



BC Association of Family Resource Programs

INTRODUCTION

PROVINCIAL STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

Second Edition
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BC Association of Family Resource Programs

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Acknowledgements

This second edition of the Family Resource Program Provincial Standards of Practice (FRP Standards) was redeveloped from the first edition that was developed and distributed to all members of the BC Association of Family Resource Programs in 2009.

The purpose of developing a second edition of the FRP Standards was to provide all members with an outline and process for first time submissions as well as a renewal process for members who have completed the FRP Standards and received their five year Standards Certificate in years past.

The California Network of Family Strengthening's work, *Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening & Support*, and the Center for the Study of Social Policy (www.cssp.org) informed much of the work in Module 1. Additional research can be found on the Strengthening Families website at www.strengtheningfamilies.net. Many countries and more than thirty states in the United States of America are shifting their policies to align and implement the Protective Factors Framework concept.

FRP- BC wishes to express their thanks to a number of individuals who supported this project. The second edition was developed with the assistance of the Standards Committee, Project Manager and the staff of the BC Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP-BC). A list of the Standards Committee members, Project Manager and FRP-BC staff are listed below. This work would not have been possible without the assistance of our volunteer, Kathleen Allisen. And a big vote of thanks to Debbie Jackson, FRP-BC's Provincial Coordinator, who carried much of the project.

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Table of Contents

1. What are Family Resource Programs?	4
2. BC Family Resource Programs and Standards of Practice	6
3. The Status of Family Resource Program Standards of Practice in BC	7
4. Standards and Policies: Understanding the Difference	8
5. How the Standards Process is Organized	9
6. How to Complete the Family Resource Program Standards of Practice Process	11
7. Family Support Best Practices – Overview	12
8. Guiding Principles of Family Support	13
9. Family Resource Programs Six Valued Practices – Outline	14
10. The Four Modules	15

What are Family Resource Programs?

Family Resource Programs (FRPs) offer an informal model of services which are preventative and provide very early intervention to families with young children. Sometimes known as Family Centres, the programs enhance child and family well-being by reducing the isolation of parents, by providing information and resources that encourage healthy child development and positive parenting, and by acting as friendly access points to more traditional community services. Participation is voluntary and open to all families with diverse backgrounds and life circumstances. The goal is not to fix problems, but rather to offer the kinds of supports which have traditionally been available within extended families and close-knit communities. The holistic approach to service delivery acknowledges the complex and ever-changing need of families. Many of BC's first Family Resource Programs continue to provide services to families in their neighbourhoods, and countless more programs are established every year. Many Family Resource Programs in BC are independent not-for-profit organizations, and others operate within large multi-service organizations such as community service agencies, Neighbourhood Houses or Aboriginal Friendship Centres.

Family Resource Programs aim to be welcoming and inclusive. They are located in settings such as community centres, schools, church basements, storefronts and Neighbourhood Houses, where parents and others in the parenting role can spend time with their young children and with each other. Over time, staff and participants develop mutually-respectful and trust-based relationships. Staff members are often hired from the community and bring to their work a range of formal and informal credentials: personal warmth and people skills are highly prized. By enhancing the capacity and confidence of parents and caregivers, Family Resource Programs endeavour to strengthen families and communities. The well-being of both children and adults are attended to.

Family Resource Programs are responsive to participants' diverse needs. For example, babies, toddlers and preschoolers can explore stimulating and safe environments, manipulate materials, play alongside other children of different ages, learn songs and rhymes during Circle Time and share the pleasures of picture books with their parents. Parents or caregivers are able to talk with other participants and staff about the joys and challenges of child rearing, chat with a public health nurse, borrow high quality and age appropriate toys, books and equipment, or access resources on a myriad of topics from car seat safety to understanding temperament. Specific program components are developed in response to identified needs. They may include fathering groups, family literacy activities, clothing exchanges, community kitchens, parenting sessions and workshops on topics of interest. Activities are designed to increase capacity in many domains including physical, social and emotional health, parenting, lifelong learning and community development.

Dr. Carl Dunst and his colleagues from the Orlena Hawks Puckett Institute in North Carolina have spent many years studying the impact of programs using a similar approach to service delivery. In a recent meta-analysis of eight studies involving hundreds of infants, toddlers and preschoolers, they concluded that capacity-building help-giving and family-systems intervention practices have direct effects on both parent self-efficacy beliefs and well-being and indirect effects on parent-child interactions and child development. According to Dunst and colleagues, interactions between service providers and program participants are effective in building capacity because they help family members to identify their needs,

they provide supports and resources to meet these identified needs and they draw upon family strengths while developing new abilities.

