

Orientation Module Seven
Networking in FCSS



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

Orientation Module Seven
Networking in FCSS

Produced for
**Family and Community Support Services
Association of Alberta**



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Orientation Module Seven

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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 One: History and Philosophy of FCSS
- 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 Eight: Suggested Orientation Activities

All modules are available from the FCSS Association.

Module Seven: Networking in FCSS

According to the Torront Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary, networking is "*establishment and use of a system of professional contacts in business and industry for such purposes as mutual guidance and exchange of information about jobs.*"

One of the most basic philosophies of the FCSS program involves people working together. Networking is a core FCSS skill – it provides connections with others that form the basis of identifying needs, solving problems and serving your community.

Networking allows you to:

- learn from others' experiences;
- share information, expertise and, sometimes, resources;
- identify issues in common;
- learn together . . .;
- establish the basis for possible partnerships and collaborations on matters of mutual benefit.

Networking is the beginning of collaboration.

In this module we are going to focus on

- Networking within the Provincial FCSS community
 - FCSS Association of Alberta
 - FCSS Directors Network
 - Provincial Government FCSS Unit
- Networking in your own community

Networking within the Provincial FCSS Community

FCSS Association of Alberta

1. What it is

The Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta (FCSS Association) is a provincial organization of FCSS programs. The Association is private, non-government, not-for-profit and voluntary (that is, membership in the Association is optional). The Association is a registered society operated by and for the member FCSS programs.

2. How to Contact the FCSS Association

Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta
Box 11054
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3K4
Phone 464-3136 (please note, effective January 1999, the area code is 780)

3. Purpose of the Association

The objectives of the FCSS Association of Alberta are:

- To strengthen and maintain a structured system of networking and sharing of information and expertise among communities, boards and staff;
- To investigate and pursue common issues and concerns affecting preventive social programs and those boards and other groups duly appointed by a Local Authority to administer such programs;
- To advocate on behalf of local communities and programs to the general public, municipal governments, regional service/governance bodies, provincial agencies and authorities and national agencies and authorities;
- To provide orientation and education to individuals, communities, boards and staff via conferences, training events and newsletters;
- To provide assistance regarding concerns or issues of a local or regional nature, where possible and when specifically requested, to individual FCSS Boards or other groups duly appointed by Local Authorities to provide preventive social programs.
- To develop critical tools to assist communities and programs to meet local mandates and needs.

4. Association values and principles

The FCSS Association partnership is based on the following beliefs:

- The value of prevention as a means of optimizing individual and community development;
- The importance of voluntarism and volunteers to create and nurture healthy and productive communities;
- The benefit to local communities and municipalities of mutual support and cooperation;

- The need and value of open communications with and among each other;
- The need to collaborate in the research and analysis of social concerns;
- The importance of local autonomy for determining local service needs, priorities and delivery mechanisms.

5. Membership

The governing body of any FCSS program in Alberta may join the FCSS Association by paying the annual membership fees.

A “governing body” is whatever group of citizens has been appointed or delegated by a municipality or Metis Settlement to oversee operation of the FCSS program. Thus a “governing body” could be the group of citizens appointed by a municipal council or Metis Settlement to oversee FCSS in its community (either as an FCSS Board or a Community Services Board); a group of citizens appointed by all the municipalities in a multi-community FCSS Program; or, in some cases, a “governing body” could be a municipal council or Metis Settlement which has chosen to act as an FCSS Board.

Membership in the FCSS Association entitles a program to have privileges at annual and special Association meetings, and to be included in consultation and other processes and activities initiated by the Association (such as development of these orientation modules).

As well, associate membership in the FCSS Association is open to other groups, organizations, government departments, corporations and individuals who believe in the objectives of the Association, who are broadly involved in preventive social programming and who pay the annual fee.

6. FCSS Regions

To foster greater communication and support within the FCSS community, the Association has identified eight regions, which are named:

- Northwest
- Northeast
- Yellowhead
- Edmonton-Evergreen
- West Central
- East Central
- Calgary-Bow River
- South

Most FCSS regions hold regional gatherings of FCSS governing bodies and staff at least once each year. While each region is unique, in general these gatherings provide opportunities for learning, for discussing common issues and for sharing information and resources. As well, each region selects representatives to the provincial FCSS Association board (see next page).

7. Association Board

The FCSS Association is governed by a 16-person board with representatives as follows:

- one elected or appointed governing body member from each of the Northwest, Northeast, Yellowhead, West Central, East Central and South regions;
- two elected or appointed governing body members from each of the Edmonton-Evergreen and Calgary-Bow River regions. Of these one must be from the City of Edmonton and one from Evergreen area; one must be from the City of Calgary and one from Bow River area;
- Five directors are appointed or elected from the FCSS Directors' Network;
- The President is elected by the entire membership at the Association's annual meeting.

