

# Family Friendly Community Checklist

## Introduction

In Alberta, we care about families! The Premier's Council has heard from Albertans across the province who have expressed a strong desire to improve the quality of family life. Albertans want communities to be more responsive to families. This *Family Friendly Community Checklist* has been developed as a tool to assist communities in reviewing those aspects of the community that can detract from, or contribute to, family well-being.

You are being asked to imagine a community that you are happy to live in and proud of the way it supports families. Then imagine what it takes to make that happen. This Checklist offers suggestions which are intended to trigger thought and discussion. The intent of this Checklist is to raise the profile of families and their needs. It is intended to encourage communities to assess how they demonstrate their concern about families. This might include anything from having a local campaign to improve cleanliness in the community, making buildings more accessible to parents with strollers, or involving seniors in a neighborhood child care program. It may involve training staff to be more sensitive to family needs or it may mean improving safety on a playground.

The Checklist can be used to assess your community from the perspective of the neighborhood or at a broader level. Check the areas where you feel your community has been supportive of family members of all ages and indicate where changes are needed. Find out the needs and priorities of families and establish a plan to improve the supports available to them in your community.

The *Family Friendly Community Checklist* is a beginning step in helping you to make improvements in your community to better support families. By evaluating the impact that different aspects of the community have on families and family life, you can identify where improvements are necessary. This Checklist has been developed as a resource in order to help highlight the needs of families and the extent of support available to them in their communities. It is provided as one or several initiatives in recognition of International Year of the Family, 1994.

We are grateful for the assistance of the Family Studies Program at the University of Alberta which helped make this project possible through the placement of a practicum student, Margo Lawrence, at the Council.

## Making this Checklist Relevant to Your Community

Community can be defined in a variety of ways. The *Family Friendly Community Checklist* has been designed to be applied at any level; the municipality, the community league or the neighborhood. It can be used by town councils, boards, neighbors or any group within the community to review the family friendliness or all or parts of the community, such as a shopping mall, or any facility which provides services to families.

This Checklist is designed to spark ideas and discussions about the family friendliness of your community. It is intended to be used as a guide for contributing to a more family friendly community. Not all of the items will apply in every situation.

The Checklist can be expanded to fit your requirements by adding additional items in the spaces that have been provided after each category.

Your comments and ideas can be helpful for future editions of this Checklist. Please send your ideas, suggestions, additions or revisions to be included in future editions.

Send your input to:

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# Checklists for Self-Assessment: Family Friendly Community

## 1. Neighborhoods

- Neighbors welcome families as community members
- People know their neighbors
- Appropriate community events and celebrations include all family members
- Community events are sensitive to, and reflective of, the diversity of family types and multicultural aspects of the area
- Families know about community resources and activities available to them through community bulletin boards, information lines, publications etc.
- Locations are established for families, to recycle toys, tools, clothing, equipment, etc.
- Families have access to a community meeting house or venue
- Food stores, public library, swimming pool, park, playground, post office, meeting places, community halls are within easy access of neighborhoods
- Houses and neighborhoods are designed to meet family needs (safe, accessible, child friendly, adequate lighting, safe crosswalks, road maintenance, sidewalks, etc.)
- Neighbors support each other (block parents, neighborhood crime watch, community leagues)
- Public transportation systems and community-based systems of support are accessible and available to all members of the community
- Neighbors are available and willing to help in an emergency
- Mediation is available to settle disputes between neighbors
- There are natural gathering places for people of all ages
- There is a sense of pride and cooperation in the community (i.e., hospitable, neighborhood clean-ups, etc.)

