

A Program for Training Band Family Services Workers

Tikinagan Child and Family Services

BFSW Program Action Group
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Introduction

This document is a summary of a new training plan for Band Family Services Workers (BFSWs). The Band Family Service Program is a prevention initiative working towards the improvement in the quality of family life. The Program is administered in twenty-eight First Nation communities across North Western Ontario. Local Band Family Service Workers (BFSWs) provide family and community support, family crisis intervention, and protection liaison. The program is cooperatively administered by Tikinagan Child and Family Services, and the twenty-eight participating Bands.

A recent evaluation of the BFSW Program included the following recommendations:

"To achieve relevance and coherence of BFSW training, a training needs assessment and long range planning for in-service training should be completed."

"In-service training should be designed to maximize the application of new knowledge and skills at the local community level."

To assist with the implementation of these and other recommendations, a Band Family Services Action Group was established, involving five BFSWs, the Coordinator of Direct Services, a Board member, and the new BFSW Liaison Worker. The members of the group are John Fox, Ziggy Beardy, Rose Mary Meekis, John Slipperjack, Victoria Carpenter, Sonny Gagnon, Genevieve Kaminawatamin, and Tom Chisel. Frank Maidman, the Program Evaluator, is an advisor.

This report is a summary of the Action Group's planning efforts in the training realm. It reflects the training needs identified in the Program Evaluation, as well as ideas from the Action Group. An earlier draft of this document was thoroughly reviewed in a workshop with all staff, and benefitted from several suggestions.

Training Goals

1. Orientation: To acquaint Band Family Service Workers with Native Child Welfare, Tikinagan and the Band Family Services Program

2. Personal Growth: To help the BFSW staff become aware of their personal strengths and limitations, and improve their general life skills.

3. Organizational: To train BFSWs in the skills and knowledge for participation as organizational members of the Band, the BFSW Program, and in relation to Tikinagan.

4. Family Support: To prepare BFSWs to assist families access and use resources for healthy family functioning.

5. Community Support: To give BFSWs the skills and knowledge for helping to build strong communities in support of family life and parenting.

6. Crisis Intervention: To train BFSWs in the skills and knowledge for family crisis intervention work.

7. Protection Liaison: To train BFSWs to respond to the needs of troubled families, whose situations place children at risk.

General Design of Training Program

The following training plan organizes the over-all program as a series of training modules. Training modules are groups of training events organized according to general topics. Each general topic is related directly to BFSW work. Each module is quite "specialized", and as a free-standing learning unit could be provided on its own on future occasions for new workers or refresher training. A module will be provided over one or more workshops.

The training program is designed primarily as a centralized training opportunity for all BFSWs. Bringing staff together periodically is important for the development of a sense of collegueship and networking among workers in geographically distant communities.

An equally important part of this program is the follow-up support, "mini-training", and coaching in local communities. This follow-up training will be provided by the BFSW Liaison Worker, and can be targeted to other local resource people, such as family committees, and other resource workers involved with the BFSW Program.

Training Development Principles

In the course of the planning process a number of important guiding ideas or principles evolved.

1. Training should give the workers the knowledge and practical tools for providing family services within First Nation community environments. Such training should help workers capitalize on their membership in the community, and work cooperatively with other service providers.
2. Training should be planned so that the training events have some continuity. Each training workshop should follow previous events, such that new learning builds on previous learning.
3. Each training workshop should be thoroughly documented, either in written or video form. This will allow an assessment of training, and the production of resource materials for within the community or in future training. A cumulative description of important skills and knowledge will emerge, resulting in a corpus of culturally-based practices.
4. Training should combine central training for all BFSWs, with follow-up support in the community by the Band Family Service Liaison Worker. Local training sessions will build on central workshops.
5. Training events should combine a variety of formats and techniques, so that the workers remain interested and challenged. Experiential learning (learning by doing) should be emphasized as the predominant learning style, and workshops should be organized to promote cross-community learning.
6. Training events should be evaluated so that the training program is constantly improved. The Action Group, the BFSW Liaison Worker, and visiting trainers should be actively involved in evaluation activities.
7. Translation of materials and training events should be provided.
8. All training events should be appropriate to the needs of BFSWs. One way of accomplishing this is to orient all new trainers to the BFSW needs, the training plan, learning styles, and preferred training approaches.

