FAMILY SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES
FAMILY SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act is a Government of Alberta act that helps support children with diagnosed disabilities, those currently awaiting a diagnosis, and their parents or guardians.

Definition of disability: A disability is defined as an impairment diagnosed by a qualified healthcare professional that significantly limits the child’s daily living in areas that may include sleeping, eating, or other daily functions. It also includes disabilities where significant delays in development of the child occur.

For example, a child that is awaiting or has just received a transplant may qualify because of the significant delays in development caused by the transplant and related issues.

Who Qualifies?
To qualify, a child must have a medical diagnosis of disability from a qualified healthcare professional. A family can still apply to the program for up to two years if they are currently awaiting a diagnosis.

Additional requirements include:
- The child must be under the age of 18
- The child must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada
- Both child and guardian must live in Alberta
- A diagnosis from a healthcare professional stating the specific effects of the disability on the child must be presented
- The person applying for support must be the guardian of the disabled child

Before you can qualify for this program, you must have exhausted all other available supports and services, and you will still be responsible for the day to day costs of raising a child.

If you need more information on specific health conditions and disabilities, please contact My Health Alberta toll-free at 1-866-408-5465. Live telephone advice and health information is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
The FSCD program is not the same as Child Intervention or Child and Family Services Authority, although it is also a part of Alberta Children and Youth Services. All the programs mentioned are a part of Alberta Human Services, but are separate and distinct.

The FSCD program is a voluntary program offered through Alberta Human Services to help fund extraordinary costs for children with disabilities and their parents and guardians. Parents remain the guardians of their children and are responsible for all decision-making even after they have accessed the FSCD program.

Once they qualify, an FSCD Family Support Worker will work with the parent or guardian to ensure the child receives the best services available. The Family Support Worker will talk with the parent or guardian about their child’s specific needs during an Assessment of Needs. During this time, the FSCD Family Support Worker will assist the parent or guardian in completing an Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) that records the goals of the child and how to meet these goals. The supports and services are tailored to meet the needs of each individual child.
The program offers two streams of support:

Family-focused services help support both the parent or guardian and the child, and view the parent or guardian as the main support network.

The benefits of family focused services may include:

- Counselling for the parent or guardian and the child
- Special clothing and footwear needs
- Costs of attending medical appointments including travel costs, meals, and accommodations

For example, if a child has cerebral palsy, they may require support for special footwear more often because they might wear out the toes of their shoes more quickly than another child would.

Child-focused services provide support based on the needs of the child that are considered extraordinary. An additional assessment by a healthcare professional is needed to qualify for this stream.

The benefits of child-focused services may include:

- Specialized equipment and support
- Living arrangements outside of the home

For example, while some children may be able to live at home with their parent or guardian, another child may require out of home living arrangements. Parents of children with disabilities sometimes need support to allow them to raise their children at home where they can fully participate in community life.
Call toll-free at 310-0000 and ask to be connected to the FSCD office serving your community to request the application. Or go online and find the application at humanservices.alberta.ca/disability-services

**Checklist for application**

Ensure you meet all of the qualifications

- The child must have a medical diagnosis of a disability from a healthcare professional (while awaiting diagnosis a parent or guardian can apply to the program for up to two years)
- The child must be under the age of 18
- The child must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada
- Both the parent or guardian and the child must live in Alberta
- Information provided by a healthcare professional about the child’s disability and how it affects the child must be included
- The person applying must be the parent or guardian of the child with the disability

Fill out the application form

- Attach medical documents to the application form. These must include one of the following:
  - Letter from a healthcare professional regarding the nature of the child’s diagnosed disability
  - Letter from a healthcare professional stating that the child may have or may develop a disability and is awaiting a diagnosis

Mail, fax, or drop off the completed application and medical documents at an FSCD Office.
Appeals
If, during the process of applying for and participating in the Family Support for Children with Disabilities program, your benefits have changed, been denied, or cancelled, you have the right to an Appeal. You also have the right to appeal if you do not agree with a decision made by your Family Support Worker. For more information on the Appeals Process contact the Appeals Secretariat toll-free by dialling 310-0000, then 780-422-2275, or visit their website at www.appeals.gov.ab.ca.

If you have already gone through an Appeal and feel you have been treated unfairly, you can contact the Office of the Ombudsman toll-free by dialling 310-0000, then 780-427-2756 (Edmonton) or 403-297-6185 (Calgary).

The Alberta Ombudsman responds to complaints of unfair treatment by the provincial government. The Ombudsman operates independently from any part of the Alberta government and reports directly to the Legislative Assembly. The Ombudsman does not investigate complaints until all rights of appeal are exhausted.

Complaints to the Ombudsman must be made in writing to:

Alberta Ombudsman
10303 Jasper Avenue NW, Suite 2800
Edmonton, AB T5J 5C3

Important Contacts

Alberta Supports
Provides information about additional government programs, supports and services
1.877.644.9992
www.programs.alberta.ca/Living

Health Link Alberta
Toll free: 1.866.408.LINK (5465)
Calgary: 403.943.LINK (5465)
Edmonton: 780.408.LINK (5465)
myhealth.alberta.ca/Pages/default.aspx

Alberta Aids to Daily Living
Can financially help those with long-term disabilities and chronic illnesses with equipment and supplies
780.427.0731 (310.0000)
www.health.alberta.ca/services/aids-to-daily-living.html

Early Childhood Services and Special Needs
Provides information on supports and services in schools
www.education.alberta.ca/admin/supportingstudent/schoolleaders/ecs.aspx

Alberta Association for Community Living
Advocates on behalf of children with developmental disabilities and their families
1.800.252.7556
www.aacl.org