



Familyhome Guidelines

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DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of these guidelines, the following definitions apply:

Agreement for service: refers to an agreement between the transfer payment agency and the Familyhome provider prepared by the agency, pertaining to the provision of service for the client.

Client: refers to a child or adult with a developmental disability planning to reside or residing with a Familyhome provider (often referred to as a “Homesharer” by some agencies).

Familyhome: refers to the Familyhome provider’s home, and members of the Familyhome provider family and the client(s) who reside in the home.

Familyhome provider: refers to an adult person and/or family, who provides accommodation, care, support and supervision for a client (child or adult with a developmental disability), and has a relationship with a transfer payment agency coordinating the Familyhome program.

Individual plan: refers to an agreement between a client and/or family and service provider which describes the client's goals and action required in order for the client to be able to attain these goals.

Ministry: for adult clients, refers to the Ministry of Community and Social Services and for child clients, refers to the Ministry of Children's Services.

Program staff: refers to the employees of the transfer payment agencies who may set up and supervise program arrangements for clients and Familyhome providers.

Transfer payment agency: refers to a ministry-funded developmental services provider or a ministry-funded children's services provider, including Children's Aid Societies, which have Familyhome placements.

**MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES
MINISTRY OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

FAMILYHOME GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist service providers that administer the Familyhome program to develop policies and procedures that promote the purpose and goals of the program. They are intended to be a tool for agencies currently operating a Familyhome program, or for those interested in developing a program. These guidelines do not prescribe requirements for agencies, but rather represent best practices that can be used by transfer payment agencies to examine their current policies and procedures and revise and update them as they consider necessary.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Familyhome program is one option within a range of accommodation programs funded by the ministry. The setting of a Familyhome placement is located in a family home, and care, support, and supervision are provided by a Familyhome provider. The Familyhome program was introduced in 1984. Initially, the program was developed for adults with a developmental disability, but it was later expanded to meet the needs of children with a developmental disability.

Typically, the Familyhome program goals are:

- To provide a safe and secure place to live in a family home setting;
- To promote a high quality of life; and
- To support and promote community inclusion.

The program expands the range of residential options available in the community and allows individual needs to be met in a more flexible and personal manner. The program provides a family setting for those clients who may require supervision, prefer living with a family, and who may need the additional support that a family environment can provide. Children and adults with a range of functional abilities, including those who have additional physical, behavioural, and/or medical complications, may be served in the Familyhome program.

APPLICATION/SCOPE

There are no specific provisions contained in the *Developmental Services Act* (DSA) regulation for agencies with a Familyhome program for adults, however, all transfer payment agencies or homes providing, directly or indirectly, residential care to three or more children not of common parentage must comply with the *Child and Family Services Act*, applicable regulations and policies with respect to foster care licensing.

These guidelines are intended for all transfer payment agencies funded under the *Developmental Services Act* (DSA) and/or the *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA), including Children's Aid Societies, that arrange and supervise Familyhome placements.

GUIDELINE 1: SCREENING PROCESS OF THE FAMILYHOME PROVIDER

Transfer payment agencies typically develop written policies and procedures that identify key characteristics of a Familyhome provider and a process for making a decision concerning the acceptance or rejection of an applicant Familyhome provider.

Individuals may not need to discontinue employment to become Familyhome providers, however, the financial status of Familyhome providers should be secure, with an adequate income to care for the family's needs. Single individuals may also qualify as Familyhome providers.

When assessing potential Familyhome providers, a key consideration is that the Familyhome providers are willing to accept a child and/or adult as part of their family and that they are capable, physically, mentally and emotionally, to provide care and opportunities to enhance the client's skills, as needed. There are other qualities and characteristics that the transfer payment agency staff look for, when considering potential Familyhome providers. Some of these characteristics are: patience, adaptability, understanding, warmth, open-mindedness, acceptance, maturity, stability, commitment, integrity, cooperativeness, and flexibility.

Key characteristics:

Familyhome providers typically have the following characteristics:

- Be available and willing to participate in Familyhome orientation, training and ongoing activities as outlined in agency policy and procedures and service agreement;
- Demonstrate ability to meet the special needs of clients;¹ and
- Be willing to learn new skills.

The selection of Familyhome providers usually involves a screening process. Previous experience is not necessarily required since people often have skills acquired in raising a family, in their own job, or in their volunteer work or other community involvement which are valuable assets in becoming Familyhome providers. The transfer payment agency administering the Familyhome program generally arranges for the training and support that applicants need to effectively care for a child and/or adult with a developmental disability in their home.

Where local coordinated access mechanisms exist, transfer payment agencies should use this mechanism to identify eligible clients.