The remaining sections of this plan is organized according to the major modules of the training program. The last section provides a recommended inventory of training techniques.

Module 1: Orientation

The first module, consisting of one five-day workshop, is designed to orient new workers as well as provide refresher training to experienced staff.

In general, workers will be acquainted with the general child welfare context of their work, the organizational settings of the program, and the details of family service work. The specific topics are as follows:

- .An Introduction to Native Child and Family Services in Ontario, other Native agencies, Child Welfare within the Province of Ontario, relationships with Children's Aid Societies, and the contributions of the Band Family Services Program.

- .Goals and Services in the BFSW Program; job descriptions of BFSWs and the BFSW Liaison Worker.

- .A Review of Tikinagan Child and Family Services: Mandate, Services and Programs, Organizational Structures, Responsibilities.

- .Tikinagan's Family Counselling Unit: Service goals, Job Responsibilities of Counsellors, and links to the Band Family Services Program.

- .Band Roles and Responsibilities in relation to the BFSW Program: Chief and Council; Family Service Committees, other service providers, etc.

This workshop will emphasize the links between the BFSW Program and Tikinagan, including uses of Tikinagan's programs and staff. As well, the important differences between Tikinagan's mandate, Family Counselling Unit, and the BFSW Program will be reviewed.

Within this module Tikinagan management and staff will act as resource people, reviewing their roles and responsibilities.

Module 2: Personal Growth

This module assumes that the "self" is an important resource for helping others, particularly in small communities in which one lives.

The module works towards self-awareness, personal growth and the development of life skills. Participants will be taught ways to deal with personal issues, in order to minimize the negative impact of such issues on the quality of work. Participants will have an opportunity to examine their strengths and limitations, and how these affect family service work. Topics will include...

.how we present ourselves to others

.self confidence, and how this can be developed

.assertiveness

.attitudes to others

Module 3: The Development of Organizational Skills

This module will train Band Family Service Workers to participate effectively as organizational members of the Band Family Services Program and the Band. These are skills required for any person who must work effectively with other people, gather and share information, plan and provide services effectively and efficiently, as well as raise money for special projects.

Workshops in this module will give particular attention to:

(1)Administrative Skills

- .the importance of information in service programs
- .case management: planning and monitoring services
- .filing systems
- .writing skills: case notes; general reports; activity reports
- .budgeting and forecasting

(2)Networking Skills

Band Family Service Workers are not expected to work alone. Working effectively with other people keeps people informed, knowledgeable, confident and comfortable in one's work. Also, such team-work requires the respect of client confidentiality.

In this training, the reasons for good working relationships will be discussed. As well, workers will be trained to work effectively, seek advice and support, and share information with other BFSWs, local service providers, local service committees, and Tikinagan staff. Attention will be given to the following networking skills:

- .interpersonal communications within service groups
- .maintaining client confidentiality in small communities
- .working creatively with other people
- .the art of negotiating
- .decision-making and consensus-building within teams

.setting up emergency teams for cross-community intervention

3)How to Organize and Facilitate Effective Meetings

Meetings do not have to be boring or a waste of time! This workshop will help workers plan, carry out, and assess the usefulness of working meetings with local family service committees, Chief and Council, community service providers, and others.

Attention will be given to the following skills and knowledge:

.the purposes and functions of meetings

.planning and preparing for meetings

.getting the most out of meetings

.facilitating meetings

(4)How to Plan and Use Your Time Wisely

This workshop will provide important ideas and skills for planning one's work and making the best use of time on a daily basis. Attention will be given to...

.planning your daily work

.understanding the blocks to effective use of time in yourself and in Native communities

.what to do to avoid wasting time

.working with others to become more efficient

.the use of aids (eg. log books, daily calenders, etc.)

Time management training will be done in such a way that respects the unanticipated events and crises in BFSW work.

(5)The Effective Use of Supervision and Consultation

Band Family Service Workers are expected to make good use of local supervisors, the Band Family Service Liaison Worker, and Regional Workers. To do this well, workers should know who to go to for what information, and how to get the most useful information or guidance.

This workshop will provide the necessary information and skills for:

- .working with the BFSW Liaison Worker
- .deciding when to approach someone else for information and when to make your own decision or use your own ideas
- .gathering important background information before seeking the advice of others
- .how to make the best use of your time with supervisors or Tikinagan staff

(6)Accessing Funds for Local Projects

On some occasions, Band Family Service Workers will need to raise their own funds for special projects or resources. This workshop will assist workers to do this by providing...

