Family Drop – In Quality Assurance Overview

Alignment with the Early Years Service Framework
Ministry of Children and Family Development

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BC Association of Family Resource Programs

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AIM

To demonstrate how the FRP-BC expertise and Family Drop-In model addresses the new MCFD Early Years Service Framework. FRP-BC proposes streamlined, standardized and sustainable Direct Services.

While FRP-BC Standards of Practice provides quality assurance to programs and the Practitioner Advanced Certificate qualifies staff, there is evidence of FRP-BC's alignment with the Early Years Service Framework in everything FRP-BC does.

KEY ALIGNMENTS

Service Categories

FRPs promote family navigation: Through relationships, staff members orient families in their day to day community life.

FRPs provide support to families: Resilience and capacity are built through connections and use existing strengths to develop new skills.

Programs that encourage holistic early learning in children: From an ecological perspective of child development, play-based and early literacy activities engage children and families within their social context.

FRPs promote community belonging: Based on respect and inclusion, programs help newcomer and vulnerable families create a social support system.

Services and standards that promote indigenous traditions and cultural awareness: FRP-BC has ten promises in the statement of reconciliation. The Standards of Practice includes a section on cultural humility and safety.

FRP-BC facilitates Government-led Early Years Service planning: As part of a synergetic interaction, FRP-BC connects government Direct Services planning with Family Drop-In service providers.

90% of centres deliver child social and emotional competence programs

98% of participants agreed with the statement "when I come to this program, I feel welcomed and accepted"

65% of FRP-BC members provide concrete support to families accessing basic needs such as clothing and food.

90% of caregivers agreed with the statement "since coming to this program, I have become more aware of the services and resources available in my community."

8.7% of FRP participants are indigenous compared to a total 5.4% provincial aboriginal population.

Introduction

Based on the new MCFD Early Years office's Vision, Principles and Framework, we believe the Family Drop Ins are the answer to increasing Direct Service to families in the province. BC Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP-BC) promotes high quality of programs and services provided by agency members. As a provider of the Quality Assurance and Control of the programs, FRP-BC is certain that family resource programs (FRPs) are a strong factor in keeping children out of care and supporting family unity. Recent research that evaluates family-based intervention using the RE-AIM framework shows that the family-centred drop-in form of intervention is more effective, inclusive, and cost-efficient than child-centred models (Isaacs, Roman, Savahl, & Sui, 2018). It is important to notice that the RE-AIM framework, so MCFD Early Years Framework (MCFD, 2018), looks at the effectiveness in engaging the population, adoption, implementation, and maintenance of the intervention model.

Community-based drop-ins are particularly beneficial to vulnerable families with a higher risk of poor child outcomes. FRP-BC is compromised to empower all families in the province. We strengthen parenting skills and social cohesion by connecting children with their caregivers, and families to their communities. FRP-BC works so that every child in BC has a happy, memorable upbringing and a successful socioemotional and economic adulthood.

As facilitator of relationships between the government and the family resource programs, FRP-BC provides the standardization of FRPs to deliver the quality assurance MCFD wants. In demonstrating alignment with the new MCFD Early Years Service Framework, this overview validates the support, networks, coordination, and expertise of FRP-BC as the route to achieve streamlined, standardized and sustainable drop-in programs.

FRP-BC Vision and Goals

The Vision of FRP-BC establishes a connection between the motivation of the work of FRP-BC and the capacity of agencies to facilitate high quality programs. the Vision and Goals can be categorized in three objectives;

- *Raising healthy children* by ensuring all families in BC have the supports they need in their communities.

- *Building family capacity,* the drop-in model enhances accessibility of all families to the programs indifferent of their availability to attend regularly.

- *Promoting social inclusion and access to services* using the drop-in model as a community hub where families can access family support, opportunities for engagement, and referrals to services such as children with special needs, infant mental health to name a few.

FRP-BC Guiding Principles

At FRP-BC we value community, connection, inclusion, relationships and respect in all that we do. FRP-BC Principles explain how the Vision and Goals of FRP-BC are materialized in the Provincial Standards for quality assurance of family resource programs.

Promote consistent positive parenting practices and healthy, secure parent-child relationships. Empowering parents is key to a healthy child development. To maintain a family-centred approach, we provide agencies with research-based *Standards of Practice* (section 1) that assure parents develop

appropriate coping mechanisms, communication strategies, and discipline techniques (FRP-BC, 2017b).

