload statistical data is to be completed at month-end, using the statistical report *Form 14-844*.

SECTION 5: FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES 5.15 SUPERVISION	
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The Program Supervisor will carry the major responsibility of directing the Family Support Services program. Responsibilities will include the supervision of the Family Support Workers, completing work performance evaluations, assignment of Family Support Workers to individual families, consultation prior to terminating on-going cases, provision of in-service training and scheduling of Family Support Worker's workload.