- .the various sources of funds for Native social services
- .proposal writing skills

(7)Organizational Communications

Working with community members and other workers on- and off-reserve requires a strong commitment to good communications.

This workshop reviews the importance of good communications within a service program, and what could go wrong when communications within an organization break down.

Attention will be given to such things as...

.communication skills for working with others

.telephone follow-up

.out-of-office arrangements

.the use of modern technology (example: answering machines)

.writing memos and letters

(8)Program Development

This workshop will provide introductory training for the development, delivery and improvement of local program initiatives. It will be particular beneficial for developing new community education and self-help initiatives such as parenting skills, workshops on the dangers of alcohol abuse, teenage relationships, and many others.

Participants will acquire introductory skills for:

.needs assessment

.program planning and design

.program delivery

.evaluation

Module 4: Training for Family Support

An important part of Band Family Services is the provision of family support. Family support refers to all activities which concentrate on helping specific families who are in need of assistance, so that they can provide appropriate child-rearing.

This module will consist of a series of workshops covering a number of topics and skill development, as follows:

(i) Family Support: Needy Families, Traditional Native Family Support, and Today's Family Support Services.

This workshop will cover the meaning of "family support", as well as how support was provided to families in traditional Native communities. Family support services in modern times will also be reviewed, including those in other areas of the Province, and particularly the Band Family Services Program. The workshop will conclude with a review of the skills needed for successful family support work. Resource people will include elders and cultural teachers.

(ii) The Application of Organizational Skills in Family Support

This workshop will review and practice the organizational knowledge and skills for family support work. Special attention will be given to...

.a review of relevant Provincial CFSA concerning customary care, Tikinagan policies, and how these affect family service work.

.developing a community profile of local and outside resources

.assisting the work of local Family Service Committees

.interpersonal and team-work skills for working with other resource people (eg. giving and receiving feedback, understanding others, expression of feelings, dealing with different temperaments)

.making referrals and liaising with other programs: obtaining client information; describing the problem; suggesting needs; writing; making transfer arrangements; preparing the client; assertiveness; advocacy; obtaining client progress information.

(iii) Family Systems Training

This involves training in how to think about and work with families as total groups. Attention will

be given to family roles and relationships, mutual perceptions and beliefs, internal divisions, power and control. An important theme will be how these patterns encourage or inhibit growth.

This module will also focus on how such problems as alcohol abuse or violence affect, and are affected by, the family. Family relationships with the community-at-large will also be examined.

(iv) Counselling Skills for Family Support

Family support work does not necessarily require long-lasting counselling or therapy with families. However, basic interviewing and counselling skills are helpful.

This workshop will cover...

.how to build good relationships with troubled families

.interviewing skills for helping and research

.basic counselling skills (eg. giving feedback) for helping troubled families

(v) Deciding How to Help the Family: The Family Support Plan

Family support planning is a process of working with families to determine their needs, decide how to meet these needs, organize the necessary resources and time-lines, and secure the family's commitment to the plan.

Topics in this workshop will include:

.the meaning and importance of family support planning

.participants in family support planning

.steps towards family support planning

.skill practice

(vi)How to Use Home Visits and In-Home Care for Family Support

One way of supporting families is to meet with them directly in the home or secure direct in-home assistance for parenting and household tasks.

Topics in this workshop will include:

.purposes of home visits and in-home care

.community resource people for in-home care

.the roles of Band Family Service Workers in the provision and support for in-home care: describing home conditions, building trust, educating about the program, providing encouragement, follow-up.

.skills practice

(vii) Customary Care: Skills and Techniques

Tikinagan Child and Family Services is currently developing a system for arranging customary care as a local alternative to the Provincial Child Welfare system and the use of the court. The new system is expected to give increased authority to the local community in identifying child protection cases, deciding upon the appropriate arrangements for responding to children at risk, and monitoring the placements of children. Band Family Service Workers will have important roles in this new system.

When the new system is in place, training will be provided to BFSWs. Although details for training are not yet available, it is anticipated that the workshop will contain the following components:

- .the nature of customary care
- .the functions and roles of BFSWs in the new system
- .skill practice

(viii) After-Care Skills

This training will provide BFSWs with the knowledge and skills for supporting the families and children in the community after treatment. Special attention will be given to ...

