

DECEMBER 2023

# FSC NATIONAL NEWS

Newsletter for members of Family Service Canada



## Message from the Board

Hello all!

December is a month of contrast... festivities, happiness and light, busyness, fatigue and frazzle; family and special friends, loneliness and sadness; gifts and traditional foods, hunger and poverty; fond memories and hope, trauma and despair. Our communities are so diverse in many ways, yet we all have one wish... safety and care! To feel needed and a sense of value.

All of us in Family Services Canada support these issues all 365 days of the year, not just in December. However, we know that whether one is connected to a certain tradition or holiday or not, these feelings stand out more at this time. As I chat with my team and others across the country, I am always so impressed at the creative and caring ways our organizations reach out to those needing safety and care to ensure they know they are valued and there is hope. Our low barrier youth services center runs a December Dozen... 12 nights of fun, food and celebration. Every youth deserves this!

Thank you to each of you and your teams for the work you do across Canada for families in various communities. In reading the recent survey feedback from our COL, the overall message of connection, support and unity in our work was so strong. It is this connection that enables us to reach out at this time of year and be just a bit more supportive, a bit more present and remembering we all need a little extra special attention at this time of year!

Happy holidays to you all and from my family and me... Merry Christmas!

Cheers to all,

Maria Howard  
FSC Board Chair

# Featured Program: Expanding Hope

Adolescence is a time of tremendous change and transition. For pregnant and parenting young people, this transition is amplified. As they explore their independence, form their sense of identity, navigate changing peer relationships, and develop executive functioning skills, they are also learning what it means to be pregnant and parenting, how to support their child's development, and how to meet their child's needs.

Expanding Hope is an initiative funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Services designed to meet the unique needs of young pregnant and parenting people across Alberta, particularly in areas of the province where specialized services may be limited. Expanding Hope is delivered through a partnership between the Terra Centre in Edmonton and Kindred in Calgary and serves young families, including: young pregnant or parenting people, age 21 and under; their children, typically ages 0 to 6; and the young person's parent or caregiver, who are grandparents or act as significant carers to the child(ren).

Expanding Hope offers two streams of service:

Direct support to young parents: Our team provides one-on-one support to young pregnant and parenting folks around life skills, emotional regulation, basic needs, attachment, child development, education/employment, and any other goals identified by the young person. Expanding Hope also offers group opportunities for young families to connect and learn together. Our team supports young families to build connections to other services within their communities. Much of this work is done virtually, with in-person services offered when possible.

Capacity-building with service providers: Expanding Hope creates connections with service providers across the province who are already working with young families. Our team engages in conversation, training, consultation, and collaboration to highlight what is unique about working specifically with young pregnant and parenting people. We are open to collaborating in new ways with service providers to support the distinct needs of young families.

Expanding Hope is a free and confidential service. Young pregnant and parenting people can self-refer by reaching out to the Expanding Hope team directly. Service providers can complete a referral form or contact the Expanding Hope team directly for capacity-building and consultation.

Expanding Hope also offers a Community of Practice for professionals across Alberta who support young pregnant and parenting people, particularly those under the age of 22, and have a desire to see young families thrive in our province. We meet the first Wednesday of each month from 9:00-10:00am online.

Please reach out to the Expanding Hope team to get more information and to chat with us!

Email: [expanding.hope@kindred.ca](mailto:expanding.hope@kindred.ca)

Website: <https://www.kindred.ca/need-help/new-parent>

# Building Healthy and Resilient Families Across Canada

The landscape of families in Canada has changed immensely over the past several decades. Families are increasingly diverse in formation, structure, race, gender, socioeconomic status, cultural belonging, function, and more. Relatedly, families' challenges and needs continuously diversify, becoming more complex and nuanced.

With an expanding familial landscape, Family Service Canada (FSC) must rethink the processes of building effective relationships with and supporting the service platform of agencies and organizations dedicated to serving families. In response to this need for a reimagined platform, FSC has been developing a new and innovative guiding framework to enhance collaboration, coordination, equity-informed advocacy and service delivery to promote and support family health and resilience.

The framework, Building Healthy and Resilient Families Across Canada (Figure 1), prioritizes the family unit as core to leading a successful life, maintaining mental health, and supporting the overall well-being of individuals and society. FSC understands 'family' as having no specific definition or conceptualization, recognizing that families are diverse and may be formed by nuclear family members, extended family members, friends, and/or non-blood relatives. Thus, this framework promotes a family/person-centered approach to support clients in identifying their family members and involvement in their care.

