



## Specialized Services – Early Birds Information

### Vision

The Ability4Good Early Birds program works with families to ensure all members can function in a way that encourages growth and enjoyment in all aspects of family life when having a child with a “severe disability”. We work with families in the home and community to ensure consistency of skill development and generalization of skills for all family members. Recognizing that all families are different and require individualized support, one of our main goals is to give all family members the tools and knowledge to build their confidence in addressing the needs of the child with special needs, as well as the family as a whole.

### What is Specialized Services?

The Early Birds team is funded through Family Supports for Children with Disabilities (FSCD). Specialized Services are intended for families whose child has a severe disability resulting in critical service needs that cannot be fully met by other programs and services or other less intrusive FSCD support.

- Specialized Services are provided based on the individual needs of the guardian and their child and not on a child’s age or diagnosis.
- The term “severe disability” is referring to the child’s limited ability to function in activities of normal daily living combined with the need for continual and ongoing supervision and support to ensure their safety and participation in these activities.
- Specialized Services involve consultations with the guardian and are intended to support them in acquiring specific skills and learning strategies to help promote the child’s participation in normal daily living.



- FSCD recognize the family as the primary source of care and support for a child, and respects and values a family’s ability to care for and promote their child’s development. As such, guardians are involved in developing and implementing the individualized service plan and through Specialized Services learn skills and strategies that help strengthen their ability to care for the child. This is accomplished through providing Specialized Services that:
  - Address critical areas of need related to a child’s ability to function in activities of normal daily living;
  - Complement other programs, supports and services that the guardian and child have access to including the supports and services provided through the child’s educational program and/or other FSCD services;
  - Provide integrated supports that are individualized to address the unique need of the guardian and child and are coordinated with other supports and services that the guardian and child are receiving.
  - Build upon the guardian’s strengths, abilities and resources to promote their child’s functional abilities and participation in activities of normal daily living;
  - Provide the guardian with support, service and consultation from the following health professionals under the *Health Professions Act* relevant to the child’s areas of need: speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists and psychologists; and
  - Address the guardian’s priorities and assist them to achieve goals related to their child’s ability to participate in activities of normal daily living.

Specialized Services are coordinated and delivered through a Specialized Services team, which may include: health professionals, non-health professionals and aides based on the needs of both the guardian and child’s needs and circumstances. All our team members must have specific training and experience working with families of children with severe disabilities.



## Clinical Team

Clinicians work collaboratively with your family to set goals. These roles are consultative (i.e, not direct therapy with your child/family) and provide special expertise and guidance in their specific discipline.

- Speech-Language Pathologist's focus on functional communication, social skills as well as play skills.
- Occupational Therapist's look at fine motor skills, activities of daily living/self-care and play skills.
- Behaviour Consultant's focus on behavior management, community participation and play skills.
- Physical Therapist's look at a child's gross motor development and how it affects daily functioning.

Clinical visits from each team member occur monthly. Clinician time is spent with both DIRECT AND INDIRECT time.

Direct time includes;

- Home visits
- School and/or team meetings
- Phone calls or emails with parent(s)/guardians(s)
- Child specific meetings at the office with the multi-disciplinary team.

Indirect time includes:

- Travel time
- Phone or emails with FSCD, school team members, etc.
- Program development (e.g., writing program plans and assessments, session planning, material preparation, etc.)

Ability4Good  
Specialized Services  
Information



## Child Development Facilitator

Within FSCD contracts for Specialized Services, families may receive an “aide”. At Ability4Good, we employ “Child Development Facilitator’s” with that portion of Specialized Services funding. The role of the Child Development Facilitator involves, but is not limited to the following;

- Building a relationship with all family members,
- Provide structure within sessions,
- Offer feedback regarding parental implementation of strategies provided by the clinical team;

Child Development Facilitators work in the home and with the family in the community on areas of need. Coaching sessions occur up to 3 times per week, with no more than 2 hours each visit (alternate hours can be evaluated if a child is not involved in other programming such as PUF or school).

Parents are required to be present and involved during all CDF sessions. It’s not the hours the coach or clinical team is in your home that makes the difference, but the family’s implementation of strategies and recommendations with consistency on a daily basis.

## Individual Family Service Plan (ISP)

The ISP is developed with all members of the team including; Caregivers, FSCD, Clinical Coordinator, Speech-Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Behaviour Consultant/Psychologist and Physical Therapist (if applicable). The plan may include, but is not limited to, the following areas;

- Communication
- Play and Social Skills
- Daily Living/Self-Care
- Regulation
- Behaviour
- Community Participation



## Play Based Approach

Research shows that children learn best when they are engaged and are enjoying what they are doing. The more families play with their children, the more the children learn and interact with others. Although it may look like “just playing”, the time spent during play is opening a world of experiences that in turn, develop long lasting skills for both family and child. And it’s fun!

“Everything that your child needs to learn – social skills, vocabulary, language skills and even how to solve problems – can be learned through play.” (Sussman & Weitzman, 2014). This is why Ability4Good uses a play based approach.

## Common Approach

Human Services and Education are working together to provide a common approach to Specialized Services for eligible pre-school aged children with severe disabilities and their families through the Program Unit Funding (PUF)/Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) Common Approach.

The PUF/FSCD Common Approach encourages greater collaboration and coordination of services to support children with severe disabilities and their families in the home and community and early learning settings. Teachers, FSCD workers and service providers work together with families to help support their child’s development across settings by:

- Understanding the family’s priorities for the child and the family as a whole.
- Having one service team working with the child across environments (with Ability4Good working with your PUF provider)
- Creating one service plan with a focus on how PUF and FSCD Specialized Services can collaborate to support the family’s goals across settings.

The PUF/FSCD Common Approach is designed to provide families with a seamless experience as they access services. Service providers are able to provide more efficient and effective support to families so children with severe disabilities and their families experience greater success.

## FSCD Agreement

New Families starting in the program are required to provide a signed copy (ie. with both the parent(s)/legal Guardian(s) and the FSCD Director’s Delegate’s signature) before services can begin.



## STEPS TO FOLLOW

Families interested in pursuing services with Ability4Good are required to complete the following steps:

1. Complete an Intake form and return to Ability4Good with a copy of the MDT recommendation letter/confirmation of specialized services provided from FSCD.
2. Once the paperwork from steps 1 – 2 have been received, you will be placed on a waitlist.
3. When a spot is open in the Early Birds program, you will be contacted with a start date.
4. Ability4Good will contact your FSCD worker who will add services to your contract and send you a copy to sign.
5. Once you sign the copy, it is to be returned to FSCD for a Director Delegate signature.
6. When you receive the completed copy, with all signatures, contact Ability4Good and you will be given an intake meeting date to sign all final paperwork and your program will begin.

