

BAND FAMILY SERVICES

A Program Description

December 10, 1992

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.INTRODUCTIONPage 1

2.SERVICE GOALSPage 1

3.SERVICE PRINCIPLESPage 2

4.DESCRPTION OF SERVICESPage 4

Family SupportPage 4

Community SupportPage 6

Short-term Crisis InterventionPage 7

Protection LiaisonPage 8

5.LINKS WITH FAMILY COUNSELLING UNITPage 9

INTRODUCTION

This document provides a description of the Band Family Services Program. The information comes from two sources: the original Community Services Agreement, and the evaluation that was completed in March, 1992.

SERVICE GOALS

The general aim of band family services is to promote strong and supportive families for healthy child-rearing. This program aims to accomplish this by assisting the community as a whole, and by responding to the needs of deficient and troubled families, as well as those in severe crises.

The program works towards four service goals:

- 1.To strengthen community and family environments for healthy parenting.**
- 2.To build and support the community's human and material resources for strengthening family life and child-rearing, and for restoring family unity.**
- 3.To help families access and use resources which will strengthen or restore healthy family functioning.**
- 4.To respond to the needs of troubled families and families in crisis whose situations may place children's health and safety at risk.**

SERVICE PRINCIPLES

Service principles are important guiding ideas and values which help the day-to-day tasks and decisions of Band Family Service Workers. So far in the program, the following principles have been recognized:

- 1.The primary responsibility for the safety and well-being of children is with the family.
- 2.If the children cannot be cared for within the family, then the extended family should care for the children. As much as possible, the natural parents should remain involved with the child in a co-parenting relationship.
- 3.At the community level, the safety and well-being of children is everyone's responsibility; and anyone who is aware of children in need of protection should be sure that the children and their families receive assistance.
- 4.The primary purposes of services to families are to help keep families intact, and to ensure that children are safe and well.
- 5.Services should be community-based, band-controlled, band-delivered, and family-focused.
- 6.Tikinagan will provide or arrange for guidance and counselling for the family and their children in order to prevent the children from being harmed, and to keep the children with their families and in their own communities, wherever possible.
- 7.Where the Band is providing service, Tikinagan will provide back-up support and advice to the Band.
- 8.Tikinagan is the final authority for ensuring that children are safe and well.
- 9.Recourse to the Provincial Courts will only be made when all other

efforts to protect children have failed.

10. Tikinagan will assist the Band in locating children who have been lost through the child welfare process, and in repatriation of children, where possible.

11. When other helping resources are needed, priority should be given to local community service providers and natural helpers from within the community, supported by specialists from Tikinagan or other agencies, and by BFSWs in other communities.

12. To help build healthier communities and families, Band Family Services Workers should encourage contacts and involvements between individuals, families and groups within the community. This "principle of interaction" should guide service choices and decisions.

13. The BFSW program assumes that personal, family and community well-being are built on physical, spiritual, psychological, interactional, and cultural components.
Service providers working from different perspectives make contributions to over-all well-being.

14. Band Family Services should complement and support the services available from other community service programs.

DESCRIPTION OF FAMILY SERVICES

This section describes the four general types of services provided through the Band Family Service Program. These services are mainly preventative in nature. That is, workers try to provide services in which help avoid family problems and potential harm to children.

Prevention work involves four different types of service. Prevention work sometimes requires services or programs to the whole community (community support). At other times prevention work means that workers provide help to troubled or vulnerable families (family support). Sometimes crises require the workers' response (short-term crisis intervention); and sometimes workers need to work closely with Tikinagan to assure that children at risk are helped (protection liaison). Each of these four types of services are detailed in the following pages.

Family Support

Band Family Service Workers providing "family support" concentrate on helping specific families to obtain the necessary resources for the fulfilment of their parenting responsibilities.

Several types of families may need support:

- .Families may be severely troubled and require help to solve specific problems (eg. dealing with a troubled adolescent, unemployment).
- .Families who are particularly vulnerable, because of financial difficulties, illness, tragedy, social isolation, or difficulties of coping with parts of life.

These families may or may not need professional services (eg. clergy, Psychologist) or a long term relationship with a Tikinagan Family Counsellor. They may equally benefit from involvement with a "natural" or informal community helper, such as a relative, elder, neighbour or Council member. Band Family Service Workers must help families access the appropriate local or outside resource people.

The ultimate aim of family support is to help families function independently and control their own lives. Ideally, they will do this with natural community help and support, without reliance on professionals or service programs.

Also, it is important that workers assure that families make best use of available resources. This includes matters of accessibility, but also includes "trouble-shooting" if there is a breakdown in the helping relationship.