¹For children, assessment and screening procedures must include criteria set out in Foster Care Licensing Requirements, where applicable.

Screening and Approval Process:

Transfer payment agencies generally approve Familyhome providers based on a process that includes a thorough home study and written report on each home.

The home study applicant screening typically includes:

- A series of family interviews to determine the family's motivation to become a Familyhome provider, and to assess the nature and quality of family relationships, and each family member's willingness to participate;
- Verified unrelated character references;
- Confirmation that the potential Familyhome provider is able to physically, mentally and emotionally provide care and cope with stress;
- A current verified criminal reference check of all adults living in the Familyhome;
- Home meets the requirements of policies and procedures developed by the transfer payment agency that are based on the requirements for a residence outlined in the *Building Code* and any applicable municipal requirements for a residence;
- Water testing compliance (for Familyhomes where water is not supplied by the municipal water system) appropriate for the local area, according to policies and procedures developed by the transfer payment agency in consultation with the local public health department and/or the Ministry of the Environment;
- Fire safety checks/compliance, according to policies and procedures developed by the transfer payment agency that are based on the requirements for a "dwelling unit" outlined in the *Fire Code* and applicable municipal by-laws; and
- Any other checks to promote safety, for which the agency has developed policies and procedures.

Terms of Placement:

Transfer payment agencies usually have processes in place to see that the Familyhome provider agrees to meet the terms of the Familyhome placement, as outlined by the agency's policies and procedures.

As one of the goals of the Familyhome program is to provide a safe and secure place to live in a family-like environment, transfer payment agencies typically place no more than two child or adult clients unrelated to the Familyhome provider from any transfer payment agency in the Familyhome. Similarly, Familyhome providers do not enter into agreements with other agencies without informing the agency that first placed a client in the Familyhome.

Some of the areas that transfer payment agencies may wish to consider in developing policies and procedures to guide the terms of the Familyhome placement include:

- Individual and/or group program orientation by the agency;

- Involvement from the client's family, if appropriate, in the client-Familyhome provider matching processes;
- A series of pre-placement visits prior to the placement. The frequency and duration of these visits to be based on the assessed needs of the client with input from the Familyhome provider, the client, agency, and the client's family (if appropriate);
- Reasonable accessibility of agency staff to the client and the Familyhome provider, and to the client's family, as appropriate;
- Agreement from the potential Familyhome provider to ongoing monitoring of the placement, as well as a written annual review of the Familyhome noting significant changes and compliance with agency policies and procedures, including, relationship with client, ability to meet ongoing needs of client, Familyhome perception of placement, client's perception of placement, building, fire and health requirements, and recommendations regarding placement;
- A method for determining suitable placement selection, including consideration of compatibility of interests; cultural and linguistic background; developmental, social, emotional, medical, spiritual, education/daytime activity needs; client's abilities, strengths and challenges; availability of recreational facilities and other services as required;
- Problem resolution processes;
- Procedures for terminating the placement and/or service agreement with the Familyhome provider (i.e., a provider's retirement, reevaluation of the needs of the client); and
- Any other terms of the placement that the transfer payment agency may consider appropriate.

GUIDELINE 2: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Transfer payment agencies usually develop their own policies describing the roles and responsibilities for the agency, the Familyhome provider and the client. Some suggested roles that agencies may wish to consider in developing these policies are noted below.

The transfer payment agency is typically responsible for:

1. Support:

- Providing service/case coordination for the client;
- Developing, coordinating, and implementing an individual plan for the client each year;
- Supporting the client to maintain contact with their family, as appropriate;
- Meeting regularly with the Familyhome provider;
- Providing 24-hour emergency back-up to the client and Familyhome provider;
- Assisting in the arrangement of planned and emergency respite for the Familyhome provider;
- Providing respite or setting policies with respect to providing respite to other Familyhome providers²; and
- Providing ongoing training and support to the Familyhome provider and to the client's family, as appropriate.

2. Supervision:

- Determining with the Familyhome provider the amount of supervision and support to be provided to the client;
- Monitoring the use of the client's personal funds on a regular basis;
- Identifying/describing to the Familyhome provider acceptable and unacceptable means of managing client behaviour³;
- Supervising and evaluating individual Familyhomes; and
- Assisting in the resolution of any concerns in the placement.

²For example, Familyhome providers may provide respite to other Familyhome clients, with the approval of the supervising transfer payment agency.

³For children in licensed settings, policies must comply with the requirements of the CFSA, its regulations, and any other terms and conditions on the license.