- .liaising with the treatment agency or Family Counselling Unit
- .identifying the root causes in the family's environment
- .building trust in families
- .working in small groups
- .working with the significant people in the family's life (eg. relatives, teachers, friends) to create natural support groups
- .post-treatment follow-up support for families

(ix)The Development of Self-Help Groups

Some people in the community may have special needs related to current or past problems (eg. abuse, alcohol, loneliness) or life transitions (eg. starting families, adolescent relationships). With the proper initial organization and on-going support, such people can be helped to help themselves.

This workshop will train Band Family Service Workers to organize and support self-help groups. Attention in the workshop will be given to...

.how self-help groups help

.starting up a self-help group

.peer counselling for youth

.supporting a self-help group

.maintaining on-going ties between people in self-help groups

Module 5: Training for Community Support

"Community support" refers to a set of services for making communities better places for families in general, and specifically for raising children. Community support activities are more preventative in nature, in the sense of making positive changes such that problems are less likely to occur.

Training for community support will concentrate on (i) community education (ii) community development and (iii) the development of community unity. Workshops will be provided on:

(1)Communities and Family Life

The first workshop will review the quality of life in First Nation communities and how they either strengthen, support or weaken family life. Attention will be given to:

- .What do we mean by "community", and what do all communities have in common? What are their differences?

- .What kinds of challenges face First Nation communities, and how do these affect family life and parenting?

- .What can be done to strengthen communities and improve the quality of life in families?

(2)Community Education

Strong families contribute to strong communities. But the reverse is also true...strong communities contribute to strong families.

Community education is one way that families can be strengthened through the efforts of Band Family Service Workers.

In order to carry out community education effectively, Band Family Service Workers will become knowledgeable about certain topics, which can be shared with other members of the community. As well, they will learn ways of sharing this knowledge, how to obtain additional knowledge from the communities, and techniques of community education.

Topics for community education

The topics in the following list will be examined in ways which show the important connections between the community as a whole, the quality of family life and parenting.

.family well-being, parenting and child neglect

.Native parenting skills

.the family as a source of infant and child development

.the challenges of youth and adolescent development

.the community, alcohol abuse, and its effects on families and individuals

.the community, gas-sniffing, and its effects on children

.the community, family violence and children's well-being

.traditional Native family life and child-rearing

.suicide and suicide prevention

.sexuality and health

Skills for community education

To carry out successful community education initiatives, Band Family Service Workers should know how to obtain the most appropriate information and resource materials, plan and communicate the information to those people who most need it, using the most appropriate channels and methods. To do this the following skills will be taught:

a)How to use community leadership and the political structure for successful community education

b)How to encourage community participation

c)Methods for reaching out and educating the community

.school visits

.home visits

.promoting awareness of the BFSW program and Tikinagan

.finding out what the community wants from the program

d)Large group and workshop skills

.how to encourage involvement and promote interest

.how to plan and design a workshop

.how to reach people

.facilitating, listening and presenting skills

.assessing the workshop

e)Using community channels of communication

.local media: radio, T.V., newsletters, etc.

.appropriate use of communications (eg. translation)

.educational booklets

f)How to work with small groups

.organizing, facilitating, listening, presenting

3. Skills for Community Resource Development

These skills will help Band Family Service Workers develop, support and strengthen existing community arrangements and resource people who potentially can have an impact on family life and parenting.

Five separate workshops will be provided:

- (i) Developing resources for customary care
- (ii) Strengthening customary care arrangements
- (iii) Providing consultation to community resource people: schools, recreation, CHRs, family service committees, etc.
- (iv) How to obtain and use outside family life resource people and materials
- (v) How to mobilize and use volunteers

4. Developing Community Unity

These workshops will present the knowledge and skills for building strong unified communities for the development of family life. Attention will be given to skills for

- .developing a community history of family life from traditional to modern times
- .organizing community-wide social events for families
- .strengthening the roles of elders within the community
- .reducing social isolation between families
- .reducing conflict between families
- .strengthening extended family relationships
- .establishing contacts between existing groups and programs related to family life (eg. building strong school-family ties)

.strengthening community-wide communications

Module 6: Training for Crisis Intervention

Band Family Service Workers are frequently needed to support families during crises. Crises are sudden events or episodes (eg. accidents, suicides, fires, conflict and violence, drunkenness) which have a disruptive effect on family life and parenting. Intervention is needed to reduce the immediate danger and risk to family members, particularly children.

