



Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Department of Health and Community Services

Alternate Family Care Program

HandBook

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INTRODUCTION

Program Philosophy/Goals

The concept of alternate family care for adults with developmental disabilities is based on the following:

- that all individuals regardless of the extent of developmental disability should have access to life within a family unit
- that where specialized needs exist these can be met through the provision of required supports to a family environment.

What Are the Goals of Alternate Family Care?

The major goals for this program include the following:

- to provide a typical living environment in which the person can continue to develop and mature for as long as such is desired or needed
- to ensure that through the provision of necessary support services the person will have the opportunity to realize his/her full potential
- to prevent/delete the unnecessary use of other more restrictive living arrangements.

What Is an Alternate Family Care Home?

An Alternate Family Care Home is a private residence which provides room and board, supervision, personal care, emotional and social support to unrelated adults with developmental disabilities. It is viewed as an extension of caregiving (foster care), but for adults who due to their developmental disabilities (or by choice), cannot live independently and who can benefit from a family environment.

Who Requires Alternate Family Care?

Alternate Family Care is usually applicable to two groups of individuals with developmental disabilities:

- those persons who are residing in caregiver homes(foster care) and have now reached adulthood.

- adults who choose to live in a board and lodging arrangement, but whose developmental disabilities indicate required supports and services representative of those typically provided in the caregiver program(foster care).

These individuals may come from a variety of settings such as family home, cooperative apartment, or hospital.

Individuals choosing Alternate Family Care may present a variety of needs. Some may be completely dependent for their self-help needs, others may have significant medical needs, some may be fairly independent in terms of self-help, but may exhibit challenging behaviors, while others may be higher functioning and requiring minimal supervision. All individuals require different levels of supervision and support ranging from 24 hour/day supervision to minimal assistance.

How Do People Become Alternate Families?

Persons interested in knowing more about our Alternate Family Care program and particularly those who wish to become involved in the program, should contact the nearest Health and Community Services office. There is an application procedure which includes several interviews with the Social Worker. At this time information is shared between both parties to allow the Social Worker to find out more about you, your family and your interest in the program and to provide you with additional explanations as necessary. During this time an assessment of your abilities related to the program is completed. Some of the factors considered are:

- your accommodations - it is necessary for you to have sufficient room for another person to fit easily into your home
- your physical and mental health and also that of all household members
- your family, personal, and community relationships
- your experience in the area of developmental disabilities
- your motivation for wishing to become involved in the program
- your ability to support the philosophy and beliefs of the program
- your expectations and preference in relation to the person who will live in your home.

We require documents such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, medicals, written references, letter of conduct and fire and electrical inspections. All applications are carefully reviewed and you are advised in writing of our decision. Alternate Family Care Homes are approved to care for a maximum of two adults with developmental disabilities. Your letter of approval will indicate the particulars related to your home. The Social Worker reviews this process annually through a detailed report.

RIGHTS AND ROLES

Rights of the Individual

An individual placed in your home has the right to:

- participate in all decisions concerning him/her
- privacy
- acceptance as a sexual being
- personal possessions
- expect acceptance into the family as an equal family member
- support in developing a personal social network
- protection from all forms of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation
- support in maintaining contact with natural family members
- continued medical follow up
- continued personal support, including an advocate
- support in accessing services
- support in accessing the community
- be supported by knowledgeable, trained, committed individuals
- confidentiality

Rights of the Alternate Family

An alternate family has the right to:

- expect on-going support from other professionals
- participate in planning sessions for the individuals living in their home

- receive financial assistance to cover the costs related to providing care to the individual
- receive the necessary supports and services to provide quality care to the individual
- receive on-going support and supervision from the Social Worker
- be seen as a team member in meeting the needs of the individual in your home
- a service contract clearly defining expectations and responsibilities
- right to information about the person in your home
- confidentiality
- right to appeal
- participate in training as it becomes available.

Role of the Alternate Family

The role of the Alternate Family is to provide day to day support in a normal family setting to adults with developmental disabilities. Such adults should be encouraged to participate in all family activities and should be assisted, as required, to be actively involved in regular routines (ie. family mealtimes, outings) and in-home socialization (ie. music, T.V.). The Alternate Family must ensure that all medical appointments are scheduled and attended. Any necessary follow-up must be maintained. As the adult's continued development depends upon consistent management, the Alternate Family is expected to co-operate with all professional resource persons required (ie. Behavior Management Specialist, Physiotherapist, Community Health Nurse, Social Worker, etc.).