3. Administering the program:

- Developing policies and procedures;
- Preparing and administering the program budget;
- Promoting the program;
- Reporting serious occurrences to the ministry;
- Approving and monitoring certain financial expenditures incurred by the Familyhome provider and the client;
- Maintaining Familyhome provider and client files;
- Developing an individual plan for the client, in discussion with significant parties;
- Liaising with ministry staff, community service providers, health care personnel, educators, and other professionals; and
- Negotiating, facilitating and promoting contact with the client's family.

4. Recruitment and Placement:

- Recruiting and screening potential Familyhome providers;
- Identifying and screening potential clients;
- Making an appropriate match between the client and the Familyhome provider; and
- Assisting the client and Familyhome provider in their initial adjustment, through orientation, training, and regular contact.

Other responsibilities as determined by the transfer payment agency, the Familyhome provider, and/or the unique needs of the client.

The Familyhome provider is typically responsible for:

- Providing a safe and secure living environment on a continuous basis for the client;
- Providing a furnished bedroom (recognizing that the client should have the opportunity to use his/her own furnishings in the bedroom, if he/she wishes);
- Providing nutritious meals;
- Offering the client the opportunity for privacy;
- Assisting the client with health care, basic needs, and other activities of daily living;
- Assisting the client to attend school, work and/or other daytime activities, extra-curricular activities, and medical appointments;
- Providing a caring and supportive atmosphere that encourages the client to participate in day-to-day activities in the home as a member of the family;
- Providing opportunities, guidance, and direction that encourages the client to become involved in the surrounding community;
- Enabling visits with the client's family and friends, as appropriate;

- Arranging for appropriate supervision for the client when the Familyhome provider is absent from the home;
- Maintaining financial and program records for the client, as required, and submitting receipts for purchases and/or services made on behalf of the client, as required by the transfer payment agency;
- Keeping all client information and records confidential;
- Participating in initial and ongoing training, Familyhome meetings, and annual reviews of the Familyhome as requested by the agency;
- Participating in the person-centred planning process and implementing parts of the plan related to the client's Familyhome placement;
- Advising agency staff of changes in the client's behaviour, medical or other care needs;
- Advising agency staff of serious occurrences;
- Informing the agency of any change in the family status; and
- Other responsibilities based on the Familyhome arrangement and the unique needs of the client.

To the extent possible, the client:

- Participates in pre-planning activities, the identification of their individual needs, goals and supports required;
- Is involved with their family, as desired and/or appropriate;
- Participates in the activities of daily living agreed upon with the Familyhome provider;
- Participates in planning meetings;
- Participates in the annual review of the Familyhome placement; and
- Other responsibilities based on the Familyhome arrangement and the client's unique needs.

GUIDELINE 3: ORIENTATION AND PRE-PLANNING PROCESS

It is a best practice for transfer payment agencies to have written policies and procedures in place that describe the orientation and pre-planning process for Familyhome applicants, providers, and clients. The orientation and pre-planning process provides essential information about the special needs of the client and further screening for agency staff and the potential Familyhome provider. Approval of a Familyhome provider is generally facilitated when agencies require applicants to participate in the agency's orientation and pre-planning process. Orientation programs will differ between Familyhome programs, however, the following lists give examples of topics that could be addressed with potential Familyhome providers and clients.

For the Familyhome applicant/provider:

Review of:

- A description of the Familyhome program, including philosophy and goals, organizational structure, regulations and procedures, the role of the agency, and services provided;
- Agency policies and procedures, including complaints procedures, serious occurrence reporting procedures, the *Developmental Services Act* and its regulation, *Child and Family Services Act* and its regulations, and the Children's Foster Care licensing standards;
- Information on developmental disabilities, including what a developmental disability is, causes, level of functioning, understanding and awareness;
- Information regarding behavioural problems, medical concerns, and sexuality issues;
- Understanding the importance of developing independence skills and initiating community involvement for the client;
- Developing awareness of legal issues, such as liability and the importance of confidentiality;
- Roles and responsibilities of the Familyhome provider;
- Impact of the client's presence on the entire family;
- Working relationships with the transfer payment agency, other service providers, the client's family, and significant others;
- Process for identifying supports required to assist with initial adjustment such as pre-placement visits;
- Process and expectations to determine amount and type of initial and ongoing supervision and support that will be provided, including backup supervision and emergency and planned respite;
- Process and expectations for developing, implementing and reviewing the individual plan for clients and agreements for service;

- Problem resolution process; and
- Client's relationships with their family, peers, and involvement in other community activity programs.

