

Orientation Module One
History and Philosophy
of FCSS



**Family and Community Support
Services Association of Alberta**
1998

Orientation Module One

History and Philosophy of FCSS

Produced for



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Orientation Module One

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This is one of **eight orientation modules** developed by the Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta for:

- Municipal councils and Metis Settlements who are entering the FCSS program for the first time, or re-entering FCSS on a different basis than previously;
- Newly elected municipal or Metis Settlement councils who are learning about FCSS programs that already exist in their communities;
- FCSS board members, directors and other individuals who are new to the FCSS program.

The other seven orientation modules are:

- Module Two: The FCSS Mandate and Program Guidelines
- Module Three: Community Development and Community Planning
- Module Four: Managing Your FCSS Program
- Module Five: Legal and Financial Accountability in FCSS
- Module Six: Marketing Your FCSS Program
- Module Seven: Networking in FCSS
- Module Eight: Suggested Orientation Activities

All modules are available from the FCSS Association.

Orientation Module One: History and Philosophy of FCSS

What is FCSS?

Family and Community Support Services is:

- **a legal partnership** between the Province of Alberta and municipalities or Metis Settlements;
- **an agreement** under which locally-driven preventive initiatives can be developed, to enhance the well-being of individuals, families and communities;
- **a funding arrangement** through which the province provides a pre-determined grant for locally-driven initiatives, and municipalities match that grant by providing at least 20 percent of the funding;
- **a philosophy** under which:
 - local people can influence things that affect them;
 - communities can be innovative and creative;
 - citizen participation, self-help and volunteerism are encouraged;
 - human growth and potential are enhanced;
- **a continually evolving** program that encourages communities to strengthen themselves.

Family and Community Support Services began in 1966, and was known as *Preventive Social Services*. The program offered the opportunity for communities to identify and select projects of importance, develop locally-based, volunteer supported services and receive a significant level of financial support from the municipal and provincial governments. Although the program has undergone many changes in its years of existence, the basic principles remain.

The basic beliefs behind FCSS

Since its inception, FCSS has been built on a foundation of belief in the power of the community – the idea that we know our own needs best and can meet them better when we work together.

This includes the following basic beliefs:

- A community's most valuable resources are its people. Investments made in developing and supporting people pay dividends in all areas of community life.
- We can make valuable contributions to our communities, and communities need the contributions of all of us.
- Voluntarism is inherently valuable, in that it allows us, as citizens, to contribute directly to our community, which in turn is linked to positive outcomes for volunteers.
- Partnerships are fundamental to community building.
- Municipalities and Metis Settlements can support individuals, programs, families and communities by providing well designed preventive programs.
- Each municipality and Metis Settlement has unique programming needs and is best able to determine what those needs are.

Vision

As stated in the FCSS Program Handbook, FCSS has a **vision for the future** that involves *Alberta's diverse people building strong communities through positive, caring interaction and mutual respect.*

This vision includes seeing and understanding the need for FCSS programs to be flexible and adaptable, varying from community to community in order to meet identified needs. FCSS programs enhance opportunities for individuals and communities to forge innovative, creative partnerships and work together to keep communities strong.

Where FCSS came from . . .

FCSS has been in existence since 1966 and has a long, colorful history. If you refer to your FCSS Program Handbook, you will find a page of significant dates. The historical overview included here simply adds a bit of background to those milestones already identified. This brief look back is included because there are pieces of the past that can help you understand how and why FCSS began, and how it got where it is today.

In the beginning (1966)

- Alberta was booming.
- The Social Credit government had been in power for some time, was very stable and had uncommitted funds.
- Municipalities had responsibility for administering child protection and welfare programs, under an 80/20 cost share with the Province. There were concerns at the provincial level that child protection was handled differently in different communities throughout Alberta;
- The federal government initiated the Canada Assistance Plan, which provided new money to be used for prevention and for strengthening communities.

The *Preventive Social Services (PSS)* program was an offer the Province made to the municipalities. Under this offer

- The Province would take responsibility for child protection and welfare;
- Municipalities would be responsible for preventive programs that could
 - strengthen families;
 - enhance the community's preventive social services;
 - allow communities to decide what programs they needed;
 - be cost shared 80/20.
- The Province would have significant influence over the program, such as:
 - input into the hiring of local PSS directors;
 - pre-approval of all proposed projects;
 - provincial consultants who would work with each program.

