

UNDERSTANDING FCSS

THE PROVINCIAL FCSS PROGRAM

FCSS came into being in 1966 under the Preventive Social Services (PSS) Act and Conditional Regulation. At the time, a dozen or so municipalities had PSS programs. To this day, no other province has legislation similar to FCSS. FCSS is mandated to do community development and provide preventive social programs and supports.

Initially, FCSS program directors were supported by a provincial FCSS Director and FCSS consultants, employed by the Ministry.

In 1981, the government changed the Preventive Social Services title to Family and Community Support Services, under a new FCSS Act. The new Act still assured the 80/20 funding split, but provided more emphasis on community control and an increase in local autonomy. The FCSS consultants also moved from working in the Ministry offices out to the field - they lived in the regions where they worked and their time was spent meeting with program directors and boards to provide support. There were 6 FCSS regions and 6 consultants.

Between 1966 and 1996, PSS/FCSS was moved to at least 5 different ministries and was subject to at least 2 government reviews.

In 1994, FCSS became part of Alberta Municipal Affairs, and the provincial FCSS Program infrastructure was disbanded. This included abolishing the provincial Director and consultant positions. FCSS funding fell under the “Unconditional Municipal Grant Program”, allowing municipalities and Métis settlements to use their FCSS funding on whatever they deemed a priority - including physical infrastructure.

In 1996, FCSS was returned to Alberta Family and Social Services. The FCSS Act remained the same, but a new “Conditional Agreement Regulation” was developed that specified FCSS funding must be used for FCSS preventive social services and not for general municipal revenue. The FCSS Unit was also re-established in the Ministry and a new provincial director position was created.

In 1999, the provincial government announced a new organizational structure and FCSS became part of the newly created Alberta Children’s Services, where it remains today. The FCSS funding allocation model was also reviewed in 1999 and a new modified per capita model was implemented. The current model takes into account median incomes of municipalities and Métis settlements as weighting factors, rather than just populations.

In 2003, slight changes were made to the Conditional Agreement Regulation and its title was changed to the FCSS Regulation.

THE FCSS MANDATE

FCSS is an 80/20 funding partnership between municipalities or Métis settlements, and the Province, provided through the FCSS Act and Regulation. Under FCSS legislation, communities “design and deliver social programs that are preventive in nature, provided at the earliest opportunity, to promote and enhance well being among individuals, families, and communities”. FCSS does not provide crisis intervention or rehabilitative services.

Local FCSS programs depend on community resources, often involving volunteers in management and delivery. They work in partnership with other service providers in the community to try to prevent the need for intervention and rehabilitative services.

One of the key principles of the FCSS Program is local autonomy - the Province provides funding but it's up to the municipalities and Métis settlements to decide how to allocate the funding to best meet the needs and priorities of the community.

The other key principle or way of doing business for FCSS is community development. The principle is based on a belief that self help contributes to a sense of integrity, self-worth and independence, and a "people helping people" approach to improving quality of life and build the capacity to prevent and or deal with crisis situations should they arise.

The types of services and supports that FCSS programs may offer are:

1. Services to assist communities to identify their social needs and develop responses to meet those needs, including:
 - raising public awareness around community issues,
 - developing strategies for community advocacy,
 - developing comprehensive community social plans and initiatives,
 - environmental scans, service reviews, strategic planning, program planning, or
 - in-kind support to community-based groups (until they are able to sustain themselves) such as provision of office space, printing, photocopying, help with preparing proposals, etc;
2. Services to promote, encourage and support volunteer work in the community, including:
 - recruitment, training and placement services,
 - resources to support volunteers, or
 - coordination of volunteer services;
3. Services to inform the public of available services, including:
 - information and referral services,
 - community information directories,
 - newcomer services, or
 - interagency coordination;
4. Services that promote the social development of children and their families, including:
 - parent-child development activities,
 - temporary or occasional parent relief services, or
 - support services for young school age children;
5. Services that enrich and strengthen family life by developing skills so people can function more effectively within their own environment, including:
 - parenting and family life education and development programs,
 - marriage enrichment,
 - retirement planning,
 - programs for single adults and single parents,
 - courses designed to enhance self-awareness and personal growth,
 - individual, family and group counselling services that are educational and not treatment oriented, or
 - youth development services;

6. Services that enhance the quality of life of the retired and semi-retired, including:
- home support services,
 - education and information services,
 - outreach and coordination services, or
 - self-help socialization activities.

FCSS PROGRAMS IN ALBERTA

As of April 1, 2007, 313 municipalities and Métis settlements, organized into 204 programs, are providing FCSS services throughout Alberta. *(Note: The number of participating municipalities and Métis settlements and the number of programs may fluctuate within a reporting year because of changes in municipality status and/or local decisions regarding program administration.)*

In 2006, the official provincial population total was approximately 3,244,990 (from Municipal Affairs 2006 Official Population List; excluding First Nations On-Reserve). Over 99% of the total population resides in municipalities and Métis settlements participating in FCSS *(Note: All eight Métis settlements in Alberta participate in the FCSS Program)*. The total population residing in municipalities not participating in FCSS is under 7,000.

The official number of provincial municipalities and Métis settlements is 362 (from Municipal Affairs 2005 Official Population List; excluding First Nations On-Reserve). The total number of municipalities and Métis settlements participating in FCSS is 313 (86%). The total number of municipalities not participating in FCSS is 52 (14%).

FCSS REGIONS

There are 8 FCSS regions in Alberta: Northwest, Northeast, Yellowhead, Edmonton-Evergreen, East Central, West Central, Calgary-Bow River, and South.

FCSS regional boundaries are not co-terminus with CFSA (Child and Family Services Authorities) or RHA (Regional Health Authorities) regions. In fact, many FCSS programs interact and partner with 3 or 4 or 5 CFSA's to provide social services and programs in their community.