

FSCD Parent Advocacy Guidebook

Escalate Effectively. Organize Collectively.

For families navigating the Family Support for Children with Disabilities program | Parent Partnership Project | April 2026

This guidebook is meant to grow with you through your journey as your child's advocate. It will help you learn your child's rights in the FSCD program, how to escalate a concern, and organize with other families when issues are systemic.

Child's Name:	
Date of Birth:	
FSCD File #:	
Parent / Guardian Name:	
Caseworker Name:	
Caseworker Phone / Email:	
Supervisor Name (if known):	
Date Completed:	

How to Use This Guidebook

Read this page before you begin

This guidebook is your advocacy toolkit. It is a working document to help you stay organized while dealing with the department.

- What You Will Do in This Guidebook**
- Section 1 — Understand your rights and FSCD's obligations to you
 - Section 2 — Learn the escalation ladder: who to contact and when
 - Section 3 — Document every communication (your most powerful tool)
 - Section 4 — Track decisions and deadlines so nothing slips
 - Section 5 — Prepare a formal complaint or appeal
 - Section 6 — Connect and organize with other FSCD families
 - Section 7 — Beginning an advocacy campaign

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Know Your Rights*What FSCD is legally obligated to provide — and what you can demand*

FSCD is governed by the Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act (FSCD Act) and the FSCD Regulation. These are the legal foundation for every eligibility decision, every agreement, and every appeal. When you know the rules, you can hold FSCD to them.

Your Rights Under the FSCD Act and Regulation

- You have the right to be informed about any decision that affects your child's services.
- You have the right to receive a written explanation of any decision, including the reasons for it.
- You have the right to request a review, request mediation, or file a formal appeal under the FSCD Act.
- You have the right to have your child's services determined through an individualized assessment — not a flat rate or generic formula.
- You have the right to participate meaningfully in developing your child's IFSP or ISP.
- Your personal information may only be collected for legitimate purposes and must be kept confidential.

FSCD's Obligations to You

- **Written decisions:** Any change to your agreement, any reduction in services, or any denial of services must be provided to you in writing with the reasons.
- **Timely decisions:** Specialized Services requests must be decided within 15 working days (unless an MDT review is required). All timelines should be communicated to you in writing.
- **Individualized assessment:** Your child's services must be based on an individualized needs assessment — not a generic formula or flat rate.
- **Transparent planning:** You have the right to participate meaningfully in developing your child's IFSP or ISP.
- **Transition planning:** If your child is 16 or older, FSCD must begin transition planning. Contract transition begins 3–6 months before your child's 18th birthday.

What FSCD Cannot Do

- Deny or reduce services without providing a written decision and reasons.
- Require you to complete Triple P before accessing Specialized Services.
- Make decisions solely based on budget or caseworker caseload.
- Share your personal information without your consent (except as required by law).
- Retaliate against you for raising a concern or filing an appeal.
- Refuse to give you the name and contact information of a supervisor.

Questions to Ask at Every Meeting

- "Can I have that decision in writing, including the reasons?"
- "What is the timeline for this decision, and what is the process if I disagree?"
- "What is the name of your supervisor, and how do I reach them?"
- "What additional information would change this decision?"
- "Is there anything in policy that prevents approving what I am requesting?"

Resources to Refer to Directly

- [Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act — kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/F05P3.pdf](https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/F05P3.pdf)
- [Family Support for Children with Disabilities Regulation — kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/2004_140.pdf](https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/2004_140.pdf)
- [FSCD Policy Manual — manuals.alberta.ca/fscd-policy-manual/](https://manuals.alberta.ca/fscd-policy-manual/)

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The Escalation Ladder

Who to contact, when, and what to expect

If you are advocating about an issue with your child’s contract or access to services, start at the bottom of the ladder and climb your complaint up in a timely fashion. If you are advocating about a systemic issue facing the department, start at the top. Always inform the Ministry that there is an issue in a department under their purview; explain what the issue is and ask for their support in moving toward a solution. Once the Ministry is informed, begin at Step 3 (Program Manager) of the ladder.

	Who You Contact	When to Use	Expected Response Time
1	Your Caseworker	First point of contact for any question or concern	Within 2 business days
2	Caseworker's Supervisor	No response in 5 business days, or you believe the decision is wrong	Within 5 business days
3	Program Manager / Team Lead	Supervisor has not responded, or decision remains unsatisfactory	Within 5–10 business days
4	Request for Review (Senior FSCD Staff)	Formal written review by 2 senior FSCD staff not involved in the original decision — submit Request for Review form within 30 days of the decision	Decision in writing within 25 calendar days
5	Regional Director	Manager response unsatisfactory, or systemic issue affecting multiple families	Within 10–15 business days
6	Formal Appeal (FSCD Appeal Committee)	Disputing a specific written FSCD decision — file Notice of Appeal within 30 days of the decision	Hearing scheduled by Appeals Secretariat
7	Ministry	Appeal decision unsatisfactory, or systemic issue requiring ministerial attention	Varies — organizing with other families can help increase response times. Advocate as required given the circumstance.

How to Contact Each Level Effectively

- **Always request a written response:** Start with an email, or follow up a phone call with an email confirming what was discussed. Written records are critical.
- **State your concern clearly:** Use this format — “On [date], [what happened]. I believe this is inconsistent with [policy / my child’s assessed need] because [reason]. I am requesting [specific action] by [date].”
- **Bring evidence:** Attach relevant assessments, previous correspondence, and your child’s agreement to every communication.
- **Be Accurate:** Always refer back to the FSCD Act, Regulations and Policy Manual and how they apply to the service request, or systemic correction, you are working toward.
- **Set a deadline:** Always specify a reasonable response deadline in your communication (e.g. “I would appreciate a response by [date, 5–10 business days from now]”).