The framework is informed by equity, intersectionality theory, ecological theory, the social determinants of health, Complexity Leadership Theory, and a systems approach to family resilience. From an ecological perspective, the family is recognized as embedded within micro, meso, and macro systems, in which various social determinants of health at each level mutually intersect and interact. It highlights where FSC and its network organizations fall in relation to families served. The framework builds up the dynamic leadership process of FSC, as it strives to nurture relationships and facilitate strengthened services to improve the lives of increasingly diverse families.

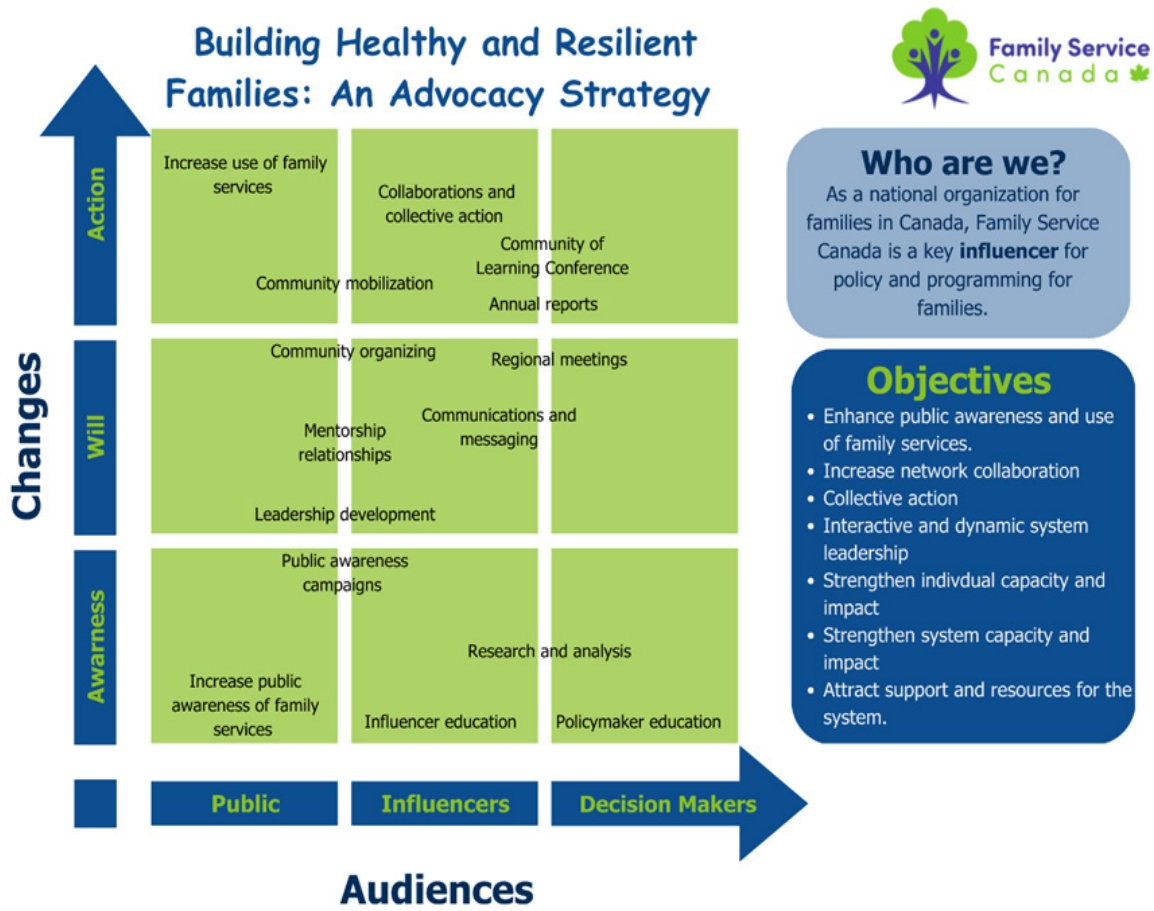


Figure 1: Building Healthy and Resilient Families Across Canada framework



Drawing on Coffman and Beer's (2015) advocacy strategy matrix, an approach for advocacy on the above framework is proposed (figure 2). Drawing on FSC's theory of change, this advocacy strategy strives to educate, influence, and mobilize policymakers, members of community organizations, and the general public on the need for change and commitment to action. Ultimately, it stands as a strategy to inspire active and coordinated participation by agencies serving families, policymakers, and the public to improve the lives, health, well-being, and resiliency of all families in Canada.

Figure 2: Building Healthy and Resilient Families: An Advocacy Strategy



We want to know what is happening in your agency. Let us know about your successes, new initiatives, important changes in staffing, anniversaries, etc. We will include them in future issues of our newsletter.