For the client:

Review of:

- Purpose and goals of placement/program;
- Rights and responsibilities;
- Process and expectations concerning client input on activities required to support:
 - selection of placement;
 - pre-planning process;
 - initial adjustment; and
 - ongoing participation in placement/program⁴;
- Problem resolution process; and
- Relationship to their family, significant others and peers.

⁴When taking the client's view into account when developing the activities required to support the placement, consideration is given to such things as client's age, developmental stage and emotional stability, as well as the participation of a third party for clients that are unable to express their view.

GUIDELINE 4: INITIAL AND ONGOING SUPPORT

The transfer payment agency typically provides initial training and ongoing support to Familyhome providers. Such training may be provided on an individual or group basis using techniques such as seminars, ongoing consultation by transfer payment agency staff, Familyhome provider meetings, information packages, use of other community resources, and other appropriate means.

Transfer payment agencies generally have written policies and procedures in place that describe the initial and ongoing support that they will provide to the Familyhome provider that could include:

For the Familyhome provider:

- Assistance in the initial adjustment of the client in the Familyhome setting;
- Types of, and the amount of supervision by agency staff;
- Regular and emergency contact with agency staff;
- Initial training, and ongoing training and support;
- Planned and unplanned (emergency) relief, including the roles and responsibilities of the agency in responding to urgent calls for assistance from the Familyhome provider;
- Networking with other Familyhome providers;
- Regularly scheduled visits to monitor and support the placement; and
- Other supports to meet the unique needs of the Familyhome provider and/or the client.

For the client

- Assistance in the initial adjustment;
- Development of an individual plan;
- Service coordination with supports provided by the agency (e.g., day programs, access to professional services, referrals) and with other supports in the larger community;
- Monitoring the use of the client's personal funds;
- Contact with their family, as desired and appropriate;
- Regularly scheduled visits to monitor and support the placement; and
- Other supports to meet the unique needs of the client.

GUIDELINE 5: INSURANCE

Transfer payment agencies may want to develop policies and procedures regarding expectations for basic home/liability insurance for Familyhome providers. Generally, the agency provides a letter of acknowledgement to the insurer to confirm the number of clients residing in the Familyhome. A letter of acknowledgement may also be provided by the insurer to the agency to confirm that the Familyhome provider has home liability insurance for the client(s).

GUIDELINE 6: CLIENTS' INVOLVEMENT WITH THEIR FAMILY

As the client may continue to have a relationship with his/her family, transfer payment agencies may want to develop written policies and procedures that describe the nature of this involvement that could typically include:

- Retaining involvement as desirable and appropriate in:
 - selection of placement;
 - pre-planning process; and
 - ongoing planning and participation (i.e., visitation, communication, participation in planning, and decision making);
- Ongoing support as negotiated with the agency (i.e., respite to the Familyhome provider); and
- Agreement on roles, responsibilities, and expectations⁵.

GUIDELINE 7: COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR CLIENT AND FAMILYHOME PROVIDER

It is a best practice for transfer payment agencies to have written policies and procedures in place that describe complaints procedures for the client and Familyhome provider. The policies and procedures need to reflect relevant policy, legislation and regulatory requirements.⁶ Topics typically covered in a complaints procedure policy include:

- Circumstances that would warrant a complaint;
- Who is to be involved;
- How a review would be conducted, including timelines;
- Reporting requirements; and
- Process for informing individuals of the outcome.

⁵It is recognized that a range of formality exists between transfer payment agencies and families related to the families' involvement with their family member and the Familyhome provider. The degree of formality is based on the individual needs of families.

⁶This includes requirements under the *CFSA*, Serious Occurrence Reporting Policy and Procedures, and Children's Foster Care Licensing Requirements.

GUIDELINE 8: ABUSE PREVENTION/PERSONAL SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Transfer payment agencies should be concerned about the prevention of abuse and would generally have written policies and procedures in place that describe abuse prevention/personal safety protocols. Agencies may wish to refer to the Ministry of Community and Social Services Prevention and Management of Abuse bulletin, legislation and regulatory requirements⁷ when developing their policies. When abuse occurs, agencies should have processes to deal with the situation and to address the needs of the client and concerns of their family. Areas to consider include:

For abuse prevention:

Processes for:

- Screening and training of new staff;
- Investigating abuse allegations;
- The duty to report (for children);
- Informing individuals about abuse investigation;
- Risk assessment;
- Care policies (e.g., how to assist someone with the activities of daily living in an appropriate way);
- Supporting client, Familyhome provider, client's family, and others during an abuse investigation; and
- Informing individuals of the outcome of abuse investigation.

For personal safety:

- Access to advocates (for children), guardians and complaints process; and
- Process and method for determining appropriate level of supervision and service required to promote the safety of the client.

