

Schools Helping Children & Families Checklist

- Establish and maintain a positive, welcoming climate.
- Make home visits and phone calls to build a positive relationship with the family.
- Use an adult translator for interviews to avoid embarrassing parents by forcing them to rely on their children to act as their communicators. Use certified interpreters when available and family members or community leaders when necessary.
- Slow down the intake process to allow time to gather important background information and to provide information about the school.
- Have a flexible timetable when the student first arrives. If the child has difficulties staying in the classroom or school for long periods of time, transition him/her into the classroom over a period of several weeks beginning with a shortened day and slowly extending the length of the day. Have the child initially attend during the least stressful part of the day (i.e. during “centers” if he/she is not overwhelmed by the activity level).
- Provide a buddy for the child and a community mentor/host for the family.
- Encourage families and children to share information about their first language and culture at school. Invite parents to participate in classroom routines and whole school events.



- Build the capacity of all staff to work in culturally competent and respectful ways.
- Involve mental health clinicians and behaviour strategists as part of the school team.
- Respect student and family privacy while collaborating to discuss student needs and progress.
- Provide whole school training on trauma informed practice.
- Provide personal outreach services that respect the culture of the family, such as In-Home Support Workers who visit the home regularly and provide a link between the home and school.
- Refer children for additional services when appropriate (e.g. school psychologist, health care providers or immigrant and refugee services).
- Hire a bilingual staff member to welcome families when they drop off their children.
- Plan English and first language forums for parents to provide school and community information. Plan several forums early in the school year to reduce the amount of information that must be shared at a single event. Make it easy for them to attend by helping to arrange transportation and/or child care for young siblings if these are barriers to their attendance.

- Ask each parent to bring one friend. Parents can become leaders in building support networks in their community.
- Hold after school homework clubs to support social connections and provide opportunities for individual or small group assistance with homework assignments.
- Provide families with information about after school clubs in the community.
- Provide cultural brokers as a parent/school liaison. They could also accompany parents to important meetings outside of the school (e.g. medical appointments).
- Seek community support for the provision of breakfast, snacks and lunches for children. Encourage parents to stay for breakfast with their children.
- Provide a parent lounge area in the school that is inviting and suitable for informal and formal gatherings to help expand families' social networks.
- Schedule weekly open houses where parents are encouraged to meet and share their experiences/questions.



- Schedule information meetings in community locations such as the public library or the community centre.
- Partner with community resources (e.g. Alberta Health Services, Parent Link Centres, Children's Hospital parent programs). Invite them into the school to share information with families.
- Partner with private/community service providers to arrange for before/after school care in the school or at a location near to the school.
- Use school facilities to host adult ESL classes.
- Use school facilities to host art, music and sports classes.
- Add bilingual and dual language books to the library collection.