The high degree of flexibility and responsiveness found at Family Resource Programs is facilitated by their relatively independent status and their governance structures. As community-based not-for-profit organizations, Family Resource Programs are usually governed by volunteer Boards of Directors comprised of community members; program participants often serve as Directors. With Board support and guidance, decisions can be made quickly in response to emerging community needs. Power-sharing and collaboration with other community groups is a natural aspect of this work. Frequently, Family Resource Programs act as honest brokers to help create new partnerships and initiatives within their communities.

Today, Family Resource Programs throughout BC operate according to similar, but not identical, mandates; they offer different program components; they are known by many names; and they are supported through many kinds of funding. They are not organized into a single, hierarchical system. However the family support field has a strong sense of cohesion. Centres and practitioners are closely linked through shared values and holistic, strength-building practices. Family Resource Programs are uniquely positioned to support the whole family in their community. As a result, the health of the family and the community are enhanced. Recent survey data from across Canada show that Family Resource Programs not only build participants' social networks, but also a sense of community belonging among diverse groups of parents. Building such social cohesion and inclusion is key to strengthening families and communities and to reducing child maltreatment.

BC Family Resource Programs and Standards of Practice

This document contains the 2ND edition of the Standards of Practice designed specifically for Family Resource Programs in British Columbia. The development of shared standards is an important strategic step towards defining and promoting quality practice for families: the child care, health care, mental health, and education fields each has a set of standards, which provides practitioners with a shared definition of the elements required in quality practice. Family Resource Programs have long held a shared philosophy and set of practices, based on the principles of family-centred care. These standards operationalize these principles and provide guidelines for program design and implementation, and agency infrastructure. They lay the foundation for how Family Resource Programs ensure:

- that participants/clients are treated ethically and with respect for their rights;
- that programs are planned and delivered according to province-wide best practice standards;
- that physical environments are appropriately planned and maintained; and,
- that organizations are governed and administrated ethically and responsibly.

The Standards of Practice are research-based and evidence informed, and provide a framework that is aligned with those practices and approaches that have been demonstrated to be most impactful for families.

These Standards establish a common language to promote quality practice across many different kinds of programs that work with families.

The Status of Family Resource Program Standards of Practice in BC

At the time of writing, there is no requirement by funders or other outside bodies for Family Resource Programs in BC to develop or follow these standards in order to receive funds or maintain their services. Funders do require contracted services to meet regulations included in, for example, the Societies Act, the Employment Standards Act, relevant privacy legislation, etc. The FRP-BC Standards of Practice project is part of an overall initiative to enhance training and ensure consistent quality of service throughout British Columbia. Although Family Resource Program Standards are not presently mandatory, there is a growing expectation in the field and on the part of funders to develop and use standards.

- Extensive growth in the field of early childhood programs over the past decade has introduced a range of family and child-serving programs with different and similar mandates. These essential standards were developed now, under the auspices of FRP-BC because it is timely for Family Resource Programs, and FRP-BC, to clearly define their own standards for quality service delivery.
- Over the past 40 years, BC Family Resource Programs have developed a rich body of shared experiences, knowledge, practices and expectations of excellence in service provision and administration. Standards cannot be written when a field is coming into existence but they can be written when this body of experience and knowledge is in place. The Family Resource Program field itself is ready for these expectations to be written into the language of standards.

The FRP-BC Standards can be used by agencies:

- to ensure consistent, high quality service delivery across similar programs;
- to help prepare BC Family Resource Programs for eventual accreditation requests;
- as a tool for Family Resource Programs to assess their existing policies, programs and infrastructure in relation to the described standards, and revise or develop new policies as appropriate;
- to guide a new Family Resource Program that is just starting up;
- to support a Family Resource Program that is changing or developing in new ways;
- to assist in the accreditation of Family Resource Programs nested within larger agencies needing to meet mandatory accreditation requirements.

Standards and Policies: Understanding the Difference

The Purpose of Standards

The purpose of a set of standards is to ensure consistent, high quality service delivery across similar programs.

- Standards are comprehensive and general enough to be applicable to any Family Resource Program;
- Standards make visible the shared expectations of practitioners in a field;
- Standards legitimize the specialized methods that have developed in a field;
- Standards encourage consistency without limiting creativity;
- Standards set up minimum levels of expectation for excellence in service provision and administration.

Standards are not policies. However, standards can guide an organization in the creation of policy by providing an over-arching set of minimum expectations and a structure to fit policy into.

How Policies Relate to Standards

Policies are specific guidelines that are tailored to individual organizations.

- Policies are one way that an organization can show how they meet standards;
- Policies are written by an organization or program with its own particular agency and community in mind;
- Policies are influenced by the mission and values of that organization;
- Policies typically include procedures - the detailed steps followed to accomplish the policy;
- Policy should be written to live up to an agency's own commitment to its staff and to the people it serves.