⁷Including requirements under the *CFSA*, Serious Occurrence Reporting Policy and Procedures, and Children's Foster Care Licensing Requirements.

GUIDELINE 9: PAYMENT TO THE FAMILYHOME PROVIDER

The ministry supports the Familyhome program by providing funding to transfer payment agencies that administer the Familyhome program and for adults, by providing income and employment supports to eligible clients, as appropriate.

Typically, the adult client pays the Familyhome provider for accommodation and basic needs (e.g., clothing, food). The transfer payment agency generally tries to see that the client has funds to cover the cost of their care, support, supervision, and related personal living expenses (e.g. transportation, social and recreational outings).

It is recognized that there are a range of agreements that transfer payment agencies may have to reimburse their Familyhome providers. In appropriate circumstances, a transfer payment agency may pay the Familyhome provider on behalf of an adult client.

For child clients, the transfer payment agency funds the Familyhome provider. Additional financial support may also be provided by the child's family.

In cases where the transfer payment agency is making payments on behalf of the client they should have written policies and procedures in place that describe payment for the Familyhome provider for the care and supervision that they provide to the client. These policies and procedures could include:

- The contribution to the payment made by the client (where the client is an adult), or by the client's family (where the client is a child under 18);
- The daily or monthly payment rates to the Familyhome provider by the transfer payment agency;
- Anything else specific to the agency (e.g., reimbursement of the Familyhome provider for other costs, such as travel to client medical appointments or out-of-pocket expenses.)

GUIDELINE 10: MONITORING

Transfer payment agencies will be concerned about the success of the Familyhome placement and generally have written policies and procedures in place that describe the ongoing review and monitoring process. These policies and procedures could outline roles and responsibilities for the parties involved in the Familyhome program. Agencies may wish to consider the following roles when developing these policies and procedures:

The Familyhome provider's role typically includes⁸:

Participation in an annual review of the home, that could include discussion of the following topics:

- Interviews with all family members;
- An assessment of the support and training needs of the Familyhome provider;
- Significant changes in the Familyhome;
- Supervision and care of the client;
- Involvement in the implementation of the client's individual plan, related to the Familyhome placement;
- Relationships with the client and agency staff;
- Compliance with the agency policies and procedures, and/or the Children's Foster Care Licensing Requirements (as applicable);
- Perception of the placement and feedback regarding the Familyhome program;
- Renewal of the service agreement; and
- Other topics as determined by the transfer payment agency.

The transfer payment agency's role typically includes:

- Review of the client's individual plan and development of a plan for the following year;
- Review of the Familyhome provider;
- Review of serious occurrence reports regarding any client or Familyhome provider associated with the agency;
- Conducting an annual review as described above, home inspection, and renewal of service contract with the ministry; and
- Other topics as determined.

⁸ For children, review and monitoring procedures must include criteria set out in the Foster Care Licensing Review Checklist.

The client's role typically includes:

Participation in an annual review, including:

- An assessment of the client's needs and goals;
- Review and evaluation of the individual plan;
- Relationships with the Familyhome provider and agency staff;
- Relationships with their family and/or significant others;
- Perception of the placement and feedback regarding the Familyhome program;
and
- Other topics as determined by the transfer payment agency.

APPENDIX A

USEFUL WEBLINKS⁹

- Ministry of Community and Social Services (for information on ministry programs and contact information for regional offices):
<http://www.cfcs.gov.on.ca>
- Ministry of Children's Services (for information on programs for children and contact information for regional offices):
<http://www.children.gov.on.ca>
- Disability Weblinks (for information on federal and provincial programs and supports for people with a disability):
<http://www.disabilityweblinks.ca>
- Canada Benefits (for information on federal and provincial financial assistance programs):
<http://www.canadabenefits.ca>
- NADD Ontario - Habilitative Mental Health Resource Network:
<http://www.dualdiagnosisontario.org>
- Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council – Fire Safety Information:
<http://www.firesafetycouncil.com/english/pubsafe.htm>
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing – Ontario Building Code Information:
http://www.obc.mah.gov.on.ca/scripts/index_.asp
- e-Laws (access to provincial legislation and regulations, including the *Child and Family Services Act* and the *Developmental Services Act*):
<http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca>

⁹ Internet sites are included for information only. The ministry does not require or endorse their use. The information contained on these sites does not necessarily represent the position and/or policies of the ministry or the provincial government.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Agencies may request from their ministry regional office copies of the following documents:

- A. Prevention and Management of Abuse Bulletin
- B. Children's Foster Care Licensing Requirements
- C. Serious Occurrence Reporting Procedure