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Based on a consideration of all these factors,  
how does your community rate? (circle one)

Excellent

Good

Needs Improvement

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## 2. Schools

- Schools welcome families and community members
- Schools plan events that include all family members
- Schools are responsive to different family types and structures and sensitive to their needs
- Schools are accessible to the community that they serve
- Outreach support for children in need and their families is facilitated/arranged by the school
- Public participation is initiated on decisions that affect families
- Schools have effective, functioning parent advisory committees
- Before and after school child care is available at or near the school with busing arrangements where required
- The curriculum is sensitive to community values and standards
- Schools are designed to meet the needs of children and their families (cafeteria, playgrounds, recreation areas, etc.)
- School facilities are made available for after hour use
- Staff are friendly when meeting the public
- Parent/teacher meetings are arranged to reflect parents' work schedules
- Business and schools work together in partnerships to encourage career exploration, job training, and skill development

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Based on a consideration of all these factors,  
how does your community rate? (circle one)

Excellent

Good

Needs Improvement

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### 3. Playgrounds/Parks/Public Places

- Playground equipment (swings, slides, teeter-totters, etc.) is safe, well maintained and built to proper standards
- Designated areas are available for children of different age groups
- Public places are available for varying needs of families
- Play areas are designated and protected
- Shady and sunny areas are available
- Proper ground maintenance is evident
- Area is free of dangerous objects (i.e., glass, sharp objects)
- There are places for parents to sit and talk while children play
- Picnic areas are provided
- Garbage receptacles are provided
- Playgrounds are easily accessible for children
- Play zones are clearly marked for passing motorists
- Community gardens are available
- Public spaces are attractive for family use (wild flowers, fruit bearing trees, etc.)
- Attractive rest areas are available in public places
- Parks are planned for safe use by citizens both during the day and at night
- Playgrounds and parks offer programs that the whole family can participate in for various age groups

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Based on a consideration of all these factors,  
how does your community rate? (circle one)

Excellent

Good

Needs Improvement

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#### 4. Security

- Fire departments, police stations, ambulance services have a reasonable response time to all neighborhoods in the community
- Supports, both formal and informal, are available to families in case of violence, crime, substance dependency, gambling addiction, racism, child abuse, spouse abuse, sexual abuse or vandalism
- Families feel safe and secure in the neighborhood at all times (Neighborhood Crime Watch, Block Parents, known places to go when in trouble)
- Community members are aware of the problems/issues in their community
- Community members are involved in improving the neighborhood
- The community has adequate lighting for streets, buildings, and public places
- People watch out for each other, their homes and their property
- Neighbors know each other, and can count on help from each other in an emergency
- Community members join together to act on issues of concern
- Partnerships between the police and families on crime prevention techniques are encouraged
- Policies on bicycle safety are established and specific areas for safe cycling are identified and encouraged
- Information on services offered to families on fire protection, tips to prevent fires, and safe fire routes are distributed and reviewed
- Families are informed about services, neighborhood routes and times of police surveillance

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Based on a consideration of all these factors,  
how does your community rate? (circle one)

Excellent

Good

Needs Improvement

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## 5. Health and Wellness

- Family members are aware of the range of health care services available to them in their community
- Emergency medical care is available on a 24 hour basis
- Local health facilities and ambulance services are available
- Family physicians are accessible to the community
- Preventive services are available to provide information and assistance on diet and nutrition, fitness and lifestyle, and stress management for families
- Support, counseling and referral are available for families and their members dealing with problems
- Health professionals, hospitals and emergency services are sensitive to the special needs of children and their families
- Families with special support needs (i.e., seniors, disabled, mentally ill persons) have access to appropriate health care services
- Self-help groups are available and encourage participation
- Faith communities make their facilities available for use by the community
- Faith communities are active in providing support through outreach work and networking
- Recreational programs are well publicized and accessible to all community members
- Families have access to local recreational for health and fitness
- Opportunities for volunteer involvement are made available
- Adequate attention is given to ensure a safe environment for families

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Based on a consideration of all these factors,  
how does your community rate? (circle one)

Excellent

Good

Needs Improvement

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## 6. Family Serving Agencies

