



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Disability Support Program

Direct Family Support Program Policy

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Revised: 20/05/14	Lynn Hartwell, Deputy Minister	

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 The Direct Family Support (DFS) Program is intended to provide funding to enable families to support their family member with a disability at home.
- 1.2 The purpose of the DFS Program is to support and maintain the integrity of families of eligible children and adults and to:
- enable individuals with disabilities to live at home;
 - maximize family supports and community participation;
 - prevent or delay the need for an out of home placement; and
 - establish a smooth and seamless transition between supports and services for children and adults.
- 1.3 The DFS Program provides funding for the purchase of respite services to assist with scheduled breaks for family care givers and is not intended to provide for full time in-home support, or to compensate care givers for supporting their family member with a disability.
- 1.4 The DFS Program has two components: Direct Family Support for Children (DSFC) and Direct Family Support for Adults (DFSA).
- 1.5 The DFSC component recognizes that families have a responsibility to provide basic needs for their children. In addition to respite funding a child may be entitled to receive funding for assessed needs associated with their disability (see [section 3: 5.2.3](#))
- 1.6 The DFSA component provides respite funding to an adult with a disability. In addition to respite funding, the adult with a disability may be entitled to receive funding for assessed needs (see the [DSP Basic and Special Needs Policy](#)).

2.0 DEFINITIONS

2.1 For the purposes of the DFSA Program refer to the [DSP Glossary of Terms](#).

2.2 For the purposes of the DFSC Program the following definitions apply:

2.2.1 Activities of Daily Living

A person's basic, routine personal care activities that are essential to their self-care. This includes activities such as bathing and dressing, toileting and grooming, and eating.

2.2.2 Applicant

A person with a disability, who applies for financial assistance and supports from the DSP.

2.2.3 Assessment

A process of collecting information using a consistent methodology in order to determine an applicant/participant's eligibility for supports from the DSP. Assessment identifies the applicant/participant's needs, and assists DSP staff in making informed decisions around what supports can best meet their needs. This is the foundation for basing decisions related to the provision of supports and services.

2.2.4 Assessed Needs

An applicant/participant's need for supports as identified through a functional assessment.

2.2.5 Assistance

The provision of money, goods, services and support options to a DSP participant.

2.2.6 Basic Needs

Items of basic requirement: food, clothing, shelter, fuel, utilities, household supplies and personal requirement that families have a responsibility to provide for their children.

2.2.7 Care Coordinator

A Department of Community Services, DSP employee responsible for financial and functional assessments, case planning and case management.

2.2.8 Casework Supervisor/Senior Caseworker

A Department of Community Services, DSP employee responsible for overseeing the work and decisions made by a Care Coordinator, and other assigned duties.

This may be called a Senior Caseworker in some offices.

2.2.9 **Disability**

The following restrictions or impairments that result in a reduced ability to perform an activity within the range considered typical for child of the same age or gender:

- the child has been diagnosed by an approved clinician as having a mild or moderate [intellectual developmental disability](#) with a significant behavioural challenge that has been documented within the last two years;
- the child has been diagnosed by an approved clinician as having a severe [intellectual developmental disability](#) that has been documented within the last two years;
- the child has been diagnosed by an approved clinician as having a significant physical disability with ongoing functional limitations that are a result of the disability and which seriously limits their capacity to perform age appropriate activities of daily living; or
- the child has been diagnosed by an approved clinician as having a dual diagnosis consisting of any of the above.

2.2.10 **Direct Family Support Program Coordinator**

Provincial program coordinator for the DFS Program.

2.2.11 **Eligibility**

The determination of whether an applicant/participant or family meets the DSP criteria to receive DSP assistance.

2.2.12 **Functional Assessment**

The determination of a child's support needs in the area of activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living, as well as their level of physical and social functioning, as assessed by a Care Coordinator.

The information gathered for purposes of the assessment comes from a variety of sources including the child, their family and supports, direct observation and collateral contacts.

The assessment yields a clear and complete profile of a child's strengths, and assists in identifying their goals and support needs.

2.2.13 **Independent / Independence**

The degree to which children are able to manage their own personal care activities, home and/or community activities.

2.2.14 Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL)

More complex functions than basic self-care activities of daily living. IADLs include using the telephone, making and keeping appointments, handling money, budgeting, managing medication, shopping, using transportation, moving about in the community, maintaining a household, working, preparing meals, laundry, housekeeping, working, and participating in leisure and recreational activities.