Family support activities might include:

- .Helping families access the natural sources of support within the community, including extended family members, friends, elders and others.

- .Helping families access and use in-home support

- .Helping families find and use appropriate treatment, from either professionals or Tikinagan's Family Counselling Unit.

- .Follow-up home visits with families after treatment, counselling or therapy.

- .Brief family consultation in which workers provide quick advice on a particular issue or need

- .Referrals to other community service providers

- .Arranging and supporting temporary co-parenting arrangements, using customary care principles, extended families, or other natural child care-givers in the community.

In all of these services, with the exception of brief family consultation, the BFSW helps the family obtain the most appropriate resources for their needs, and helps them use the resources. They typically do not provide direct services.

Community Support

Community support services include a vast number of services and interventions which focus on all or parts of the community. Community members are involved regardless of whether they have problems.

Community education is an important way to support communities. This involves activities which build knowledge, skills and ideas for healthy communities, families, and parenting. Examples: alcohol/drugs/gas-sniffing education; parenting skills; program awareness; Native cultural awareness; family values; child development;

Helping to develop community groups or organizations which directly or indirectly strengthen family life is another type of community support. For example, Band Family Service Workers may become involved with recreational facilities, school curriculum, or family committees.

Workers may also contribute to community resource development, focusing on developing or strengthening existing human resources and arrangements for helping families and children. For example, workers might...

- .arrange for alternative families; customary care; foster parents; co-parenting
- .consult to schools, recreational personnel, Family Service Committees, and other community service providers involved with families and children;
- .access and share family life and child development resource materials
- .access external resource people from Tikinagan or other agencies, and facilitate their participation in community problem-solving
- .recruit and support volunteers for family services and activities

Developing community unity in the interest of creating healthy environments for families and children is an important objective in community support. This may happen through...

- .reducing social isolation and conflict
- .strengthening friendships, socializing, peers

.building strong ties between programs, groups, and larger institutions which directly or indirectly affect families

Short-Term Crisis Intervention

In short-term crisis intervention, the worker would make immediate contact with a family during or following a family crisis. This is usually done in co-operation with another community resource person (eg. police, Family Counsellor, Band Councillor, etc.).

The aim of crisis-intervention is to reduce the immediate danger or risk to parents and children using the appropriate family crisis-intervention methods.

The BFSW would not provide long-term treatment or counselling to the family. Depending on the nature of the crisis, the worker would...

- .help the family develop an appropriate understanding and emotional response to the crisis

- .assist the family to contact the appropriate resources within the community, including relatives or other parts of the natural support system

- .provide other service providers with appropriate information and support so that they can help meet the family's needs

- .follow-up with the family so that the pre-crisis family situation is restored.

Protection Liaison Work

The aim of this service is to assist the community take suitable action when the health and safety of children are already at risk. Since Tikinagan is a designated child welfare agency, this means that BFSWs will assist, at the community level, all Tikinagan activities. However, BFSWs are not themselves mandated child protection staff.

Depending on the Band policy, the BFSW may perform such duties as...

- .reporting high risk situations

- .transferring the child to a temporary place of safety until investigation decisions are made

- .liaising with the Band and Tikinagan around investigations

- .providing preliminary assessment information

- .representing Bands at court hearings

- .assisting with home findings and placements

- .follow-up work with the natural and temporary parents

BAND FAMILY SERVICES AND FAMILY COUNSELLING: BOUNDARIES AND LINKS

There should be clear distinctions between the functions and roles of Band Family Service Workers and Tikinagan's new Family Counsellors. As well, several areas of co-operation and mutual support should be recognized.

The Family Counselling Unit (FCU) concentrates on intensive family counselling, and individual counselling with a "family perspective". This leaves community support, family support, short-term crisis intervention, and protection liaison for the BFSW program.

Strong links should be established between these two programs. For example:

- .BFSWs could contribute to an assessment phase, providing information about each troubled family as well as suggestions for service.

- .Under the direction of the family counsellor, co-counselling could be undertaken where a counselling team was needed (eg. large family, male/female counsellors)

- .BFSWs could provide individualized parenting skills training, while the Counsellor focused on re-building troubled family relationships or healing personal pain.

- .BFSWs could develop and share their knowledge of referrals including local "natural" helpers and resources outside of the community.

- .BFSWs could provide post-counselling family support (eg. home visits) to help consolidate the gains from counselling. Support could also be provided to family members in their non-family situations (eg. school, work)

.Family Counsellors could consult to BFSWs on family dynamics, and other relevant family information for prevention programs.