Key Contacts — Record Here

Advocate / Support Person: _____

Advocate / Support Person: _____

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Preparing a Formal Complaint or Appeal

When internal escalation is not enough

There are two formal options beyond internal escalation: (1) a Request for Review by senior FSCD staff, and (2) a formal Appeal to the FSCD Appeal Committee. These processes are not mutually exclusive.

Option 1 — Internal FSCD Complaint

- Use this when you are dissatisfied with how your case is being handled, feel you are not being treated fairly, or want to raise a concern about conduct.
• How: Contact the supervisor or manager directly (see Step 2). Put your complaint in writing.
• What to include: dates, names, what happened, how it affected your family, and what resolution you are requesting.
• What to expect: an acknowledgment and a response outlining any steps taken.

Summary of my concern:

Five horizontal lines for writing a summary of concern.

What I am requesting as a resolution:

Five horizontal lines for writing a resolution request.

Option 2 — Formal Appeal (FSCD Appeal Committee)

- Use this when you have received a written FSCD decision that you disagree with (e.g. denial of service, reduction of funded hours, rejection of Specialized Services).
• Deadline: You must file your Notice of Appeal within 30 days of the date you were told about the decision. If you choose mediation first, the 30-day clock is paused until mediation concludes.
• How: Complete the Notice of Appeal form (available from your caseworker or from the Appeals Secretariat: 780-427-2709 / 310-0000). Submit it to the Appeals Secretariat.
• What to include: the specific decision you are appealing, why you believe it is incorrect, and the outcome you are seeking.
• What to expect: a hearing before a 3-member independent panel. You may bring a support person or representative. The panel can agree with, change, or cancel the FSCD decision. The panel's decision is final.

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Connecting and Organizing with Other Families

Collective voice creates systemic change

Individual advocacy protects your child. Collective advocacy improves the system for every child. When families organize together, share information, and speak with a unified voice, FSCD is far more likely to respond with transparency and accountability.

Why Organizing Matters

- Families often experience the same problems — long waitlists, unexplained service reductions, lack of communication — without realizing they are not alone.
- Documenting patterns across families provides evidence that a problem is systemic, not individual.
- Groups of families can request meetings with Regional Directors and senior management in ways individual families cannot.
- Organized parent groups have successfully influenced FSCD policy, funding levels, and caseworker training in Alberta.

How to Connect with Other FSCD Families

- **Parent Partnership Project:** The organization that produced this guidebook. Connect with other FSCD families, share resources, and participate in collective advocacy.
- **Disability-specific parent groups:** Organizations focused on your child's specific diagnosis often have parent networks with FSCD experience.
- **Local parent advisory groups:** Some school authorities and early intervention programs have parent advisory committees where FSCD experiences are discussed.
- **Online communities:** Private groups for Alberta disability parents can be valuable for sharing information — but be cautious about sharing identifying details.

Requesting Transparency from FSCD

- Submit a Freedom of Information (FOIP) request to Alberta Assisted Living and Social Services to obtain aggregate data on FSCD waitlists, funding levels, denial rates, and staffing.
- Attend public consultations: Alberta Assisted Living and Social Services periodically holds consultations on disability policy. Organized parent groups can register to present.
- Meet with your MLA: A group of families requesting a meeting to discuss FSCD concerns is a legitimate and often effective advocacy strategy.
- Write collectively: A letter to the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services signed by many families carries far more weight than individual letters.

Starting a Local Parent Advocacy Group

A parent advocacy group does not need to be formal or registered to be effective. Even 4–5 families who agree to share information, document experiences, and communicate collectively can have significant impact.

- Agree on a shared goal: What specific change do you want to see?
- Document individually, share collectively: Each family keeps their own records and aggregates patterns to identify systemic issues.
- Designate a spokesperson to represent the group in meetings with management or elected officials.
- Communicate in writing: Group letters and emails create a record. Always follow up verbal meetings in writing.
- Stay issue-focused: Effective advocacy focuses on systemic problems and policy solutions, not on individual case files.

Families I Am Connected With

Record other families or advocates you are connecting with. Keep this information confidential.

Contact Name	How to Reach Them	Shared Issues

Our Collective Goals

What systemic changes is your group working toward? Be specific.

Our Action Plan

List the concrete steps your group will take, who is responsible, and by when.

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Final Checklist

Confirm you are ready to advocate effectively

Use this checklist to confirm you have worked through every section and have everything in order before your next meeting or escalation.

	Task / Document	Status
<input type="checkbox"/>	Step 1 — I have reviewed my rights and FSCD’s obligations	<i>Done / In progress</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Step 2 — I have recorded contacts for each escalation level	<i>Done / In progress</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Step 3 — I have started my Communication Log	<i>Done / In progress</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Step 4 — I have recorded all decisions and upcoming deadlines	<i>Done / In progress</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Step 5 — If applicable: I have drafted my complaint or appeal	<i>Done / N/A</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Step 6 — I have identified other families or advocates to connect with	<i>Done / In progress</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have a dedicated folder (physical or digital) for all FSCD correspondence	<i>Done / In progress</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I know the name and number of my caseworker’s supervisor	<i>Confirmed / Need it</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I know how to reach the Appeals Secretariat if needed	<i>Confirmed</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have shared this guidebook with anyone else advocating alongside me	<i>Done / N/A</i>

You Are Ready When:

- Every section of this guidebook is as complete as possible
- You have a communication log and are documenting every contact
- You know the escalation ladder and who to contact at each level
- All deadlines are recorded and being tracked
- You are connected with at least one other family or advocate

Final Notes