2.2.15 Intellectual Developmental Disability

A disorder that includes an intellectual deficit which creates difficulties in functioning in two or more activities of daily living and/or instrumental activities of daily living within the range considered typical for a person of the same age and gender, which occurs prior to the age of 18 years. Each of these criteria must be present:

- a) Deficits in mental abilities such as reasoning, problem solving, planning, abstract thinking, judgment, academic learning, and learning from experience. An intelligence quotient (IQ) below the population mean, which is typically an IQ score of approximately 70. There are four levels of intellectual disability:

1. Mild: IQ of 50 to 70;
2. Moderate: IQ of 39 to 55;
3. Severe: IQ of 20 to 40; and
4. Profound: IQ of 20 to 25.

A learning disability is not the same as an Intellectual Developmental Disability as average or above average intellectual functioning is required for a learning disability; and

- b) Impairments in functioning within two or more aspects of activities of daily living or instrumental activities of daily living for example, communication, social participation, functioning at school or at work, or personal independence at home or in community settings; and
- c) Onset before the age of 18 years.

2.2.16 Medical Equipment

Includes prosthetic appliances and other types of equipment (e.g. walkers, crutches) recommended by a health care practitioner.

2.2.17 Participant

A person with a disability who has undergone a financial and functional assessment, is determined eligible for the DFS Program, and receives supports and services offered through the DFS Program.

2.2.18 Physical Disability

A long-term, chronic and persistent physical limitation that creates significant difficulties in functioning in two or more aspects of activities of daily living or instrumental activities of daily living within the range considered typical for someone of the same age or gender. The physical disability substantially limits functional independence and results in the child requiring ongoing support and skill development.

2.2.19 Reassessment

Reassessment confirms a child's needs and level of support or care requirements. Reassessments are performed in response to changes in a child's circumstances and may identify changes in their support needs and program resource requirements.

2.2.20 Respite

Relief provided to the parent, family, or guardian of a DSP participant, for a specific period of time. The main function of respite is to provide the participant with a positive and rewarding experience while, at the same time, providing the primary caregiver with a break from the care and the supervision of their family member with a disability.

2.2.21 Disability Support Program (DSP) Specialist

A Department of Community Services, DSP employee responsible for regional delivery of DSP Programs.

2.2.22 Special Needs

Items and services of special requirement that are related to the child's disability and are not basic needs (as defined).

2.2.23 Transfer

Transfers between DSP support options.

2.2.24 Transition

Discharge from a DSP support option.

3.0 POLICY OBJECTIVE

To ensure the consistent application of the DFS Program Policy in determining initial and ongoing eligibility.

4.0 APPLICATION

This policy applies to all DSP staff, applicants, DFS participants, their families and persons acting on their behalf.

5.0 ACCOUNTABILITY

- 5.1 All DSP staff, applicants, DFS participants, their families and persons acting on their behalf are responsible for complying with this Policy and the general [DSP Program Policy](#).
- 5.2 Casework Supervisors/Senior Caseworkers and District Managers are responsible for the fair and consistent application of the policies, related guidelines, and procedures as a part of case management supervision duties and responsibilities.
- 5.3 The Regional Administrator, DSP Specialist, and the DFS Program Coordinator are responsible for ensuring the policy is effective in enabling DSP Staff to deliver the DFS Program in an efficient and cost-effective manner.
- 5.4 The DSP Division, in consultation with the Regional Management team, is responsible for ensuring that the DSP staff has access to appropriate training.

6.0 MONITORING

- 6.1 The DSP Division is responsible for ensuring that an effective ongoing review and periodic evaluation is in place to determine that the DFS Program is meeting its objectives.
- 6.2 The Deputy Minister, Associate Deputy Minister, and Senior Management are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness and consistent application of this Policy.

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Chapter ____ 8 ____:	Direct Family Support Program	
Section ____ 2 ____:	Eligibility for Children and Adults in DFS	
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1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 The provision and level of funding for children and adults with disabilities and their families is subject to a determination of their eligibility.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

Refer to Chapter 8, Section 1: Introduction: 2.0

3.0 POLICY OBJECTIVE

To establish a standardized process for obtaining relevant information to support the DFS Program application, initial and ongoing eligibility for the DFS Program.