Foster strength-based practices. Individuals become parents at different points in their lives with different levels of skill, coping ability, and support systems in place. We emphasize the skills and the abilities

that parents already have in order to boost up their confidence. Our *Standards* guide practitioners so that their interaction with families is based on equality and respect (section 1, standard 1.1).

Promote developmentally appropriate play-based learning. The environment at FRPs promotes and provides the child with the opportunity for free play. FRP-BC encourages program deliverers to include play-based activities that stimulate development of motor, cognitive, and social skills through play.

Open to all families and welcomes diversity. FRPs welcome families of all religious, ethnic, language, and sexual orientation. Diversity is seen as a strength that leads to greater learning opportunities and promotes a greater sense of community belonging (FRP-BC, 2015). While vulnerable families are often over-represented in FRPs, programs fundamentally see all parents as being worthy of support; they view parenting as a continual learning process.

Work in partnership with families and communities. As direct service providers, Family resource programs take an ecological perspective. The development of a child occurs in synergetic connection with family which is also connected to their community and social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). FRPs direct service is characterized by openness and honesty, which leads to trusting relationships from which genuine connection and development can occur (Dunst, 1995). The strength of these relationships influences how families succeed in meeting their needs and creating their own paths to access support. We contribute to community partnership with our *Standards of Practice* which are designed to help practitioners create bridges that join families with service providers (referrals), funders, businesses etc.

Commit to reflective practice. FRP-BC is compromised with the quality of programs and services delivered by agencies. Our *Standards* cover program planning and delivery (section 2, standard 6) to reflect current issues

and priorities of families and communities. FRP-BC promotes quality assurance, professional conduct and the "Write Twice" reflective practice method. Adoption of FRP-BC *Standards of Practice* qualifies members' programs. Likewise, quality of service delivered by practitioners is assured when they take the *Family Resource Practitioner Advanced Certificate* (Northern Lights College, 2018).

Contextualization of FRP-BC Work Within the MCFD Early Years Service Categories

Our association provides input to the field in a variety of ways. These include the provision of provincial *Standards of Practice* that qualify programs, the post-secondary *Family Resource Advanced Practitioner Certificate* qualifying the service, facilitator training, and networking among others. With the MCFD service categories in mind, it is illustrated how FRP-BC's work strengthens drop-in programs with tools to prevent adverse childhood experiences and achieve the desired health outcomes of positive experiences(FRP-BC, 2017a). The data gathered in FRP-BC's 2016 Monitoring Report (Malange, Sinclair, & Khazaie, 2016) materializes the category of services delivered by agencies.

How do FRPs play a part in family navigation? Family Resource Programs are not limited to providing information. Staff members guide families through the challenges they encounter. FRPs provide strong support to parents or caregivers in vulnerable situations. In line with the *Strengthening Families Approach* (Harper Browne, 2014), FRPs help parents building social connections and establish a network of support as a protective and promotive factor. In fact, 9 in 10 FRPs help parents developing social connections.

Family capacity building through referrals: Research shows that the participatory help provided to parents in drop-in programs result in the acquisition of skills to obtain resources (Trivette & Dunst, 2014)

Referrals:
- **Health and community services**: 16% of FRPs indicate being involved in connecting parents with family and disability-related services in the community; employment and housing resources are among the list.
- **Home visits**: In 12% of the FRPs, staff members take part in home visits.

What kind of support do family resource programs provide to families? FRPs are fundamentally strengths-based. They recognize that individuals become parents at different points in their lives, with different levels of skill, coping ability, and support systems in place. Family support activities foster resilience in the family. Building up a connection between parent and child can be challenging to new parents. This parent-child connection is crucial for a strong development. As a matter of fact, the great majority of FRPs (71%) provide child interactive drop-in programs. In contrast to some Early Years programs, FRPs include programming dedicated to educating parent. Half of the FRPs across the province provide workshops for

Figure 1 Strengthening Families Protective Factors

parents and parent support groups. Many FRPs work to break the cycle of poverty and sense of powerlessness in vulnerable families. In keeping with the *Strengthening Families Framework*, FRPs provide concrete support crucial in times of need. These measures include access to basic needs like food, shelter, clothing and healthcare. FRP-BC found that 65% of FRPs help parents with concrete support

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(Malange et al., 2016). The intentionally informal nature of the interaction between staff members and families offer a safe environment for caregivers to discuss their challenges. The staff in 80% of the agencies indicate helping parents understanding the process of development of their children. The staff of 7 out of 10 FRPs reported that parents will come to them asking for advice regarding child discipline issues.