How the Standards Process is Organized

The structure and content of these Standards of Practice are modelled after a composite of standards. We reviewed the standards of the Council on Accreditation (COA) as well as the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitative Facilities (CARF). We also reviewed the Infant Development Program of BC Policy Manual, the INFORM Guide from West Coast Child Care Resource Centre, and a variety of current policy and procedure manuals in use in BC. Extensive additional material comes from FRP-BC’s *Working to Make a Difference: Guidelines for Best Practices in Family Resource Programs*. See *Appendix 1: Reference List* for a complete list of references.

The Family Resource Program Standards of Practice are organized into four modules:

1. Family-Centred Practices
2. Program Planning and Delivery
3. Community Partnerships and Collaboration
4. Governance and Administration

Each module is designed to be submitted separately from the other three modules. All four modules must be accepted by the FRP-BC Standards Committee in order for an agency to complete the Standards process. The process takes approximately one year to complete. Deadlines for the submission of modules will be staggered throughout the year as follows:

Module	Annual Deadline
1. Family-Centred Practices	October 30
2. Program Planning and Delivery	January 15
3. Community Partnerships and Collaboration	March 4
4. Governance and Administration	May 27

Sections

Each module is divided into sections relating to particular areas of practice, and each section contains one or more standards. For each Standard, the criterion is stated with examples given below. In order to complete the Standards, agencies must provide evidence through written submission, and copies of program materials that demonstrate the specified standard. Submissions will be evaluated to ensure the minimum level of the Standard has been met, and to identify the ways in which the agency demonstrates higher quality practices. The minimum level of each Standard must be met in order to complete the Standards. Programs are encouraged to demonstrate the ways that they exceed the minimum level.

As programs work through the Standards they are encouraged to demonstrate the way their program operationalizes any given Standard by:

- Submitting relevant supporting documents. These documents may include policy and procedure manuals, newsletters, program evaluations, annual reports, and participant handbooks. However there may be other relevant documents. Programs are encouraged to submit whatever documents they consider to demonstrate the way they are operationalizing the Standard. **Each supporting document must be clearly labelled with the Standard that it relates to.**
- Written submissions. Sometimes the program may not have pre-existing documents that demonstrate a given Standard, or the supporting documents do not convey all of the work being done. In these cases, programs are encouraged to write a small paragraph or two describing how the Standard is applied in their program.

Review Process

Indicators that programs exceed the minimum levels are found when the Standard is implemented in a formal or intentional way: when the practices and approaches are embedded in policy or program plans. Committing resources or staff time to an aspect of programming is another way to ensure that quality is being built into programming. Evaluation processes can indicate what aspects of your programs are being effective, and what modifications would be helpful, or better reflect family priorities. The Standards are formatted in a way that identifies examples of the minimum criteria for meeting the Standard. The arrow in the centre of the page identifies the activities that programs engage in to enhance the quality of their work. The arrow serves as a reminder that programs can always be enhanced. Meeting the Standards is just the beginning! To the right of the arrow are examples of exemplary practice. They are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather, it is hoped that they will stimulate creativity, and encourage programs to share their innovative practices.

Insert under Sections heading as the 2nd paragraph following “Programs are encouraged to demonstrate the ways that they exceed the minimum level.”

How to Complete the Family Resource Program Standards of Practice Process

Before you begin this project you will need to make two important decisions. First, who needs to be involved in the work? If you are a stand-alone Family Resource Program, take this document to your board and decide together who will be involved in the work. If your Family Resource Program is housed within a larger agency, take this document to management and discuss what kind of approval and support is required. Second, assemble your team and make decisions about how to accomplish the work. It's a good idea to bring the team together initially for a longer meeting, such as a half-day retreat. Make decisions about who will work on which parts, and decide on a timeline.

The following steps will help your team organize the work.

- Read the document in full (ideally, several times).
- Complete the Letter of Commitment (found at the end of this document) and send it to FRP-BC.
- Read your organization's existing policies and procedures, and gather your documentation.
- Make a list of the documentation that you need and identify the areas where you will make a written submission. Identify who will be responsible for writing the submissions.
- Approximately 3 to 4 weeks prior to the deadline for each module, FRP-BC will hold a webinar to support you in completing your submission. Look to the FRP-BC website for examples of how programs have met Standards.
- Bring together your team and review your submission. There may be additional ideas about how your program demonstrates the high quality of your services. Include them all - It is a time to showcase your great work.
- On or before the deadline, send your assembled submission to:
BC Association of Family Resource Programs
#145, 6832 King George Blvd.,
Surrey, BC, V3W 4Z9
- Within two weeks, FRP-BC will acknowledge receipt of your submission. At that time, you may be asked to provide additional documentation, or to better describe how you meet one of the Standards.
- Within six weeks of the submission deadline, you will be notified if you have successfully completed the module. All four modules must be completed in order to be designated as an agency that meets the BC Association of Family Resource Programs Standards of Practice.

