

# FSL FAQs

POPARD Family - School Liaison Newsletter



## **FAQ: WHAT CAN I EXPECT REGARDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES BETWEEN MY CHILD'S SCHOOL AND OUR COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES OR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS?**

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Well, the good news is that there actually is a system in place for this coordination! And it does not even require thinking “outside the box.” It is already in the box. In 2013, Ministries of Children and Family Development and Education, as well as other Ministries, updated inter-ministerial protocols to provide guidance in the “coordination and delivery of support services to school-age children across British Columbia.”

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/teach/teaching\\_tools/inclusive/provision-of-support-services-to-schools.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/teach/teaching_tools/inclusive/provision-of-support-services-to-schools.pdf)

School districts and many independent schools in BC provide a range of health (including mental health) services for their students. These services might include speech-language therapy, school psychology, counselling, and occupational therapy, as well as teachers with specialized training in supporting children with sensory disabilities or other challenges. Small districts might contract these services, while larger districts might employ staff who provide such services.

In the *Manual of Policies*, the phases of providing service to children with special needs include:



The Ministry of Education recognizes that some school-age children have special needs that might be supported by services that are not available in their schools:

To the maximum extent possible, special education services should be organized for delivery at the school level. However, a support system should be available at the district level to ensure that schools have access to expertise and services which are so specialized as to preclude their replication in each school. School districts should ensure that when the resources available at the school level have been exhausted, a mechanism is in place to provide additional assistance to the school using district level or community-based resources. (*BC Special Education: Manual of Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines*, 2016, p. 8).

The Ministry encourages "... a progressive flow from one phase to another, so that, according to need, supports can be obtained in a timely way from within the school, the district, the community and/or from regional or provincial services."

For example, "...some students may need medical or therapeutic services offered through child development centres or clinics; others may require the support of a mental health worker or a drug rehabilitation counsellor..." (*BC Special Education: Manual of Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines*, 2016, pp. 12, 14).

The *Manual of Policies* (pp. 18-19) states further: "It is essential that school and community services be co-ordinated to avoid duplication, and to ensure consensus regarding goals, consistency in interventions and an integrated approach to service delivery. . . [t]he school-based team should be responsible for co-operating with these community services. . ." The school-based team plays a key role in:

- keeping school staff informed of services available in the community
- acting as a referral source for these community supports; through the case manager, planning the delivery of services with community partners

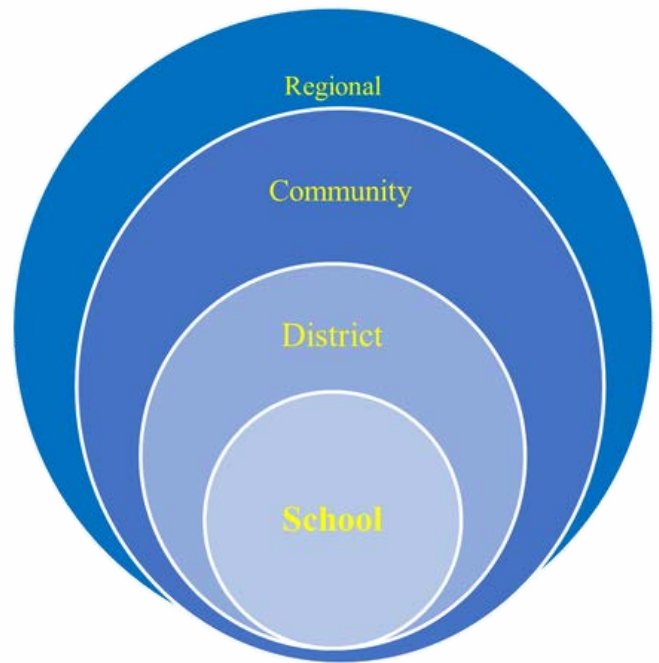
- ensuring school-based services are co-ordinated with community services
- documenting in the IEP the community services provided and those responsible for delivering them
- facilitating and planning the transition of students from the school to the community

Personnel listed in the *Manual of Policies*, who might assist in determining "when the resources of a school have been exhausted" are Learning Assistance Teachers and School Psychologists. Learning Assistance Teachers particularly contribute to program support and implementation. School Psychologists may contribute to identification, planning, and evaluation; their services include "consultation with teachers, parents, students and community agencies regarding the nature of students' strengths and needs, their educational implications, and ways to enhance learning and interpersonal relations."

Your child's school-based team may discuss coordination of school and community services when needs are judged to be beyond the resources of a school or district. This may become evident during the second phase of providing support (planning) when an IEP is being written, or in the third phase, if it becomes clear that planned activities in the IEP cannot be implemented. In public schools, senior district administrative staff (e.g., Directors of Special Education or Student Support Services) may have routines and protocols for coordinating with community agencies, and they may facilitate coordination. District administrators' roles include:

- involving community representatives of groups concerned with students with special needs in program planning and evaluation
- establishing liaison with preschool and post-secondary services in the district and community which provide programs for students with special needs (*BC Special Education: Manual of Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines*, p. 9)

As needed, after discussions with school staff (see FAQ "[What do I do if I do not agree with the goals on the IEP?](#)") parents may wish to contact senior school district administrators (in a public school district) or senior special education administrators (in an association of independent schools) to enquire into policies that are intended to enhance coordination with community or regional resources, public and private.



**IF YOU HAVE  
QUESTIONS OR  
WOULD LIKE FURTHER  
INFORMATION,  
CONTACT POPARD'S  
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