Family capacity building through participatory support: At drop-ins, staff members provide participatory help encouraging parents' involvement in decision-making. Involvement helps parents to arrive at the kind of support they need. Research found that participatory help results in improvements in family well-being, functioning, and community navigation (Trivette & Dunst, 2014).

- **Interactive drop-in programs:** offered by 71% of FRP members.
- **Parent support programs**: support groups and workshops offered by 50% of members.
- **Concrete support**: clothing, food, and access basic needs provided by 65% of the members.
- **Guidance to parents**: child development guidance found in 80% of centers and child discipline guidance in 7 out of 10 centers.

How do family resource programs encourage holistic early learning? FRP practitioners take an ecological perspective to child development, meaning that they see the child and family as connected to each other as well as connected to their community and social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In practice, this means that practitioners incorporate settings and people that are important to the families in the activities (Gardiner, 2012). This ecological approach is embodied in play-based learning programs where children learn through play how to relate to their environment in a physical, social, and emotional way. More than 7 in 10 FRPs

deliver a developmental activity including creative play and age-appropriate toys.

Similarly, half of our members in British Columbia include early literacy activities while a third of them target language development. Along with cognitive development, the *Strengthening Families Framework* encompasses FRPs with the promotion of social and emotional competences so that children learn to self-regulate their emotions and communicate effectively. In general, 9 in 10 FRPs contain programs that promote social and emotional competencies in children.

Family capacity building through holistic practices: Play-based learning make parents more sensitive to their child's feelings. Empathetic interaction produces healthy attachment between caregiver and child. Healthy attachment prevents negative psychological outcomes in adulthood (Philipp, 2012).

- **Play-based learning programs:** 7 in 10 FRP members offer these programs.
- **Early literacy programs**: delivered by half of our members.
- **Language development**: provided by a third of our members.
- **Social and emotional competences programs**: 9 out of 10 member centers deliver child self-regulation and socioemotional management programs.

How do family resource programs promote community belonging? FRPs view empowering *parents* as the key to healthy child development. They recognize that individuals become parents at different points in their lives, with different levels of skill, coping ability, and support systems in place. Family support activities foster resilience in the family. FRPs promote the protective factors put forward in *the Strengthening Families Framework*.

In our data, 9 in 10 FRPs assist parents creating social connections and developing networks of support. Some 9% of FRPs, usually located in areas with high rate of immigration like Metro Vancouver, provide settlement support activities for newcomers.

Previous research by FRP-BC captured the important role of FRPs in responding to the challenges of social isolation and depression in mothers, as well as in challenges faced by immigrant and newcomer families (Pereira, Khazaie, & Gannon, 2015).

Changes in the narrative of families attending FRPs mirrors increased sense of community belonging. After some time of engagement in FRPs,

practitioners note how individuals move from "I" to "we" when referencing themselves as part of the FRP community (Charlesworth, Ellis, & Watson, 2013). Consistent with our previous qualitative research, FRPs also helped parents with mental health challenges: 80% of agencies reported that their FRP staff helped families with isolation challenges in the past week, 65% reported that their staff helped with a caregiver's mental health challenges. On the other hand, diversity is central to inclusion. 58% of agencies reported that the diversity in the demographics of their participants was one of their program's top strengths. This is consistent with the Families Canada (previously FRP Canada) e-Valuation data in which 98% of participants agreed with the statement "*when I come to this program, I feel welcomed and accepted*" and 90% of participants agreed with the statement:

"Since coming to this program, I have become more aware of the services and resources available in my community."

Family capacity building through social networking: Caregivers develop new parenting skills and strengthen existing ones when they interact with other parents. When parents sense to have stronger parenting skills, their child socioemotional behaviour improves (Trivette & Dunst, 2014).

- **Support network development:** 90% of members help families creating social connections
- **Settlement support:** 9% of our members report helping newcomers settle.
- **Isolation issues:** staff members in 80% of centers help families facing isolation.
- **Caregiver mental health support**: staff in 65% of member centers help caregivers with their mental health challenges.