Training for short-term crisis intervention would focus on such things as...

- .the meaning and causes of crises in Native communities, and the needs of families during crises.
- .overcoming the fears of helping families in crisis
- .assessing the immediate needs of families during crises, particularly the needs of vulnerable people, such as children or elders
- .communication skills in crisis situations
- .recognizing and dealing with the immediate emotions (eg. anger, fear, panic, hopelessness) during crises
- .mobilizing appropriate resource people during and after crises (eg. relatives, police, home-makers)
- .getting control of the situation
- .responding to conflict and violence within the home
- .helping families deal with the on-going stress associated with crises
- .first aid

Module 7: Training for Protection Liaison Work

The aim of protection liaison work is to help the community take suitable action when the health and safety of children are clearly at risk. Since Tikinagan Child and Family Services is the provincially designated child protection authority, part of the training in this area will help workers liaise with Tikinagan.

Training for this work will concentrate on:

Authority

.review of provincial and Tikinagan policy concerning the authority for making apprehensions; relevant sections of the Child and Family Services Act

Assessing Risk

.information gathering to assess high risk situations, including interviewing and observational skills

.skills for establishing co-operation with people in the household: building a relationship; working with anger

.what to look for (evidence/criteria) to determine risk

Working with Tikinagan

.clarifying roles with Tikinagan staff

.communication and report-writing skills concerning high risk families

Transferring Children to Temporary Places of Safety

.home-finding and home-study skills: appropriate homes; making recommendations to Tikinagan

.training and preparation of co-parents

.follow-up work with the natural parents: building trust; parenting education; referrals; coordinating visits with children.

.follow-up work with co-parents: securing financial assistance; medical services and check-ups; helping the children to adjust to the new household; helping to solve problems in the household and community; assuring the provision of appropriate care and support.

.knowledge and skills for assisting the court process: understanding the court process and court

roles; research and writing skills for documenting and communicating family background; verbal, case-note taking, and written reporting to Tikinagan staff; preparing self and the family for court

Training Resources

Preliminary planning for the BFSW training program has identified a preliminary listing of resource materials and training resource people. Many of these are already in hand, or are accessible. The goal is to develop a "training and service resource centre" of materials (written, audio, video) to assist training and on-going service.

.Materials on life-skills coaching, activities for trainers, and peer counselling.

.Training resource people: Temus Nate, Nodin Mental Health Services (crisis intervention); Legal Aid (training for court work); Native Parenting Project (parent skills training); Dennis Champagne (life skills); Bea Shawanda.

.Proposal-writing package: Native Community Branch

.Summaries of Native sections from Child and Family Services Act.

.Video materials from: Ojibway Tribal Family Services; Migisi; Frank Maidman (Native Alcohol Treatment).

.Nicole Valley Native Sexual Abuse Program

.Experienced BFSWs as resource people

An Inventory of Training Methods

A review and listing of the variety of training methods for this program is as follows.

1. Lectures and short talks by: outside experts; BFSW and Tikinagan staff; elders; community resource people.
2. Role plays and other experiential learning exercises in which people learn skills and knowledge by actually working on simulated cases, tasks and problems during the workshop.
3. Small group discussions
4. Large group discussions
5. The study of written materials
6. Exposure and discussion of audio and video materials
7. Video playback: the use of video to record and learn from BFSW activities (eg. interviewing) during workshop.
8. Panel discussions on specific topics by: experts, BFSWs, Tikinagan staff; questions from audience.
9. Methods for encouraging the sharing of work successes, challenges, and new initiatives among BFSWs.
10. Learning logs in which workshop participants write their learnings at various stages throughout the workshop, and compare with previous knowledge. Useful for seeing progress in learning. Sharing one's progress with a fellow BFSW or group is an alternative to writing.
11. Traditional talking circle in which everyone sits in a circle. Each individual, one after another around the circle, talks about personal or work issues.
12. Case study in which confidential cases (family or community problems) are studied and analyzed for solutions. Case studies can also be used with community initiatives, such as a new self-help group. Case descriptions can be done in writing or verbally. People presenting the case receive feed-back from the group, so that everyone learns from the process.