



Program Coordination Protocol

Between

Child Intervention Services (CIS)
(including the
Supports for Permanency (SFP) Program)

And

**Family Support for Children with
Disabilities (FSCD) Program**

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Introduction

- The Child Intervention Services (CIS) program is delivered by the Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) as well as by the Delegated First Nations Agencies (DFNAs) for children and families living on reserve. (For the purposes of this document, the term “CIS caseworkers” refers to program staff delivering the CIS program in both the CFSA and DFNA).
- The Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) program is voluntary and available to children in Alberta who have a disability including Aboriginal children who live on reserve. Whether on or off reserve, the program is delivered by the CFSAs. For children and families living on reserve, the FSCD program works in collaboration with the Band as well as coordinates services with available federal government programs and services.
- This protocol outlines how the CIS (as delivered by the CFSAs and DFNAs) and the FSCD programs will work together to best support children and families.

Principles

- Children with disabilities and their families who receive support from Children's Services should benefit from all available knowledge, expertise and services provided in a collaborative and coordinated manner.
- Children with disabilities and their families, who receive supports and services through both the FSCD and CIS programs (whether they live on or off reserve), benefit most from a consistent and coordinated approach to case planning.
- Children with disabilities and their families should receive the supports and services they require in the least disruptive manner and in a manner that recognizes and values family as the primary source of care and support for children.
- Consultation and service coordination between the program areas ensures that the needs of children and families are addressed through a seamless service delivery.

Intent

- To emphasize the importance of the FSCD and CIS program areas working together in the best interests of children with disabilities and their families.
- To support a consultative model as well as collaboration and joint case planning between the CIS and FSCD program areas even where one program is not mandated to provide direct services.
- To ensure that when a child and family come to the attention of Children's Services, regardless of which program has first contact with the family, they receive the supports and services they require in the least disruptive manner, from the most appropriate program or the coordinated support of more than one program when required.
- To clarify casework roles and responsibilities for the delivery of supports and services for children with disabilities and their families accessing supports from both program areas.
- To ensure the coordination of supports and services so that children with disabilities and their families are not limited in terms of their access to appropriate supports and services by virtue of their accessing services from one Children's Services program area over another.
- To ensure the coordination of supports and services so that children with disabilities and their families do not experience a gap in services as they transition from one Children's Services program to another.
- To ensure that children with disabilities do not come into the care of the Director under *The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* where disability related supports and services might otherwise be available to strengthen the family's ability to continue caring for their child in the family home.
- To ensure that adoptive parents or private guardians are aware of the disability related supports and services that may be available prior to finalizing the adoption or private guardianship for a child with a disability who is in care under a Permanent Guardianship Order (PGO) or Permanent Guardianship Agreement (PGA).

Child Intervention Services (CIS) Program Summary

- Child Intervention Services are guided by legislated principles under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act (Enhancement Act)*. The *Act* places a greater emphasis on assessment of children in determining the need for intervention and the type of intervention that will be provided. This is based on the belief that a thorough assessment of child and family strengths and needs will result in better case planning and more effective interventions and shorter timeframes to achieve the intervention objectives. The *Act* requirement, to assess all referrals or requests for service, supports the requirement of shortened timeframes for children in care and the achievement of earlier permanency for children. The completion of thorough assessments is vital to reaching these objectives.

Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) Program Summary

- In accordance with the *Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) Act*, the FSCD program works in partnership with families who have a child with a disability to assist the family in promoting their child's healthy growth and development. The Program recognizes families as the primary source of care and support for children and the services provided do not replace parents' responsibilities in raising their child or diminish their decision-making authority as guardian of their child. The FSCD worker gathers information from the parents and with the parents' consent consults with relevant health or community professionals as needed, to better understand the impact of the disability for the child and their family. The FSCD worker assists the family to identify their needs and goals based on the child's unique and extraordinary needs as well as the family's individual circumstances. The FSCD worker supports the family to identify and access appropriate supports within their community and may provide a range of services through an agreement with the family based on their individual assessed need.

Consultation, Coordination and Transition Planning

- Children with disabilities and their families may receive supports and services through both the Child Intervention Services (CIS) and Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) program areas.