How is FRP-BC and agency members supporting indigenous culture, language revitalization and cultural awareness? FRP-BC and agency members promote and support indigenous cultural awareness and language revitalization I three ways; providing cultural competence and safety principles for practitioners, building commitments of reconciliation, and providing Indigenous programming. FRPs across BC implement trauma-informed practices.

Promoting and adopting cultural competency and cultural safety principles.[1] To achieve social cohesion, inclusion and well-being of indigenous communities, FRP-BC *Standards of Practice* include a comprehensive cultural competence and cultural safety section that provides FRPs across the province with a framework that promotes and safeguards indigenous culture, cultural knowledge, and awareness.

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[1] *The FRP-BC principles (under section 5, Standard 20) derive from the engendered cultural safety principles (www.ecdip.org/culturalsafety/).*

> **Compliance mechanisms:**
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> standardization is key to quality assurance. For this reason, agencies will report to FRP-BC evidence of standards adoption including:
>
> - *Program practice description*
> - *Codes of ethics*
> - *Documented workshops, courses, webinars staff participate in*
> - *Reflective practice learning stories from an Indigenous perspective*

Staff cultural awareness: Staff will have an awareness of how their own values and beliefs influence their practice and that these may not be shared by the families they serve.

Participant values invited: Family members will be invited to share their own meaning of family and the experiences, values and beliefs related to raising healthy children.

Inclusion of culture: Staff will reflect and have an awareness of the cultural nature of their FRP and how it can be designed so that it is respectful and representative of the unique and distinct families and communities they serve or wish to serve.

Knowledge of cultural oppression: Staff will have knowledge of the historical and ongoing oppression that has impacted the families and communities they serve or wish to serve.

Programs honour cultural protocols: Member agencies will learn about and honour Indigenous protocols by initiating and/or strengthening relationships with local First Nations people.

FRP-BC Statement of Reconciliation: FRP-BC has drafted 10 commitments of reconciliation that agencies can use. Alternatively, FRP-BC helps agency members build their own commitments of reconciliation.

We acknowledge that reconciliation is the work of all Canadians. Because residential schools directly affected children and families, FRP-BC feels particularly called to publicly respond

to, and act on, the report and its calls to action.

We acknowledge that language, culture and education are vital for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities to thrive and children must have the opportunity to learn through their own culture and language.

FRP-BC makes 10 commitments that include concrete actions on:

- *Cultural training* to ensure that staff members and board members have cultural training in regard to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people.
- *Appropriate programming* based on staff training for cultural inclusiveness.
- Complementary, *consultation with local indigenous communities* enhances relationship building and ensures reconciliation. This continual reconciliation process will be maintained through a sociocultural impact assessment that evaluates the possible impacts of all FRP-BC work on indigenous communities.

Cultural capacity building in families: The rates of participation of Indigenous families and visible minorities in the programs indicate a positive contribution to community belonging and safety network building.

- **Providing services to Indigenous people**: Agencies report that about 8.7% of their participants are Indigenous, compared to approximately 5.4% of BC's total Indigenous population.
- **Providing Indigenous programs**: Currently, 5% of FRP-BC members in BC deliver Indigenous programs.

How does FRP-BC facilitate Government-Led Early Years Service Planning? FRPs are natural hubs where we work with members in harmony to engage them with all stakeholders including government. FRP-BC framework promotes a synergetic interaction between

families, drop-in member providers, and community services. Our relationship with member agencies and the provincial government results in the perfect environment whereby connections between government-led Early Years Service and direct service providers are built. FRP-BC as a bridge builder facilitates a smooth interaction to further develop stronger reporting, standardization of practices, transaction cost reduction, quality assurance, and transparency between direct service providers and the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Conclusion

The new Early Years Service Framework MCFD indicates an opportunity to transform the current child-oriented intervention approach that is less effective in attaining community cohesion. This situation has motivated FRP-BC to invite MCFD to join efforts to deliver the standardized and streamlined *Direct Service* needed in the communities of British Columbia. The review and contextualization of FRP-BC Vision and Goals, principles and services categories within the MCFD Early Years Service Framework shows the work done at FRP-BC addresses all the items proposed in the MCFD Early Years Service Framework.

This overview highlights the FRP-BC Provincial Standards of Practice, the Family Resource Practitioner Advanced Certification, data collection and partnership with Direct Service providers to illustrate the high-quality work and the expertise of the association and the family resource programs. These features are the warrant of quality assurance, family empowerment, and standardized service that MCFD needs to achieve socially sustainable and happy communities.

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