Role of the Social Worker

The Social Worker (Community Support Services) is responsible for supervision and support to the adult living in your home. Regular visits to your home provide the opportunity for information sharing that is beneficial to the on-going development of the living arrangement. It also allows the Social Worker

the opportunity to monitor progress while developing a relationship with you and your family. The Social Worker is responsible for assisting you in obtaining all necessary supports and services. This is done in the format of General Service Planning prior to placement and at least annually thereafter. The Social Worker ensures that all persons contributing to this process are notified of the meeting and assists the person and Alternate Family in identifying issues requiring clarification and discussion.

PLACEMENT PROCESS

Pre-Placement Visits

All families have unique qualities. Identifying those qualities best suited to the needs of the person requiring alternate care often requires a series of meetings and visits. The Social Worker maintains close contact with you throughout this process and sometimes organizes contact through a written schedule of events requiring regular review and revision. This process serves a two-fold purpose in that it allows you to become familiar on a gradual basis with the person requiring placement, while at the same time allowing the person to gradually adjust to life in a new setting. Whenever possible the natural family should be included in this process.

General Service Planning

Prior to placement, the Social Worker will arrange a General Service Plan meeting to identify all necessary supports and services required in the following areas: Residential; Educational/Vocational; Health; Social; Family Involvement and Emotional Support. Such a meeting includes the person, natural family, alternate family, relevant professional staff and any significant others. This ensures a thorough discussion of all necessary program areas and identifies a long-term service plan, while at the same time identifying those individuals responsible for on-going short-term planning. Such a format ensures that all relevant information is given to the Alternate Family and identifies who is responsible for obtaining it.

Service Agreement

When an individual moves into your home, you will be required to sign a service agreement which outlines the expectations/responsibilities of all parties. Such an agreement ensures a consistent understanding between the parties and must be changed as the individual's/family's needs change. The social worker will discuss this service agreement with you, the individual and natural family (if required) and leave the completed form with you for your review at least twenty-four (24) hours before signing is required.

Program Development

In order to ensure on-going skill development of the individual and address any behavioral concerns, it may be necessary to use structured programs which are implemented in a consistent manner. In these instances, a Behavior Management Specialist will be involved to identify the programs that are to be

implemented. Special training will be provided to families who require assistance in managing significant behavior problems. At no time should physical force, corporal punishment or other demeaning methods of punishment be used. If there are serious behavior management problems that are not responding to the programs identified, these should be brought to the attention of the Behavior Management Specialist and Social Worker.

Vocational Planning

All adults should be involved in some type of meaningful vocational/work activity. Alternate Families are expected to ensure that the person receives the necessary supports and services to attend regularly. Consistent attendance, proper attire and necessary supports ensure maximum benefit for long-term success in the workplace.

Health Issues

Many adults living in Alternate Family Care may require specialized health care needs. Training specifically to the person is required for instances such as tube-feeding, although some Alternate Families may have had previous training or experience in this area. The family physician or the Community Health Nurse can ensure that this training is provided at the request of the Social Worker.

Annual medical and dental assessments are required in order to ensure that any unidentified source of pain or discomfort can be avoided, especially for adults who are nonverbal and, therefore, unable to communicate illness. Non-identification of such could, therefore, result in a change of behavior. Any medical follow-up identified must be given priority.

Payment for prescribed medications and other medical equipment will be considered and the individual is provided with a drug card.

Community Access

It is expected that the adult with a developmental disability will be included in community activities whenever possible. The Alternate Family can assist in this process by ensuring the person is included in regular family outings, and other social outings in the community.

Church attendance, community involvement at social events (ie. dances, bingo, darts, card games, church socials, showers, etc.), and utilizing generic services such as hair dressers, dentists, doctors, banks, stores, etc. on a regular

basis all help the person become recognized as a member of the community and increases chances of developing friendships.

Vacation Plans

It is desirable, but not required, that Alternate Families include the adult living in their home in vacation plans. The Social Worker should be informed of these plans to ensure necessary assistance and consents are obtained. Where costs may be high, it is possible to have additional funds provided to assist in the cost.