4.0 APPLICATION

Refer to Chapter 8, Section 1: Introduction 4.0

5.0 POLICY DIRECTIVES

5.1 Direct Family Support for Children (DFSC) Program – Eligibility

Eligibility is determined using an assessment process. The Care Coordinator conducts a functional assessment using a standardized support assessment tool to identify the level of support the child and their family requires and a special needs agreement form signed by the child’s parents. The Care Coordinator also conducts a financial assessment based on the family size and net income (see [section 3: 5.2 and 5.3](#)).

5.2 Eligibility Criteria - Direct Family Support for Children (DFSC) Program

To be eligible for the DFSC Program the child and family must meet the following criteria:

- a) the family and child are permanent residents of Nova Scotia;
- b) the child is under 19 years of age;
- c) the child is living in the home of a family member/guardian;
- d) the child has been diagnosed with a disability (see [section 1: 2.2.9](#));
- e) the family net income meets the [DFSC Program Income Guidelines](#); and
- f) the family agrees to participate in the assessment process.

5.3 Ineligibility - Direct Family Support for Children (DFSC) Program

A child and their family are ineligible for the DFSC Program when the application and/or assessment process identifies any of the following criteria:

- a) the child is in the care of the Minister;
- b) the child's family is in receipt of services through the Subsidized Adoption Program of the Department of Community Services (DCS);
- c) the family net income exceeds financial eligibility criteria ([section 3: 5.2.1](#));
- d) the child has not been diagnosed with a disability (see [section 1: 2.2.9](#));
- e) the child is able to carry out activities of daily living;
- f) the child and family are First Nations Canadians and live in a First Nation's community and they are eligible for funding through the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada;
- g) the child is assessed as requiring ongoing Type II nursing care;
- h) the child or child's family does not agree to participate in the assessment process.

5.4 Eligibility - Direct Family Support for Adults (DFSA) Program

To be eligible for the DFSA Program the Applicant and their family must meet the following criteria:

- a) the Applicant and their family are permanent residents of Nova Scotia;

- b) the Applicant is 19 or over;
- c) the Applicant is residing in the home of a family member or guardian;
- d) the Applicant has been diagnosed with an intellectual developmental disability, long term mental illness, physical disability, or dual diagnosis;
- e) the Applicant and family have needs as identified through the functional assessment process;
- f) the Applicant meets the financial eligibility criteria as outline in the [DSP Financial Eligibility Policy](#);
- g) the Applicant and their family agree to participate in the assessment process as outlined in the [DSP Program Policy](#).

5.5 Ineligibility - Direct Family Support for Adults (DFSA) Program

An Applicant is ineligible for the DFSA Program when the application and / or assessment process identifies any of the following criteria:

- a) the applicant and their family are not permanent residents of Nova Scotia;
- b) the applicant does not reside in the home of a family member or guardian;
- c) the applicant has not been diagnosed with an intellectual disability, long term mental illness, physical disability or dual diagnosis;
- d) the applicant has no support needs as identified through the functional assessment process;
- e) the applicant does not meet the financial eligibility criteria as outlined in this Policy ([section 3: 5.3.1](#)) the [DSP Financial Eligibility Policy](#);
- f) the applicant and their family refuse to participate in the assessment process as outlined in the [DSP Program Policy](#).

5.6 DFS Program Initial Application and Ongoing Eligibility Process

5.6.1 Applicants and, in the case of DFSC, families must participate in the application and assessment process for the DFS Program.

5.6.2 Participants and their families shall re-establish DFS Program eligibility for funding support on an ongoing basis (see [section 2: 5.6.1](#)), or as circumstances warrant.

5.7 Reporting Changes in Circumstances

5.7.1 Participants and their families are required to report to the Care Coordinator any changes in circumstances, financial and personal, which may affect their ongoing eligibility or level of required support from the DFS Program.

5.8 DFS Ongoing Reviews

5.8.1 The Care Coordinator shall review a child/adult participant's circumstances (annually for DFSC and biennially for DFSA, or when circumstances warrant) to determine ongoing eligibility for the DFS Program.

5.8.2 The review shall involve the child/adult participant, their family, and significant others such as medical and clinical support teams, adult service centre and day program personnel, as appropriate.

5.9 Transfer and Transition

5.9.1 When a participant's circumstances have been reviewed and it is determined that they require a change which cannot be provided in the DFS Program, they shall be assisted to secure an alternate DSP support option which meets their needs.