The FCSS Association is operated through the volunteer time contributions of board members and other FCSS representatives. The Association has one part-time secretary who looks after the paperwork associated with operating the board, and who also looks after annual billing of fees.

8. Examples of Association activities and projects

- a major event of the Association is the annual provincial conference, which typically includes educational workshops, opportunities to talk about province-wide issues, opportunities for networking and sharing resources and information with other FCSS programs, discussion of resolutions to be put forward to the province, and the annual general meeting of the Association;
- The Association is involved in activities which provide the collective perspective of FCSS Board members to help in the continued development of the FCSS program;
- The Association puts forward the views of its members to the Minister of Alberta Family and Social Services, and to other provincial government ministers. In 1998 the Association is working with the department to determine how the two organizations can work jointly to support individual FCSS programs and continue to improve the FCSS program.
- The Association continues to develop additional ways to support new and experienced FCSS programs, through:
 - creation of resource material;
 - regional and provincial networks;
 - relationships with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association; Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties; Inter City Forum on Social Planning;
 - direct assistance when requested by individual FCSS Boards;
 - other special projects.

9. Benefits of Membership

- Being a member strengthens the numbers when communicating with the Minister of Family and Social Services, and other provincial ministers who may affect FCSS;
- The more boards that join, the greater is the credibility and impact of positions put forth by the FCSS Association;
- The more boards that join, the greater the opportunity for information sharing among boards;
- The more boards that join, the greater likelihood of identifying common issues and concerns;
- Member boards influence the direction of the Association, to help ensure that Association activities are relevant to individual FCSS Boards;
- Member boards can introduce resolutions and vote at the annual and special Association meetings;
- Member boards can use resources that are developed by the Association.

FCSS Directors' Network

- **An informal network of great value**

Most FCSS Directors value their contact with Directors in other communities. As the only person in the community with their role, FCSS Directors often find there is nobody else who understands all aspects of their job.

As one person said, "I consider my involvement with the Directors' Network an essential part of my job."

The Directors' Network is informal in the sense that it is totally voluntary and the form and activities of the Directors' Network are as chosen and developed by the participating directors.

Once a year the FCSS Directors' Network chooses a Chair and Vice-Chair, and also selects three additional Directors who will, along with the Chair and Vice-Chair, serve as the five Director representatives on the provincial FCSS Association Board.

- **The province-wide Directors' Conference**

Twice a year, the FCSS Directors' Network hosts a provincial event that typically includes:

- workshops;
- discussion of issues;
- sharing information and resources; and
- opportunities for developing a common approach to a province-wide issue.

- **Regional gatherings**

In many parts of the province, FCSS Directors within each of the eight regions gather at least twice a year for information exchange, learning and resource sharing. Sometimes Directors in a particular region work together on a particular issue. For example, in some regions, FCSS Directors (with the support of their boards) planned a common strategy for working with Child and Family Services in their part of the province.

- **How to contact the FCSS Directors' Network**

- telephone any FCSS Director in your part of the province to learn what regional activities are happening in your region;
- contact the FCSS Association at 464-3136 (effective January 1999 the area code is 780) to learn the current Chair and Vice-Chair.

FCSS WebBoard

The FCSS WebBoard has been set up on the Internet. You need Netscape v 2 or higher or Explorer v 3 or higher as your browser.

After you are on the Internet, go to your web browser, then enter the following URL:
[http://psn.sas.ab.ca/webboard/\\$webb.exe/~77](http://psn.sas.ab.ca/webboard/$webb.exe/~77). Further instructions will await you there.

The site has public areas, which is what you see when you first log in, and a few private FCSS Conference areas that you will not see until the FCSSADMIN gives you access, usually within 24 hours of your signing on, if you made it clear that you are with FCSS in your personal description.

The FCSS WebBoard is set up as an interactive area where members of the Alberta FCSS Community, board members and staff, can share ideas and information.

Provincial Government FCSS Unit

Alberta Family and Social Services is responsible for financial administration of the FCSS programs and for ensuring adherence to the FCSS Act and Conditional Agreement Regulation.

The Provincial FCSS Director, Patrick (Mic) Farrell, and two Program Review Officers, Veronica Facundo and Debbie Trachimowich, are available to provide legislation interpretation, clarify policies and assist municipalities and Metis Settlements in determining project eligibility.

