



THE FCSS ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA

In 1977 when Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) was known as Preventive Social Services (PSS), the PSS Association of Alberta was incorporated. The Association had no staff, no permanent office or mailing address, and board members from local PSS programs volunteered to do the work necessary to govern and manage the Association.

In 1981, when the government changed Preventive Social Services to Family and Community Support Services, the PSS Association of Alberta changed its name to the FCSS Association of Alberta (FCSSAA). The FCSSAA began receiving a provincial grant, office space was provided in ministry offices, and an Executive Director was hired.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the number of municipalities and Métis settlements participating in the provincial FCSS Program steadily increased. The FCSSAA was growing as well - membership increased, annual conferences were held, and regional meetings were held in some areas.

In 1994, FCSS was moved to Municipal Affairs, the FCSS Regulation was changed and the provincial FCSS Program infrastructure was disbanded. This had an important impact on the FCSSAA - there seemed to be no need for a provincial FCSS association and membership fell.

In 1996, during the government's redesign of social services, FCSS was returned to (then) Alberta Family and Social Services. However, the FCSSAA lost its provincial grant and its office space in the ministry, and the Executive Director had to be let go.

At the 1996 AGM, a motion was made to dissolve the FCSSAA. Fortunately, the motion was defeated and the FCSSAA has grown tremendously since then. It has become a strong voice on behalf of FCSS Programs and has built a solid relationship with government, through the Ministry of Human Services, and other government and non-government agencies and organizations.

FCSSAA STRUCTURE

The FCSSAA is an incorporated non-profit society; its members are FCSS advisory boards or councils duly established to oversee local FCSS programs. The FCSSAA receives its income from membership fees and a grant from the ministry.

A 16 member Board of Directors oversees the operations of the FCSSAA:

- President, elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in November;
- 10 Regional Representatives; 1 from each of the 8 FCSS regions (Calgary-Bow River and Edmonton-Evergreen have 2 regional representatives each), elected at fall regional meetings prior to the November AGM;
- 5 staff representatives from the Directors' Network, appointed annually at the September Directors' Network business meeting.

The FCSSAA Executive Committee is comprised of the President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. The Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary are elected at the first meeting of the new Board in January.

The FCSSAA office is located in Edmonton, and includes a large reference library, known as the FCSS Resource Bank. An Executive Director, Project Coordinator and Office Administrator support the FCSSAA Board, and local FCSS program staff and advisory board members.

FCSSAA MANDATE

The FCSSAA vision statement is “FCSS is the leader in preventive social support programs in Alberta”. Its mission statement is “The FCSSAA unites and strengthens the FCSS community by representation and advocacy on behalf of member boards”.

The role of the FCSSAA Board is:

- to listen to its members;
- to identify common concerns and issues related to FCSS;
- to communicate those issues to other members and to the provincial government, along with proposed solutions;
- to support communities by developing tools which will meet local needs and mandates.

The FCSSAA has created a strong network of FCSS programs for sharing information, providing province-wide direction and problem solving, and ensuring that the value of FCSS resources, and the FCSS “way of working” is well understood by all levels of government.

Some of the work the FCSSAA has done on behalf of FCSS programs -

- Represented FCSS programs on the design team that developed the FCSS funding allocation model in 1997, and review of the model in 2000 and 2006. The FCSSAA was instrumental in achieving a \$15.5 million increase to the provincial FCSS Program in 2002.
- Maintains the FCSSAA web site at www.fcssaa.org
- Develops and provides professional development training and workshops to FCSS directors, staff free of charge.
- Hosts the annual provincial FCSSAA conference, held every November.
- FCSSAA members are eligible for a reduced rate to attend annual conferences; smaller, remote FCSS programs that are members of the FCSSAA are eligible to apply for a subsidy to assist with covering the costs to attend the conference.
- Initiated discussions and preliminary plans for the development of an FCSS Growth Strategy in 2005.
- Worked with the ministry to implement strategies to address recommendations of the FCSS Program Review in 2006-07.
- Coordinated input into the ministry’s annual business planning process through consultation with FCSS programs at spring regional meetings.
- FCSSAA Board members and the Executive Director sit on provincial committees addressing topics related to preventive social services.
- advocates on behalf of all FCSS programs to government on issues that impact FCSS.