In the early days, PSS programs typically developed very hands-on services, such as child care programs for working parents and homemaker services for the frail elderly. Over time many programs in this category were spun off into their own systems. The strength of the PSS program was that it allowed communities the flexibility to determine their own priorities, and their own ways of meeting needs. Some PSS programs provided direct service while others chose to act as the catalyst for identifying needs and encouraging others to meet them.

By the end of the 70s, things were changing

- The long-time Social Credit leadership had been swept away and the Conservatives were into their second term of power.
- The province accepted responsibility for a standardized day care system. This led to the formation of the Day Care Branch and the removal of a large portion of the PSS budget.
- A new Minister of Social Services determined the need for a complete PSS review.
- Municipalities across Alberta stated overwhelmingly that PSS should continue.

During the 1980s

- In 1981 the *Preventive Social Services Act* was repealed and a new *Family and Community Support Services Act* was put in place. This new Act still assured the 80/20 funding split, but provided more emphasis on community control and an increase in local autonomy. The major differences included:
 - regulations which described broad service parameters;
 - no pre-approval required for projects;
 - funding standardized to a per capita grant system;
 - funding earmarked for projects;
 - funding for administration;
 - funding provided in advance quarterly installments rather than yearly.
- A shift was made so that the municipal government's 20 percent contribution could, in fact, come from other sources than the municipal budget.
- FCSS was moved, for a time, to the Department of Health, then back to Family and Social Services.

And then came the 90s

- Another review took place.
- In 1994 FCSS became part of Municipal Affairs and the provincial program infrastructure was disbanded. This included abolishing the Provincial Director and Consultant positions.
- At the same time, it was decreed that municipalities could take the funding they had been receiving for FCSS and add it to general revenue, to be used for any municipal program, as part of the unconditional municipal grant program.

- Simultaneously, the Province initiated a re-design process for child and family services, intended to foster more community involvement in the well-being of children.
- In 1996, FCSS was returned to Alberta Family and Social Services, due to the number of communities who expressed overwhelming support for the program.
- A steering committee developed a new design for the program. The Family and Community Support Services Act remained the same, but there is a new Conditional Agreement Regulation that specifies:
 - Municipal governments can still choose whether or not to operate an FCSS program. But if they take provincial money that is allocated for FCSS, they must use it for FCSS and not for general revenue;
 - The 80/20 funding rule still applies. However, the 20 percent must come from the municipal operating budget, not from other community sources;
 - The municipality or Metis Settlement now receives only one grant for FCSS instead of separate grants for program and administration;
 - Service parameters were somewhat revised with less emphasis on services for particular groups and more emphasis on service results that strengthen individuals, families and communities.

How our history can help us move forward

As members of new FCSS programs, or as new members of existing FCSS programs, you may find it useful to have some sense of where the program has been. The knowledge and understanding of your colleagues and your municipal representatives may vary depending upon when they were first exposed to FCSS. One of your first tasks may be to assist those people to understand the program in its current form.

Though FCSS has undergone significant change, there are underlying themes that have never been compromised:

- The emphasis on prevention;
- The commitment to community volunteerism;
- The partnership between the provincial and municipal or Metis Settlement government;
- The 80/20 funding relationship;
- The flexibility of local decision-making within broad provincial guidelines.

The FCSS program continues to be a positive example of cooperation between provincial and local governments, in order to meet community needs. This cooperation has taken different forms and will likely undergo further adaptation. But as we move into the future, we can feel confident that this special partnership will continue to develop and realize new potential.

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Presentation Materials



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What is FCSS?

- **A legal partnership;**
- **A contract;**
- **A funding arrangement;**
- **A philosophy;**
- **An ongoing evolution.**

The basic beliefs behind FCSS

- **A community's most valuable resources are its people.**
- **We can make valuable contributions to our communities.**
- **Voluntarism is inherently valuable.**
- **Partnerships are fundamental to community building.**
- **Communities can support individuals, families and communities through well designed preventive programs.**
- **Each community is unique and best able to determine needs.**

FCSS Vision

***Alberta's diverse people building strong communities
through positive, caring interaction and mutual
respect.***

Where FCSS came from . . .

- **In the beginning (1966);**
- **By the end of the 70s, things were changing;**
- **Continuation in the 80s;**
- **And then came the 90s.**