- Where the two program areas jointly serve children with disabilities, the CIS staff (from the CFSA or DFNA) and FSCD workers will work together to ensure that children and their families receive the supports and services they require in the least disruptive manner, from the most appropriate program or the coordinated support of both program areas.
- Where a child with a disability is in the care of the Director under a Temporary or, Permanent Guardianship Order, or a Permanent Guardianship Agreement, the FSCD program cannot maintain an active FSCD Agreement to provide disability related services beyond the first 30 days that a child is under the guardianship of the director. Beyond the first 30 days, the FSCD program may continue to have an open file for a short time during the transition from FSCD to CIS and to provide consultation regarding disability related needs and services.
- Where a child with a disability remains in the care of their parent/guardian and the child's parent/guardian maintains full guardianship responsibilities, the FSCD program may continue to provide disability related supports and services at the same time as the family is receiving CIS services, including family enhancement and intervention services. CIS and FSCD will work together to provide the family expertise support and services as required in both program areas without duplication.
- An adoptive family or a family with a Private Guardianship Order for a child with a disability may receive both Supports for Permanence (SFP) and FSCD supports and services concurrently. The FSCD program may provide disability support and services and at the same time SFP provides supports to promote a successful placement or adoption.
- CIS and FSCD programs will work together to best support children with disabilities and their families by:
 - ▶ consulting with each others program areas regarding children with disabilities where supports from both program areas may be required or where the information and expertise of the other program area is relevant to case planning,
 - ▶ determining, in a collaborative fashion, which program is able to provide the required supports and services,
 - ▶ coordinating the provision of the supports and services with no overlap, gaps or duplication of services across program areas,
 - ▶ proactively identifying and addressing the child and families needs through joint case planning, including transitioning planning for youth,
 - ▶ working together as a team to ensure that families are supported in the transition between the program areas, providing for a smooth transition where the child's file is not closed by one program until the other program and services are in place.

- Consultation with each others program areas regarding the needs of a child with a disability and their family may occur at any time where it is identified that disability related supports may be required, family enhancement services may be needed or possible protection concerns exist.
- Neither the CIS nor FSCD program areas will close their file without facilitating the transition from one program to the other and consulting with the other program to ensure that the child and family are receiving the supports and services they require.

Procedures

CIS Intake/Assessment

- When CIS conducts an intake or, during an assessment, if it is identified that the child has a disability or may have a disability, the CIS caseworker contacts the FSCD program to inquire if the child and family are receiving supports and services from the FSCD program.
- Whether or not a child and family are receiving supports and services from the FSCD program, FSCD staff are available on a consultative basis to discuss the child's disability, disability related needs, programs, services and other disability resources.

When the child and family are not receiving FSCD supports and services...

- The CIS worker provides the family with information about the FSCD program as a possible source of support and refers the family to FSCD.
- In order for the FSCD program to enter into an agreement to provide services, other than information, referral and coordination supports, the parent/guardian would need to agree to discuss their child's and family's needs and participate in an intake/initial identification of needs. The FSCD program would then need to determine if the child is eligible for the program and complete an assessment of need with the family.
- If the CIS caseworker determines that a child and family do not require intervention services, the CIS caseworker consults with the FSCD program before concluding the intake and closing their file to provide any relevant information as well as to ensure that the family has been connected to the FSCD program where appropriate.

When the child and family are receiving FSCD supports and services...

- The CIS and FSCD workers discuss relevant information about the child and family and the disability related needs.
- The CIS caseworker may request the assistance of the FSCD worker with their assessment where appropriate and in the best interests of the child and family. (For example, if the FSCD worker has a good relationship with the family it may be a support to the family to include the FSCD worker in a meeting between CIS and the family to discuss the child's disability and related needs.) The FSCD worker would not be conducting the assessment but would be working in the context of supporting the family and coordinating supports with the CIS caseworker.
- The two programs work together to identify the family's needs, considering if the child and family's needs are disability related and can be met through the FSCD program without the need for CIS services.
- The CIS caseworker determines if there are intervention concerns for the child and the need for CIS involvement.
- Where there are protection concerns and the need for CIS services, the CIS and FSCD program work collaboratively as a team to address the family's needs and ensure that there is not duplication of services.

FSCD Intake/Initial Identification of Needs or Reassessment of Needs

- When FSCD first has contact with a child and family, the FSCD worker inquires about the family's involvement with other programs and services including CIS. If the family is receiving supports through CIS, the FSCD worker contacts CIS to inquire as to the child and family's involvement with CIS programs.
- When the child and family are receiving CIS services the FSCD and CIS caseworkers discuss relevant information about the child and family and the disability related needs.
- The two programs work together to address the family's needs and ensure that there is not duplication of services.

When the child and family are not involved with a CIS program and the FSCD worker is aware of possible protection concerns for the child ...

- The FSCD program will make a report to the CIS program area immediately and provide any relevant information to assist the CIS program in determining the need for an intake/investigation.
- If someone is reporting concerns to the FSCD program, the FSCD worker advises the reporter to contact CIS directly to convey the information and then follows up to ensure that the report was made.
- The CIS caseworker assesses whether the child needs intervention services.