5.9.2 When a participant requires a transfer to an alternate DSP support option, DSP staff shall follow the [DSP Program Policy](#) regarding planning for these transfers. The transfer plans shall be discussed and developed in cooperation with the participant, their family, and their personal support network when appropriate.

5.9.3 When a participant's circumstances have been reviewed and they are determined to be ineligible for the DFS Program and DSP Programs, DSP staff shall follow the [DSP Program Policy](#) and meet with a participant, their family, and their personal support network, when appropriate, to develop a transition plan.

6.0 ACCOUNTABILITY

Refer to Chapter 8, Section 1: Introduction 5.0

7.0 MONITORING

Refer to Chapter 8, Section 1: Introduction 6.0

8.0 APPENDICES

Chapter 8, Section 2: Eligibility for Children and Adults in DFS

DFSC Forms:

Direct Family Support for Children Program Consent Form

DFSC - Calculation of Monthly Family Net Income Form

DFSC - Support Assessment Tool

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1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

To establish a standardized approach for determining an applicant’s financial eligibility and the funding to be provided by the DFS Program.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

Refer to Chapter 8, Section 1: Introduction: 2.0.

3.0 POLICY OBJECTIVE

To ensure financial resources are used efficiently and effectively to provide appropriate supports and services to eligible applicants.

4.0 APPLICATION

Refer to Chapter 8, Section 1: Introduction 4.0

5.0 POLICY DIRECTIVES AND PROCEDURES

5.1 DFS Assessment

The Care Coordinator uses a standardized assessment process that includes a functional assessment (see [section 2: 5.1](#)) and financial assessment to identify the respite needs of a child or adult applicant/participant and recommend the amount of funding to be provided.

5.2 Direct Family Support for Children Financial Assessment

5.2.1 The Care Coordinator shall determine a child’s financial eligibility for the DFSC Program by conducting a financial assessment in accordance with the [DFSC Income Guidelines](#).

5.2.2 The DFSC Program provides funding for respite and for special needs related to the child’s disability, including:

- a) personal care supplies (eg., diapers for children over four years of age);
- b) funding for transportation to medical related appointments;

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- c) medical equipment, providing the request is accompanied by an assessment and recommendation by the appropriate Health Care Practitioner (e.g., occupational therapist, physiotherapist, doctor);
- d) medications related to the child's disability that are benefits under the [Nova Scotia Formulary](#);
- e) summer respite (see [section 3: 5.6](#)); and
- f) child care costs for a child over 12 years old (see [section 3: 5.7](#)).

5.2.3 Approvals required for items of special need in the DFSC Program are approved as per the rates outlined in the DSP Basic and Special Needs Policy.

5.2.4 A family requesting funding for an item or service of special need must purchase the most economical item or service.

5.2.5 Approved funding will be issued effective the date of approval and will be prorated from that date.

5.3 Direct Family Support For Adults Financial Assessment

5.3.1 The Care Coordinator shall determine an applicant's funding eligibility in the DFSA Program by conducting a financial assessment in accordance with the [DSP Financial Eligibility Policy](#).

5.3.2 Respite funding will be provided in accordance with the findings of the functional assessment and in consultation with the participant and their family. A participant may also be eligible for funding for assessed needs such as shelter, food, clothing, prescriptions, transportation and a comforts (personal use) allowance (see the [DSP Basic and Special Needs Policy](#)).

5.3.3 When the applicant has been determined eligible for the DFSA Program, and if the DFSA Program funding is not available in the fiscal year in which funding is requested, the applicant's name shall be placed on a wait list, upon their request.

5.4 Maximum Respite Funding Rate

The amount of respite funding provided by the DFS Program will vary from participant to participant, as it is determined individually through the assessment process. Effective October 2006, the maximum respite funding rate is \$2,200.00 per month. This funding is intended to give the participant's family scheduled breaks from care giving and is not intended for 24 hour support.

5.5 Family Responsibilities for Use of Respite Funding

5.5.1 Families participating in the DFS Program are responsible for ensuring that respite funding is used appropriately and that the respite provider(s):

- a) is knowledgeable about the participant's support needs;
- b) is mature and responsible;
- c) has the required skills, knowledge and information to support the participant;
- d) is comfortable with all the participant's support needs; and
- e) is not a family member.

5.5.2 Families participating in the DFS Program shall contact the Care Coordinator and advise them when:

- a) they are unable to locate respite workers; or
- b) they are not utilizing the full amount of the approved respite funding.