Family Support Best Practices - Overview

Family Support is all of the following:

Family Support is based on the premise that the primary responsibility for the development and well-being of children lies within the family, and that all segments of society must support families as they raise their children. Family Support services include a broad array of activities designed to strengthen families. They help parents to raise their children successfully, to become self-sufficient, and to take an active role in their communities.

- *An approach to strengthening families and communities so that they can foster the optimal development of children, youth, and adult family members.*
- *A type of grassroots, community-based program designed to prevent family problems by strengthening parent-child relationships and supporting parents to be good nurturers and providers.*
- *A movement for social change that urges policymakers, service providers, parents, and employers to take responsibility for improving the lives of children and families and for ensuring that they get what they need to succeed.*

*Adapted from a definition from
Family Support America*



Guiding Principles and Valued Practices of Family Support¹

Guiding Principles

1. Family support programs are open to all families, recognizing that all families deserve support.
2. Family support programs complement existing services, build networks and linkages, and advocate for policies, services and systems that support families' abilities to raise healthy children.
3. Family support programs work in partnership with families and communities to meet expressed needs.
4. Family support programs focus on the promotion of wellness and use a prevention approach to their work.
5. Family support programs work to increase opportunities and to strengthen individuals, families and communities.
6. Family support programs operate from an ecological perspective that recognizes the interdependent nature of families' lives.
7. Family support programs value and encourage mutual assistance and peer support.
8. Family support programs affirm parenting to be a life-long learning process.
9. Family support programs value the voluntary nature of participation in their services.
10. Family support programs promote relationships based on equality and respect for diversity.
11. Family support programs advocate non-violence to ensure safety and security for all family members.
12. Family support programs continually seek to improve their practice by reflecting on what they do and how they do it.

¹Malcolmson, J. (2002) *Putting the Pieces Together: A Conceptual Framework for Family Support Practice*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs.

Valued Practices

The first edition of the Family Resource Program Provincial Standards of Practice, were developed based on the Six Valued (Best) Practices in providing prevention based family support. This second edition is in keeping with these Six Valued Practices, they are:

- 1. Valued Practices in physical space and design**
 - a. Accessible*
 - b. Child friendly*

- 2. Valued Practices that promote engagement**
 - a. Reflective of the community*
 - b. Welcoming*
 - c. Father Involvement*

- 3. Valued Practices that promote and build relationships**
 - a. Appropriate staff engagement with families*

- 4. Valued Practices that promote family development**
 - a. Encourage family interaction*
 - b. Promote parent education*
 - c. Support families in addressing their needs*
 - d. Promote child development*

- 5. Valued Practices that strengthen communities**
 - a. Involve parents*
 - b. Involve community*
 - c. Welcome diversity*

- 6. Valued Practices in governance and administration**
 - a. Staffing practices*
 - b. Governance*
 - c. Financial management*
 - d. Planning, monitoring, evaluation*
 - e. Partnerships*

* *A full outline of the Six Valued Practices can be found in **Appendix 1**.*

These Guiding Principles and Valued Practices provide the foundation of the current edition of the BC Association of Family Resource Programs Standards of Practice. But, as well, they are found in leading program frameworks for Family Support around the world, including *Strengthening Families: a Protective Factors Framework* by the Center for the Study of Social Policy. This framework was developed in collaboration with:

- Child Welfare Information Gateway
- The Finance Project
- FRIENDS National Resource Center
- The National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds
- Parents As Teachers
- United Way Worldwide
- ZERO TO THREE

Using the *Strengthening Families* Approach, more than 30 states are now shifting policy, funding and training to help programs working with children and families to build protective factors with families.

The Four Modules:

To receive recognition for having met the BC Association of Family Resource Programs' Standards, programs must complete four modules:

1. FAMILY CENTRED PRACTICES

- Family-centred approaches
- Family support and strengthening
- Encourage family development
- Value in diversity

2. PROGRAM PLANNING AND DELIVERY

- Flexibility in programming
- Programming for adults
- Early learning programming
- A focus on child development
- Program evaluation & quality improvement
- Design and function of the physical environment
- Safety and hygiene

3. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

- Engagement in community-based planning and leadership
- Partnerships and collaborations
- Engagement with the broader community
- Connections for families to community resources

4. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

- Governance
- Planning and administration
- Finance
- Human resources
- Information management