If you are planning a holiday without the person, assistance may be needed to locate another home for this period. Requests for vacation support should be made to the Social Worker as soon as possible to allow adequate time to make those arrangements; however, at least 30 days notice is required.

Natural Family Contact

Many adults with developmental disabilities require an Alternate Family Care Home because their parents are older and unable to continue to provide long-term care. Family contact is important to both parties as it is often difficult to adjust to life in separate settings. Natural families often find it difficult to admit that they can no longer provide a role that another family can, and this often results in feelings of guilt. Your acceptance and reassurance is important in building a co-operative and positive relationship. Your Social Worker is available to assist you in this transition. Requests for visits should be initially discussed with the Social Worker as occasionally there may be circumstances that require special consideration and/or approvals.

Persons should be encouraged and/or assisted in writing letters to family members, sending cards/gifts on special occasions and maintaining family photographs that will help them remember family members.

Personal Possessions

All too often, individuals living in other residential options, have very little in the way of personal possessions. As an Alternate Family Care Home, one of your responsibilities is to assist the person in your home acquire and care for their own personal items. You should also ensure that these personal possessions and other specialized equipment are covered by your homeowner's insurance policy. In the event that you have difficulty in the area of insurance, you should advise your social worker immediately.

Confidentiality

As Alternate Family Care providers you will be privy to background, as well as current information on individuals and their families. It is, therefore, imperative that you understand the issue of confidentiality. Upon approval and prior to an individual moving to your home, Alternate Family Care providers are required to sign a Declaration of Confidentiality. If information is required by professionals in the community who are involved with the individual, the need and content should first be discussed with the Social Worker and where necessary a "permission to release information" form be signed.

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Board and Lodging Payment

A monthly board and lodging payment is provided to cover items ordinarily required for an individual's care. This rate is determined by considering the individual's special needs and supports required. This payment is expected to cover items which are ordinarily kept in a home for a family member and includes toothpaste, soap, shampoo, etc., as well as food, housing laundry and some clothing replacement expenses. The rates approved vary according to individual need.

Any question or concern related to specific payments should be discussed with your Social Worker who can outline the considerations for the approved rate.

Flat Rate Allowance

A monthly allowance is provided for individuals requiring supportive services. This allowance is intended to cover personal spending requirements and supplement his/her clothing over and above that covered by the board and lodging payment. This allowance should be kept in a bank account in the individual's name and should be available for his/her own spending money.

Clothing

Annual clothing allowances are not provided as it is expected that existing wardrobes will be maintained through the regular purchase of clothing through the board and lodging and flat rate allowances. If any emergency situation occurs (eg. extreme weight changes or behavioral difficulty resulting in the need to replace a complete wardrobe), this should be discussed with your Social Worker. It is expected that the Alternate Family will ensure that the individual has clothing that is age appropriate and reflective of their peers.

Medical Costs

Medications prescribed by the doctor are covered through the individual's drug card provided through the Income Support program. Items that do not require a prescription such as aspirins, cough syrups, laxatives, etc. should be purchased from the monthly board and lodging rate.

Adult attends required for individuals who are not toilet trained may be provided through Health and Community Services upon receipt of a prescription from the doctor. This prescription should be forwarded to your Social Worker.

Special Equipment And/Or Services

Special equipment and/or services required will be assessed on an individual basis and should be discussed with the Social Worker to determine if funding can be approved prior to purchase. Purchases made without approval will not be reimbursed.

Transportation

Transportation for medical appointments are usually covered through the Income Support program. Other transportation needs such as visits home or community access may also be provided. Such requests should be discussed on an individual basis with the Social Worker. There is no reimbursement for transportation costs associated with family outings, as part of regular routine.

Transportation to day program or work sites can be provided and should be discussed with your Social Worker to ensure that the necessary forms are completed to obtain approval.

Support Services

Support Services are used to supplement the resources within the Alternate Family and to ensure that the caregivers receive regular relief from the demands of 24 hour per day care. The type and form of support provided is in response to the needs of the individual and family. It may include hourly support during the week (especially if the individual is not involved in a structured daytime program); in addition to residential respite. Such support is often used to provide an opportunity for the individual to enjoy various community activities. Your Social Worker will discuss your needs with you in order to recommend an adequate support system to ensure long-term placement.