5.5.3 The Care Coordinator shall provide information related to finding respite providers to families participating in the DFS Program when families indicate they are not able to locate their own.

5.6 Summer Respite – Direct Family Support for Children

5.6.1 Summer respite funding may be requested by families participating in the DFSC Program to provide children with the opportunity for structured out-of-home summer activities. Summer respite funding may be provided in addition to the \$2,200.00 monthly maximum respite rate.

5.6.2 Families are eligible for summer respite funding when:

- a) they have submitted a formal request for summer respite funding,
- b) they have enrolled, or agree to enroll, their child in a structured out-of-home summer activity; and
- c) they have verified, or can verify, the child's participation by providing receipts.

5.6.3 The amount of summer respite funding that may be provided is dependent on the actual cost of the structured out-of-home activity to a maximum level set out below, which is dependent upon the age of the child, as follows:

- a) the maximum level of funding for summer respite for a child age 12 or under is up to \$500.00 per calendar year;
- b) the maximum level of funding for summer respite for a child aged 13 to 19, is up to \$1,000.00 per calendar year.

5.6.4 The Care Coordinator who has received a request for summer respite shall:

- a) determine the appropriate level of funding based on the age of the child;
- b) advise the family of the requirement to provide receipts;
- c) review the receipts;
- d) follow up with the family if they did not comply with c); and
- e) advise the family that future summer respite will not be considered if appropriate documentation is not provided.

5.7 Child Care Costs Child over 12 years - Direct Family Support for Children

Child care funding may be provided when the child is over the age of 12 and requires support and supervision prior to and after school hours due to the family's work schedule. Child care cost funding will not be provided to replace the child's school or day time program.

5.8 Joint DCS and DHW Funding Arrangements

There are circumstances when assistance from both DCS and the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) are provided to a participant. In these circumstances the Care Coordinator shall:

- a) identify the sources of funding and services available through the DHW;
- b) ensure the participant's consent form has been signed;
- c) contact the District Health Authority Care Coordinator to determine the type and level of service and the amount of funding provided; and
- d) ensure there is no duplication of funding and services.

5.9 Hospitalization or Absent from Home

5.9.1 The Care Coordinator shall ensure there is no disruption in monthly funding when a participant is temporarily absent from their home for less than 30 days for the purposes of vacation, visiting family, and hospitalization, in accordance with the [DSP Program Policy](#).

5.9.2 The Care Coordinator shall seek approval from the Casework Supervisor / Senior Caseworker to continue to provide assistance from the DFS Program, as required, during absences beyond 30 days, when there is confirmation that the participant is returning to their home and the return date is known.

6.0 EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

6.1 Respite Funding for Family Members in Exceptional Circumstances

6.1.1 The DFS Program does not compensate family members who live with a participant to provide respite services to them. However, in any of the exceptional circumstances set out below a family member may be paid to provide temporary respite services when:

- a) the participant's behaviour can only be managed by the family member;
- b) the participant requires a medical intervention that only the family member is able to provide;
- c) efforts to find respite providers, other than the family member, have been clearly demonstrated but unsuccessful.

6.1.2 Approval is required for this respite funding.

6.1.3 In these exceptional circumstances the respite services must not replace or create an employment opportunity for the identified family member. The maximum respite level and approvals set out in this Policy will apply.

6.2 Additional Temporary Respite in Exceptional Circumstances

6.2.1 It is recognized that in exceptional circumstances the assessed needs of the DFS participant's family may increase and additional respite funding may be required on a temporary basis.

6.2.2 Additional temporary respite funding may be considered when:

- a) the care giver is sick, recovering from surgery, or otherwise unable to continue regular support responsibilities;
- b) a family emergency (e.g. death in the family, requires the family to be unavailable for regular support responsibilities);
- c) a short-term deterioration in the mental or physical health of the care giver or participant;
- d) the family and/or participant are experiencing unusual short-term distress; or
- e) the family requests an annual vacation, as per DFS/EFS Funding Rate Guidelines.

6.2.3 Approval is required for this respite funding.

6.2.4 Additional temporary respite funding must be authorized on a time limited basis and is subject to review.

7.0 ACCOUNTABILITY

Refer to Chapter 8, Section 1: Introduction 5.0

8.0 MONITORING

Refer to Chapter 8, Section 1: Introduction 6.0