Through province-wide promotion and education about FCSS, special projects, and acting in an advisory capacity to the Minister of Human Services, the FCSS Association plays an integral role in helping to make *all* FCSS Programs stronger.

FCSSAA RESOURCE BANK

Why was the Resource Bank created?

When the Preventive Social Services Program began in 1966, FCSS consultants from the ministry were the main resource for local FCSS program directors. Six consultants were resources to the directors to support program development, professional development, monitoring of services and reporting to the Province.

In 1994, when the provincial FCSS Program infrastructure was disbanded, the consultant positions were eliminated. This resulted in a gap in information sharing, networking and support for local FCSS staff. By default, FCSSAA board members were taking on the role of FCSS consultants - on top of governing the association - on top of their own jobs - which was understandably difficult to sustain.

In 1998, the FCSSAA Board conducted a comprehensive survey with FCSS program directors and local advisory boards to determine the kind of supports they needed and how the FCSSAA could assist in meeting those needs.

Four areas for improvement were identified:

- the need for consultation and networking assistance;
- the need for mechanisms to support the use of FCSSAA tools and other resource information;
- the need for an accessible FCSSAA "contact place"; and
- the need for an FCSSAA sustainability plan.

In response to the survey, a proposal was submitted to the ministry in 1999 for funding to establish an FCSSAA office and create a "Resource Bank". The proposal was supported and the Resource Bank opened its doors in June 1999.

What is the Resource Bank?

The Resource Bank is a reference library, and a communication network for information sharing among FCSS program staff and boards.

There are hundreds of resources on the bookshelves! Most of it is "how to" books and manuals relevant to FCSS - program planning, FCSS orientation material, community development, needs assessments, prevention and early intervention, provincial issues, social issues, etc.

The Resource Bank is a vehicle of the FCSSAA through which support is provided to FCSS programs across the province. While its primary communication is with local FCSS program staff and board members, the Resource Bank also communicates with the provincial FCSS Director and staff, FCSS Directors' Network, and other provincial government representatives. The FCSSAA Executive Director and Project Coordinator are available to support FCSS programs, including FCSS orientations for boards and staff, and consultation around program development and delivery - free of charge for FCSSAA members.

Several FCSS-specific resource materials have been developed by the FCSSAA, through the Resource Bank, such as:

- the FCSS Program Contact List (updated and distributed twice a year)
- the FCSS Orientation Manual (for orienting new FCSS board members and staff)
- the "Understanding FCSS" video presentation; the presentation is available on DVD, free of charge

- a presentation folder and brochure page with the FCSS branding that FCSS programs may use for local promotion (an inventory of the brochures and folders is stocked at the Resource Bank for FCSS programs to purchase at cost)
- the “FCSS 101 Orientation” Power Point presentation and handouts; the material is available on CD, free of charge.
- the “Working in Community” FCSS professional development workshops. The workshops include Introduction to Community Development, Research, Needs and Strengths Assessments, Strategic Planning, and Evaluation Planning. The “Working in Community” workbooks are available from the Resource Bank, free of charge to FCSSAA members.
- the “Advocacy Training” workshop (a how-to guide and resource tool kit for public education and advocacy activity), also available free of charge to FCSSAA members.

Most of the resource materials are now available in electronic version on the FCSSAA website at www.fcssaa.org. Many of the FCSS-specific resources are available only in the Member section of the website, accessible with an assigned password, provided by the FCSSAA office.

For more information about the FCSS Association and the Resource Bank, please contact:

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