- Staff treat family members with respect, and spend time and effort in developing rapport with family members
- Services assist family members to build and maintain their confidence and competence in their family roles
- Services build on the strengths of the family as a whole as well as its individual members
- Services help family members to become an active part of the program as well as a resource for each other
- Parents play an important part in program decisions
- Program is located in community it serves
- Services are available at hours that are convenient for families
- Staff view family members' search for information and support as a sign of family strength, not a sign of weakness
- Program serves as a resource to family members, providing information about its own services and about other resources in the community
- Program is 'family-friendly' and welcomes all family members
- Programs that fit the demographic mix of the community are offered after consultations with the community
- The needs, desires, feelings, and strengths of all family members are considered in relation to service planning and delivery
- Family members are informed as to who will have access to information about the family and how confidentiality will be maintained
- Family members have the option of being present and participating in discussions about their family
- An appeal process is available, and family members are informed about how to use it to resolve their concerns

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Based on a consideration of all these factors,  
how does your community rate? (circle one)

Excellent

Good

Needs Improvement

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## 7. Parenting

- Workplaces are sensitive to and support the needs of working parents
- Support networks are available for families in need
- A community resource guide is available for parents
- Programs and supports for the parenting role are available (information, support, resources, etc.)
- Parents are involved in activities and decisions which affect their children (education, health, career, etc.)
- Appropriate advocacy groups that address issues of concern to parents are present
- Appeal mechanisms are available to parents on decisions which affect their families
- Parents and children are helped to feel welcome by staff and customers at local restaurants, shopping malls, and businesses
- Programs and activities which involve parents and children are available
- Community members value and support the role of parents
- There is support available in the community for parents who stay at home with their children

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Based on a consideration of all these factors,  
how does your community rate? (circle one)

Excellent

Good

Needs Improvement

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## 8. Children

- Children have access to both parents, to their grandparents or other seniors, and to members of their extended families
- Community members value and care for children
- Children contribute and are a part of the life of the community
- Children are present and participate in activities and events organized by the community
- Programs, such as preschool classes and parent-child activities, are available to support the growth and development of young children and to support the role of parents
- Children in trouble know where to go for help (Block Parents, counselors, distress line, etc.)
- Local restaurants, shopping malls and businesses have change rooms, play areas, and staff that are happy to serve children
- Streets and crossings are safe for children and walkways are clean and well lit
- Play areas are safe and visible to parents
- Quality child care alternatives are available and accessible to those who require them
- Facilities are accessible to strollers, carriages, walkers, wheelchairs, etc.
- Safe places are available for children to participate in unstructured play activities
- Supervised arts and craft programs are available to encourage children's creativity
- Activities for children are available without concern for cost (nature walks, etc.)

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Based on a consideration of all these factors,  
how does your community rate? (circle one)

Excellent

Good

Needs Improvement

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## 9. Teenagers and Young Adults

- Teenagers and young adults have opportunities for input into planning and decision-making about youth programs and activities
- Teenagers and young adults are supported in planned community events
- Employment and volunteer opportunities are available for teenagers and young adults
- Counseling and education are available on teen pregnancy, drugs and alcohol, sexuality, parenting, relationships, etc.
- Teen parents are supported in the community in both their parenting and student roles
- Staff in local restaurants, malls, and businesses treat teenagers with respect
- Community members value and care for teenagers and young adults
- Teens contribute and are a part of the life of the community
- Teens are present and participate in activities and events
- There are places and spaces available for teen gatherings (sports, dances, etc.)
- Adult and peer counseling are available for teenagers and young adults who need help and support
- Parents, teachers, counselors and others are able to identify depression in teenagers and young adults and provide needed support and referral
- Educational opportunities are available to meet the needs of young adults
- Support is available for teens and young adults experiencing problems

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Based on a consideration of all these factors,  
how does your community rate? (circle one)

Excellent

Good

Needs Improvement

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## 10. Seniors

- There are organized ways of encouraging intergenerational activities involving seniors
- Seniors have recognized and accessible roles to play in meaningful work, volunteer, and other types of activities
- Seniors have an opportunity for input into the decision-making process, i.e., participate in community meetings to discuss local/community issues
- Community members value and care for seniors
- Seniors contribute to, and are an integral part of the life of, the community
- Seniors participate in activities and events in the community
- Adult children are supported in their care giving responsibilities for their senior parents
- Flexible options are available for seniors to maintain independent living with access to and support from family members
- Seniors are encouraged to get involved in community services and activities
- Public transportation routes are appropriate around areas with high density senior citizens residents
- Senior citizens are assisted by allowing off-hour unscheduled stops for their safety on public transportation