CIS – Family Enhancement

Children with disabilities and their families may receive Family Enhancement and FSCD services concurrently.

- The CIS caseworker and the FSCD worker together with the family determine what supports and services are required.
- The CIS caseworker and FSCD worker act as a team to coordinate which services will be provided by whom.
- Supports and services for children and families should be provided in the least disruptive manner. Depending on the nature of the child and family's needs, one worker may be identified as the primary contact for the family, rather than having workers from both programs contacting the family unnecessarily.

CIS – Custody Agreement or Custody Order

Children with disabilities and their families may receive CIS services under a custody agreement or custody order as well as FSCD services concurrently.

- Where CIS has a custody agreement or custody order the parent maintains guardianship responsibilities.
- If CIS has a custody agreement or custody order for a child with a disability, the caseworker will consult the FSCD worker to ensure that the child receives consistent disability related supports and services in the CIS placement.

- The CIS and FSCD workers, in consultation with the family and out of home caregiver, collaboratively determine what supports and services will be offered by each program area to best support the needs of the child within the child's placements during corresponding home visits and during the child's transition into the family home.
- The CIS caseworker and FSCD worker plan services so as provide consistency for the child both in and out of home as well as to avoid any interruption or gap in services when the child transitions back home.

CIS – Supervision Order

Children with disabilities and their families may receive CIS services under a supervision order as well as FSCD services concurrently.

- The CIS caseworker and FSCD workers collaboratively determine with the family what supports and services will be offered by each program area to best support the needs of the family and the child.

CIS – Temporary Guardianship Order

- When a child with a disability and their family are in receipt of FSCD supports and services and the CIS caseworker removes the child from the family home, assuming guardianship responsibilities for the child under a Temporary Guardianship Order (TGO), the FSCD program may continue to have an active FSCD Agreement and open file for up to 30 days.
- The FSCD and CIS caseworker will collaborate in joint case planning and coordination of services to facilitate a smooth transition for the family between program areas.
- Where the child is in the care of the Director for a period of longer than 30 days under a Temporary Guardianship Order, the FSCD program will terminate their active FSCD agreement.
- While the FSCD program would no longer have an active agreement for the child, the program may continue to have an open file for the child during a transition period in order to provide information, referral and coordination supports as well as to work together with the CIS program as part of a case planning team or on a consultative basis.
- The FSCD and CIS programs work together to:

- ▶ identify appropriate supports and services for the child with a disability,
- ▶ ensure that the child receives required disability related supports and services,
- ▶ ensure continuity of services, and
- ▶ facilitate a seamless transition for the child and family between the programs.

Transitioning a Child Back Home

When a child with a disability who is the subject of a Custody Agreement, a Custody Order, or is in the care of the Director under a Temporary Guardianship Order is returning home

the following steps should be followed.

- Where the FSCD program is also providing supports and services for the child and family or has been participating on a consultative basis or as part of the case planning team with CIS, the FSCD worker will take a more active role in the joint case planning and coordination of disability related services for the child's return home.
- If the FSCD program is not participating on an ongoing basis as part of the case planning team, the CIS caseworker will contact the FSCD program well in advance of the child's planned return home in order to initiate joint case planning.
- Prior to the child's return home, both CIS and FSCD programs, in consultation with the family will proactively identify, plan and coordinate supports and services to support a smooth transition for the child's return home. It will be determined what may be offered by both programs to best support the child and family. CIS will continue to work with the family regarding any protection concerns. FSCD will work proactively to have disability related supports and services in place upon the child's return home. Once at home, the child and their family will receive the coordinated support of both programs. Neither the CIS nor FSCD program will close their file without consulting with the other program to ensure that the family is receiving the support and services they require.
- While the FSCD program cannot start providing actual services before the child's return home, planning and coordination of services should be done in advance to avoid any gap in services.
- It is important to note that the FSCD program is a voluntary program and that some families may choose not to access supports and services.

Transition Planning For Youth in Care

- The FSCD program is available on a consultative basis to provide disability related resource information as well as assist with case planning for youth with disabilities who are in the care of the Director.
- Transition planning for adult services should start by age 16-years.