Occasionally you may need to hire persons to provide support to the individual living in your home. As these persons will often work independently with the individual it is important to ensure that you have appropriately screened the applicants prior to hiring. You are therefore required to obtain references and Certificates of Conduct on all persons you decide to hire and ensure they sign an Oath of Confidentiality. The social worker must also be notified when new workers are hired.

Employees hired to support the individual(s) in your home must be given a written job description. Guidelines explaining their expected duties while working, particularly overnight "awake" requirements, must be provided to them

in writing. A copy of those guidelines must be signed by the staff acknowledging that he/she received and understood the information. The signed copies must be retained for verification by the social worker.

As the employer of these support workers you will need to know the rules regarding payment, hours of work, deductions, etc. Contact with Employment and Labour (Labour Standards Division), Canada Revenue Agency and the Human Rights Commission maybe necessary. Phone numbers for such contact is as follows:

Labour Standards Division 1-800-563-5471	729-5522
Canada Revenue Agency 1-800-772-5060	772-0427
Human Right's Commission	729-4190 729-2009

Residential Respite

A maximum of 54 days per year may be utilized for the purpose of vacation and/or weekend respite. The needs of the individual and the alternate family are considered when approving residential respite so all families will not be entitled to the maximum amount. Time spent in overnight visits with natural families will be included in the approved residential respite support package and deducted from the maximum days assessed.

Damages Caused by the Individual

When the individual causes damages in an Alternate Family Care Home or in the community, the Social Worker should be advised. An incident report should be completed by the person who witnesses the damage to enable further discussion, especially if the damages were intentionally caused, as the individual must learn to accept responsibility for such actions. The Social Worker and Behavior Management Specialist, if necessary, will assist you in determining an appropriate method of payment. Depending upon the circumstances, Health and Community Services may accept responsibility for the damages. Each case is reviewed individually.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Training Programs

Training for Alternate Family Care Providers is often required specifically for the individual needs of the adult being placed in your home. General training events are also organized from time to time. This training is considered essential to your role and you are expected to participate. Your Social Worker will inform you of any planned training events and extra supports may be available if required to enable you to attend.

Lines of Communication Within the Department of Health and Community Services for Alternate Family Care Providers

The Social Worker assigned to your home should be your immediate contact with the Department as this is the person who has primary responsibility for ensuring adequate supports to the adult placed in your home. Open communication with your Social Worker enables the development of a healthy working relationship. There may be times when you feel your concerns should be discussed with others. In such situations, your contact should be with the Supervisor/ Program Manager.

Out-of-Hours Contact

Every region has a Social Worker on call when the office is closed to assist with emergency situations. Ask your Social Worker for the telephone number that contacts the out-of-hours worker.

Consent for Treatment

Alternate Family Care Providers are not permitted to sign medical consent forms on behalf of the adult with developmental disability. If the person is capable of giving an "informed consent," he/she should do so. If this is not possible, the Social Worker should be contacted to obtain the necessary signatures. Whenever possible the Social Worker should be advised in advance that a consent is required.

Changes in Your Home

Your Social Worker needs to know of any changes in the number of people living in your household. In approving your home we understand that you agree not to board other children or adults from any source without discussing it with your Social Worker. This includes offering short term support services to others.

As part of the approval process of your home is to ensure that fire safety is considered, especially in terms of access from sleeping areas; it is necessary for you to discuss with your Social Worker, any proposed changes to the sleeping arrangements for the individual residing in your home. Privacy for adults is important and individual access to his/her own bedroom is desirable. Likewise it is necessary for you to advise your Social Worker of any planned renovations as it may be necessary to consult the Government Service Centre to ensure that such changes would comply with their requirements.

As the Social Worker is responsible for regular contact with you and the individual living in your home, it is necessary for you to inform him/her of any change in your address. This includes temporary changes for vacations. You must consult with the Social Worker prior to arranging overnight respite on behalf of the individual to ensure that the family providing the service is approved.

Changes in marital status, finances, health, etc., often cause stress on family members. As the individual living in your home may be affected by such circumstances, it is necessary for you to inform the Social Worker if such occurs. This will allow the opportunity for additional support if required.