The Provincial FCSS Unit can be reached at:

Alberta Family and Social Services
Family and Community Support Services
3rd Floor, Centre West Building
10035-108 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 3E1

Telephone:	Mic Farrell	427-4421
	Debbie Trachimowich	427-2803
	Veronica Facundo	427-2803

Fax 422-0912

Networking within FCSS

If you would like to have a complete directory of all the networking links you might use, call the FCSS Association and ask for *Networking within FCSS*, which has a listing of:

- FCSS Directors' Networking Coordinating Team;
- FCSS Association of Alberta Board of Directors;
- Directory of FCSS programs;
- Directory of FCSS e-mail addresses;
- Instructions on how to get to the FCSS WebBoard;
- Provincial staff.

Networking in your community

Just as networking is valuable within the provincial FCSS community, your FCSS program will need to network with people within your local area. Local networking shares all the same purposes of provincial networking, as well as the benefits.

Traditionally, networking has been one of the things for which FCSS has been known. Not only have FCSS programs gained a reputation for developing their own local networks, they have also become famous for their ability to foster community networks between like-minded people or people with common issues.

There are a number of different types of people with whom you will network in your community:

- *formal and informal power structures*: municipal or Metis Settlement council; opinion leaders;
- *agency groups*: community education councils, Ministerial Associations, Interagency groups, any group that gathers together representatives of different sectors;
- *provincial and federal government agencies* that provide services in your community, such as AADAC, Mental Health, Social Services, Employment Insurance;
- *regional agencies*: Child and Family Services, health authorities, regional school divisions, regional planning agencies;
- *local service clubs and lodges*: Rotary, Kiwanis, Knights of Columbus, Kin/ettes, Elks, Moose, etc.;
- *local volunteer groups*: for seniors, youth, cultural groups, families, other sub-groups.

Conditions in which collaboration is most likely

Here are some factors that can either build bridges or put up barriers to community collaboration. You might like to examine your own FCSS program (or your community) to see which of these factors are present. Can you begin to build (or enhance) some bridges? Do you need to remove some barriers?

Community Collaboration ... it happens and it works!

BRIDGES	BARRIERS
<p>Perceptions, Visions, Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • perception of mutual self-interest • compatible dreams • shared values 	<p>Perceptions, Visions, Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • belief we have nothing in common • incompatible goals • conflicting values
<p>Interpersonal Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • openness; willingness to be vulnerable • trust • relationships • internal security 	<p>Interpersonal Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • closed; denying or hiding problems • fear, distrust, anger • operating only from role • insecurity
<p>Organizational Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunities to be in the same place at the same time • high tolerance for ambiguity • value differences • fewer resources; need help 	<p>Organizational Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rigid structures; isolation; restricted communication channels • need for bureaucratic control • “cloned” skills and styles • ample resources; no need to cooperate
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • look beneath the paradoxes • share credit and learnings • have someone able and willing to organize process • create agendas, send minutes, communicate • build and nurture good will • start small; create confidence; build on success 	<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assume “either/or” can’t be changed • take credit or assign blame • no individual or agency able or willing or able to be aware of process • assume it will just happen; do not communicate • be surprised when support not there • believe we have to “know” before we start

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Presentation Materials



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Benefits of Being Connected with Others:

- **learn from others' experiences**
- **share information, expertise, resources**
- **identify issues in common**
- **learn together**
- **establish the base for partnerships and collaborations**

Networking is the beginning of collaboration

About the FCSS Association of Alberta

- **non-government**
- **not-for-profit**
- **voluntary**
- **registered society**
- **owned and operated by and for member
FCSS programs**

Purpose of the FCSS Association of Alberta:

- **To strengthen and maintain a structured system of networking and sharing of information;**
- **To investigate and pursue common issues and concerns;**
- **To advocate on behalf of local communities and programs;**
- **To provide orientation and education;**
- **To provide assistance regarding concerns or issues of a local or regional nature;**
- **To develop critical tools to assist communities and programs.**

FCSS Regions

- **Northwest**
- **Northeast**
- **Yellowhead**
- **Edmonton-Evergreen**
- **West Central**
- **East Central**
- **Calgary-Bow River**
- **South**

FCSS Association

Activities and Benefits

Activities:

- **annual provincial conference;**
- **putting forward views of members to government;**
- **gathering collective perspective to help continue development of the FCSS program;**
- **developing additional ways to support new and experienced FCSS programs.**

Benefits:

- **strengthen the power of numbers when communicating with government;**
- **increased credibility and impact of positions put forward by FCSS;**
- **greater opportunities for information sharing;**
- **likelihood of identifying common issues and concerns;**
- **introduce resolutions and vote at the annual and special Association meetings;**
- **use resources that are developed by the Association.**

Directors' Network

- **workshops;**
- **discussion of issues;**
- **sharing information and resources;**
- **opportunities for developing a common approach to a province-wide issue;**
- **regional gatherings.**

Networking in your community

- ***formal and informal power structures;***
- ***agency groups;***
- ***provincial and federal government agencies;***
- ***regional agencies;***
- ***local service clubs;***
- ***local volunteer groups.***