Permanency Planning

- Children with disabilities and their families may not receive CIS services under a Permanent Guardianship Order or Agreement as well as FSCD services concurrently.
- The FSCD program can, on a consultative basis however, provide information, referral and service coordination supports to assist the CIS program with case planning.
- Where a child with a disability is under the permanent guardianship of the Director, the CIS caseworker may involve the FSCD worker on a consultative basis to work together with the CIS program as part of case planning and coordinating the team to:
 - ▶ Identify appropriate supports and services for the child with a disability,
 - ▶ Ensure that the child receives required disability related supports and services,
 - ▶ Ensure continuity of services, and
 - ▶ Facilitate a seamless transition for the child and family between the programs.

Adoption or Private Guardianship Order

Children with disabilities who are the subject of an Adoption or Private Guardianship Order may receive FSCD services concurrently.

- Where a CIS caseworker, is working with the adoptive/private guardianship applicant regarding a child with a disability, the worker:
 - ▶ consults with the FSCD program to help determine if the child may fit within the mandate of the FSCD program upon finalization of the adoption or private guardianship order,
 - ▶ advises the family of the FSCD program, and
 - ▶ coordinates a meeting with the family and a FSCD worker.
- Where the child has a disability and is likely to receive FSCD supports and services after an adoption order or private guardianship order has been granted, the FSCD

worker advises the adoptive parent of the types of supports and services that may be available.

- Prior to the adoption or private guardianship order being finalized, both programs work collaboratively and proactively to identify, plan and coordinate supports and services with the adoptive family to create a smooth transition between program areas.

Supports for Permanence (SFP) Program

Children with disabilities and their adoptive parents or private guardians may receive SFP and FSCD services concurrently.

- The CIS caseworker and FSCD worker, together with the family, identify the child's and family's needs and determine what supports and services are available through the two program areas to best meet the needs.
- The workers from the two programs work as a team to address the families needs and coordinate who will provide which services as per their program mandates and policies and who will have primary casework responsibilities. Typically, the FSCD worker will take the lead casework role in working with the family.
- The intent is to stream line supports and services for families and provide services in the least disruptive manner, including having one worker being the primary contact person for the family rather than having workers from both programs contacting the family unnecessarily.
- The workers from both programs work together and jointly complete an annual review of the child's and family's supports and services needs (or a review as required where the needs have changed significantly in a shorter time period).

Information Sharing between Programs

- The CIS/SFP and FSCD programs receive their authority from the *Enhancement Act* and the *FSCD Act*; these programs are all delivered by the Ministry of Children's Services. Certain aspects of each of these programs are suited to an integrated delivery approach where relevant information is shared for the purposes of joint case planning and service coordination. The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act* enables a public body (Children's Services and the CFSAs and DFNAs) to collect and to disclose (share) relevant personal information in specific circumstances only. CIS caseworkers and FSCD workers may disclose relevant information with each other to coordinate services as authorized under section 40 of the *FOIP Act*. In some circumstances, more than one sub-section under section 40 of

the *FOIP Act* may allow for the disclosure of personal information, however if there is no sub-section that allows for/ or requires the disclosure, the information cannot be disclosed.

- Decisions to disclose personal information must be made by the person delegated the authority to make the decision as identified in the FOIP delegation matrix, i.e. caseworker, supervisor, manager or division head/CEO. Link to delegation matrixes: <http://ahreinet.net.gov.ab.ca/department/cs/foip/delegations/>
- When personal information is obtained, document the date of the disclosure, what information was disclosed, to whom it was disclosed, the purpose for the disclosure and who authorized the disclosure. Only disclose the personal information that is necessary for the authorized purpose.
- Link to the *FOIP Act* refer to Part 2 – Protection of Privacy: http://www3.gov.ab.ca/foip/legislation/foip_act/index.cfm

Dispute Resolution

- As a part of the ongoing case consultation process within both programs, casework supervisors will be consulted in instances where mutual agreement in relation to the coordination and provision of services, or the casework responsibilities of their respective programs, cannot be reached.
- Where it is possible, a Program Specialist (e.g. FSCD and/or Child Intervention Specialist) should be accessed in order to gain additional feedback to assist with decision-making.
- If issues or concerns about program mandates, service provision and coordination or the transition of casework responsibilities between programs are not able to be resolved at the supervisory level, Program Managers will provide direction.

Cross-Training For Programs

- The CFSAs and DFNAs may arrange for in-service presentations regarding the program areas or other cross-training opportunities to facilitate information sharing and staff's understanding of other program areas.
- Cross-training of CIS and FSCD program staff will promote awareness of the intent and purpose of the other program, and provide for greater understanding of policies and procedures, as well as the types of supports and services that may be available from the other program area.
- Greater awareness of the programs and services available for children with disabilities and their families will assist staff in identifying areas for consultation,

joint case planning and coordination, enable more collaborative working relationships, and promote smoother transitioning for children and families between programs.