



Supported Child Development Program

USING THE WAITLIST PRIORITY RATING SCALE

BACKGROUND

Waitlists for Supported Child Development/Aboriginal Supported Child Development services are sometimes unavoidable due to limitations in funding, staffing or available child care spaces. Children and families accessing SCD/ASCD services are entitled to waitlist policies that are open, fair, equitable and consistently applied from program to program.

WAITLIST PRINCIPLES

Accountability: The waitlist management process must be administered in a professional and ethical manner. Children and youth with special needs and their families have the right to expect that services, and the manner in which they are delivered and consistent across the province.

Fairness and Equity: Placement of children and families on waitlists must be fair and equitable at all stages of the process.

Access to Information: Information about the waitlist process, including how to access it, decision-making stages and procedures, as well as other relevant policies, is to be made available and provided to individuals requesting service. SCD/ASCD programs will be responsible for ensuring information is provided to communities on waitlist management. The Office of the Provincial Advisor for the SCD will provide support to facilitate this process.

Openness: The process is to be conducted in an open manner. Individuals will receive information at the time of initial referral for service regarding the range of services available and the limitations on service availability as well as the length of the waitlists. This information is to be kept up-to-date and available to individuals throughout the process.

Consistency: The same principles, criteria, and procedures for developing and managing waitlists are to be followed by all SCD/ASCD programs.

WAITLIST PROCEDURES AND OBLIGATIONS

There are two sets of requirements for your Supported Child Development program to follow. The first is in implementing the criteria and dealing with families being placed on a waitlist. The second is in managing the waitlist over time. This section itemizes these obligations, and introduces two tools to help your agency meet them.

1. Implementing the Criteria

- **Interview the family and the child/youth**, to review services, eligibility requirements, service availability and the wait list process with them. Explain that some services may be time-limited, and that duration and intensity of service is affected by progress towards goals, changes in the family situation, changes in the settings needs, and the need to share resources fairly among families.



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- **Document the request for service**, including the date, ideally by opening a file, or clearly documenting the request in an alternate written format. Confirm the service request date with the family.
- **Review the considerations under Criterion # 2, Urgency of Need**, through discussion with the family, review of relevant documentation and discussion with other professionals, co-workers or supervisors. These people can provide useful insight and information to help staff that are just meeting the family, and avoid the family having to repeat information. Ask for and consider diagnostic information, reports from psychologists, medical specialists or mental health teams, and reports from previous or existing service providers such as school district staff, therapists, Early Childhood Educators or Infant Development Consultants.
- **Establish the urgency rating and the family's place on the waitlist**, in consultation with team members and/or supervisors. Ensure that all needed services are documented.
- **Work with the family to develop an interim plan**, if the waitlist time appears to be significant and if the family so wishes. An interim plan can document service needs, outline alternatives to formal service, identify planning points for key transitions, and provide information about parent support, advocacy organizations, and the ministry's Complaints Resolution Process. It may also involve providing alternative services that are available in the interim.
- **Update the family file at key points**, for example, when eligibility is confirmed, when one or more services become available, when a service plan is completed or revised, and at clearly defined review dates.

FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION IN SETTING A PRIORITY RATING

Criterion 1: Length of time on waitlist

The length of time on waitlist is determined from the date that eligibility is established. This date never changes; it applies throughout the province should a family move prior to services being provided, or should they request a different service at a later time. Every 3 months the family's situation should be reviewed and the appropriate additional points should be allocated.

Criterion 2: Urgency of Need

The urgency of the child and family's needs must be determined in order to decide whether to move them up or down the waitlist from where they would be based only on service request date. This is to be done relying on the professional judgment and assessments from you, the SCD Consultant, other professionals, service providers and family self-report. The following considerations are to be taken into account:

a. Child's Age

It is known that early intervention contributes to better outcomes for children and families and this is an important focus of the SCD program. Key transition points such as the move from preschool to kindergarten are particularly important. In addition, pre-K age children are given highest priority as there are fewer services available to children at this age.



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b. Level of Intensity and/or Nature of Child's Needs

Special needs as documented or diagnosed by professionals, or as described by the family can vary in intensity. Factors to keep in mind include:

- i. Any complex medical needs;
- ii. The degree to which the child's needs affect his/her ability to do the things other child of the same age do;
- iii. The level of dependency on parent/guardian or caregiver;
- iv. Effect of a delay in service on the child's development.

c. Level of Family Need

The strengths of the family as well as external supports available affect how well they can manage until formal services are available. The following factors are considered within the **Family Needs Self Report Tool**:

- i. Family's ability to manage child's special needs;
- ii. Amount of time spent providing care;
- iii. Impact on employment;
- iv. Family characteristics;
- v. Health status of family;
- vi. Impact on siblings;
- vii. Impact of child's needs on family (parent/siblings) emotionally, socially, economically;
- viii. Support available to the family;
- ix. Other stresses on the family;
- x. Appropriateness, proximity and ability/willingness of extended family and friends to help;
- xi. Involvement of other formal services such as schools or health care providers;
- xii. Involvement of community agencies, parent support groups, churches.

Administering the Family Needs Self Report Tool:

The **Family Needs Self Report Tool** is designed to establish the level of family need(s), based on parent report. The scale can be given directly to the parent/caregiver to fill out, or approached more informally, such as through a phone interview. Remember, this is the family's own interpretation of their level of need, not yours!

Each question is rated from 1-Strongly Agree to 5-Strongly Disagree.

When the scale has been completed add up the responses and then divide the total by 5 to get a number to fill in for Criterion 2c. You may have to round up (.5 and over) or round down (.4 and under) depending on your total. For example, if the total for the Self Report Family Needs Tool was 22, and you divided it by 5, you would get 4.4. You would then round that number down to 4 and enter it into the Waitlist Priority Rating Scale.



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d. Level of Child's Needs in a Child Care Setting

Factors can include:

- i. Child's ability to transition within a program;
- ii. Child's ability to participate in group activities independently;
- iii. Child's ability to interact with peers;
- iv. Child's personal safety and/or safety of other children;
- v. Child's level of dependency on caregivers;
- vi. Extraordinary child care setting circumstance such as the child being asked to leave or new staff.

e. Observations and/or feedback from community partners, therapists and/or child care settings staff:

Feedback can be from the following: SLP, IDP, Child Care staff, OT/PT, or other. This is combined feedback; only one rating is to be recorded on the Waitlist Priority Rating Scale.

Please note that consistency in weighting each Criterion on the Rating Scale was developed through extensive field-testing. The points assigned for each Criterion are weighted to give consistent results. Any alteration of the Criteria may lead to inconsistent results.



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FAMILY NEEDS SELF-REPORT TOOL¹

Please check the square that best matches how you feel about the following statements:

I am able to spend quality time with others who are important to me.

I strongly agree with this statement.

I strongly disagree with this statement.

I am able to work/go to school/stay at home or participate in cultural or recreation activities as I would if my child didn't have extra needs.

I strongly agree with this statement.

I strongly disagree with this statement.

My family and I have enough support from extended family and/or friends and community members.

I strongly agree with this statement.

I strongly disagree with this statement.

My family and I are able to deal with other stressful things in our lives.

I strongly agree with this statement.

I strongly disagree with this statement.

I am able to manage my child's needs.

I strongly agree with this statement.

I strongly disagree with this statement.

¹ Adapted from Dunst, Trivette & Deal, *Enabling & Empowering Families: Principles & Guidelines for Practice* (Newton: Brookline Books, 2003).