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Based on a consideration of all these factors,  
how does your community rate? (circle one)

Excellent

Good

Needs Improvement

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## 11. Workplaces

- Workplaces provide options that support the parenting role, such as flextime, work at home, access to portable technology, “warm” line for calls from working parents to children at specified times
- The family role is highlighted in employee recognition programs
- Managers are sensitized to work and family realities
- Various workplace events include all family members
- The workplace has an employee assistance program in place to respond to personal and family problems
- Affordable, accessible child care alternatives are present or nearby for working parents
- Employees feel comfortable to communicate family concerns to their supervisors in confidence
- Managers are supportive in finding ways to reduce stress for employees having problems balancing work and family
- Where appropriate, children are welcome visitors at their parents’ place of work
- Workplace policies are sensitive to the family responsibilities of employees (i.e., child illness, elderly parents, bereavement, maternity)
- Workplaces offer personal development courses that enhance both work and family activities

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Based on a consideration of all these factors,  
how does your community rate? (circle one)

Excellent

Good

Needs Improvement

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## 12. Public Involvement and Support

- Elected officials are approachable and responsive to family members and sensitive to family issues and concerns
- Decision making procedures are clear and participation is encouraged, i.e., well developed public consultation processes are in place
- All family members are encouraged to participate in discussing issues, making decisions and implementing actions that affect the community
- Community-based systems of support (i.e., self-help initiatives, support groups, volunteers, religious institutions) are available to help mobilize local resources
- Family members are encouraged and supported in the process of being or becoming self-reliant, so that family members are supported in their ability to take care of themselves and their families
- Professional staff are responsive and available to those in need (i.e., outreach activities, financial planning assistance, food preparation workshops, consumer protection services, employment search, etc.)
- Professional staff are able to provide help and support for families within a reasonable period of time
- Professional staff are sensitive to families, respectful of individual dignity, and reflect community values
- All family members are encouraged to become involved in issues that affect them and their community
- Information is readily available to the public on sources of support for families
- Policies and programs offered by municipalities, communities and institutions are assessed for their impact on families (the Premier's Council *Family Policy Grid* can be used for this purpose)
- All documents and records are written and presented in plain language

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Based on a consideration of all these factors,  
how does your community rate? (circle one)

Excellent

Good

Needs Improvement

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# How Does Your Community Rate?

## Your Family Friendly Community

FFCC Category	Excellent 5 or 4 Points	Good 3 or 2 Points	Needs Improvement 1 or 0 Points
1. Neighborhoods			
2. Schools			
3. Playgrounds/Parks/Places			
4. Security			
5. Health and Wellness			
6. Family Serving Agencies			
7. Parenting			
8. Children			
9. Teenagers and Young Adults			
10. Seniors			
11. Workplaces			
12. Public Involvement/Support			
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>A =</b>	<b>B =</b>	<b>C =</b>

To calculate your community's FFCC Score, add up the three totals on page 14.

**A+B+C=** \_\_\_\_\_

- 35 – 60     If your score is above 34, your community is one of which to be proud. On all counts, your community is a safe and friendly place, and is sensitive to family needs.
- 16 – 34     If your score is between 16 and 34, your community has many qualities which make it a desirable place for families. However, there is room for improvement in the areas noted.
- 1 – 15        If your score is below 15, your community needs to make substantial improvements in order to become more family friendly.

In order for you to apply the information you have obtained from the FFCC. You need to be able to draw conclusions from the results. Here are a few questions to help evaluate the family friendliness of your community. These questions can be used to identify areas in which your community can be strengthened.

1. What areas of major change will be required to increase family friendly features in your community?

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2. What relevant plans or changes do you have already underway which could increase the family friendly features of your community?

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3. What other plans, strategies need to be put in place?

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