

## **PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AS IT RELATES TO THE FCSS PROGRAM**

“What is prevention and what is community development?” has been questioned, discussed and revised for at least 70 years in North America. There are nearly as many definitions or frameworks of prevention and community development as there are practitioners and academics in the field of social services. The literature abounds with continually evolving theses and perspectives attempting to refine a common definition. No definition is absolutely right or wrong.

In 2005, the FCSS Association of Alberta (FCSSAA) developed a series of modules and training workshops for FCSS Directors and staff, designed to strengthen their knowledge and skills in community development, and program planning, management and evaluation. The “Working in Community” workshops have been provided to over 180 FCSS program staff across the province.

A significant challenge in developing the training material was to come up with working definitions of prevention and community development that would be basic, easy to understand, and practical. After an extensive literature search, the following section was included in the Working in Community workshops:

### **FCSS, Prevention and Community Development**

The FCSS philosophy is based on a belief that self help contributes to a sense of integrity, self-worth and independence. Projects and services developed by local FCSS programs are intended to help individuals in their community to adopt healthy lifestyles, thereby improving the quality of life and build the capacity to prevent and or deal with crisis situations should they arise.

According to FCSS legislation, services under an FCSS program must “be of a preventive nature that enhances the social well-being of individuals and families through promotion or intervention strategies provided at the earliest opportunity.” *Section 2.1(1)(a), FCSS Regulation*

Additionally, “Services provided under a program must do one or more of the following:

- (i) help people to develop independence, strengthen coping skills and become more resistant to crisis;
- (ii) help people to develop an awareness of social needs;
- (iii) help people to develop interpersonal and group skills which enhance constructive relationships among people;
- (iv) help people and communities to assume responsibility for decisions and actions which affect them;
- (v) provide supports that help sustain people as active participants in the community.”

*Section 2.1(1)(b), FCSS Regulation*

## Levels of Prevention

Prevention may be defined in very basic terms of primary, secondary and tertiary. FCSS programs focus on primary prevention (community development) and secondary prevention (community-based services).

	<b>Primary Prevention</b> (prevention; universal prevention)	<b>Secondary Prevention</b> (early intervention; intervention; selective prevention)	<b>Tertiary Prevention</b> (crisis management; treatment; rehabilitation; restorative; indicated prevention)
<b>Goal</b>	To prevent the onset of a problem or risk by pro-actively modifying behaviours and environments	To intervene at an early stage of an evident problem or potential crisis so it does not recur	To manage the crisis state of the problem with treatment/ rehabilitative services and reduce the long term impact
<b>Target Population</b>	communities, groups, systems	families, individuals	individuals
<b>Description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no visible problem</li> <li>• state of well being and adjustment</li> <li>• promotion and maintenance of healthy lifestyles</li> <li>• ability to identify and solve issues as they arise</li> <li>• most desirable state</li> <li>• least intrusive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• onset of problems</li> <li>• recurring problems</li> <li>• in state of minor crisis</li> <li>• likely to become at-risk, or in need of crisis management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recurring problems</li> <li>• in state of major crisis</li> <li>• at risk of increasing crisis situation</li> <li>• in need of treatment or rehabilitative services</li> <li>• least desirable state</li> <li>• most intrusive</li> </ul>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• education, awareness, events that foster volunteerism and community connections</li> <li>• strategies for community advocacy</li> <li>• community social plans</li> <li>• youth leadership and development programs for all youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• programs and services for high risk youth</li> <li>• family counselling</li> <li>• anger management counselling</li> <li>• substance abuse counselling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• women's shelters</li> <li>• intensive, long term counselling</li> <li>• incarceration</li> <li>• child protective services</li> </ul>

The chart above is by no means exhaustive or definitive. It provides a basic, practical framework by which FCSS staff can conceptualize preventive social services.

## **Community Development vs. Community-based Services Approach**

There has long been discussion about community development vs. provision of community-based services for meeting needs and making change happen - and which is most appropriate for an FCSS program to focus on.

Each community needs to decide for itself what its core philosophy and approach will be. Many FCSS programs are a combination of community development and community-based services. Elements of both approaches can be present in any project or community planning process.

Whether an FCSS program wants to provide services or facilitate others to provide services, the role of FCSS is to ensure community involvement and input to make change happen.

Using either a community development approach, a community-based services approach, or a combination of both, preventive social services provided by FCSS programs will be:

- oriented to the future not the past;
- focussed on a group in the community or section of the community, rather than the individual;
- innovative and locally determined;
- carried out in cooperation with other organizations; and/or
- designed to encourage self help, volunteerism, and capacity building so people can help themselves.

FCSS programs can often be seen doing community development by:

- encouraging groups of people to identify and work toward resolving community issues;
- publicizing issues that affect the quality of life of people in the community;
- adapting to changing conditions; and/or
- helping people to identify their needs, define their dreams and determine how to make those dreams reality.

One recent document delving further into 'what do we mean by prevention' adds to the body of literature - "The Promise of Prevention: Does it Deliver?" prepared in 2005 by Peter Faid for the City of Edmonton Community Services Advisory Board, is available from the FCSSAA office.

Other excellent readings and research on prevention can be found on the City of Calgary website at [www.calgary.ca](http://www.calgary.ca)