

Social Workers and FASD

Social Workers support children, young people, and adults with FASD, and their families, across a range of settings including FASD Diagnostic clinics, family support services, parenting programs, mental health services and out of home care. The role each worker can undertake will be determined by the agency in which they work, and their role.

Social workers can work with an individual or a family, but as well as looking at the person and their individual needs, they also consider the family and support system around the person, and their broader environment including school, work, housing, and their support services.

Referral

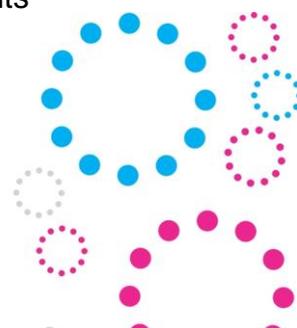
There can be many reasons for a family being referred to a social worker. The referral would include information about the individual or family and an indication of the problems, issues or needs of the client.

In accepting a referral, the worker would need to consider whether the referral is a good fit with their work role and skills, as social workers can work in a wide range of settings including child protection services, police, hospitals, courts, and legal services as well as community health or private practice.

Assessment

Social Workers will start with an assessment to understand why problems are occurring. They will ask about:

- The person's situation, needs, health and wellbeing, strengths, and resources
- Their goals and priorities
- Family background and history, their culture and values, and the impact of past experiences
- Relationships with family, caregivers, people in their household, and social supports
- Issues such as mental health or drug/alcohol issues or major stressors within the family
- Access to and participation in school, work, recreation and community groups and networks
- Access to housing, income support, health, childcare, and other entitlements



- Social and community connections and formal / informal networks

Planning and Goal Setting

Once there is an understanding of what the problem is, and why it might be happening, Social Workers work with their client/s to develop goals such as:

- Improve emotional, developmental, and social wellbeing
- Improve relationships and dynamics between family members
- Increase the person and family's access to resources and supports
- Improve their living situation and increase social and community participation.

Strategies might include:

- Providing support, counselling, or referring to therapists
- Support with basic needs, such as housing, income support or emergency aid
- Educating the person or their family about specific issues or topics of concern
- Improving access to services to improve health, wellbeing, or community connection
- Finding specialist services to meet particular needs
- Problem solving through advocacy or support
- Addressing issues like drug and alcohol issues, mental health, or family violence through specialist support



Interventions for Children			
Issue	Why is problem occurring	Goal of intervention	Strategy (person, system, environment)
Behavioural issues such as dysregulation, aggression, school refusal, emotional meltdowns, or dangerous behaviour.	The family can't explain the problems and other children in the family don't have these issues.	To support the family to access assessment or diagnosis for the child.	Advocacy to access paediatric diagnostic services; assistance to get funding for assessments, help the family make decisions about referrals e.g., mental health, disability) or arranging meetings to discuss a diagnosis with professionals involved with the child.
	The parents are struggling to implement consistent boundaries and a routine	To help the parents use more effective parenting strategies	Regular home visits to support parents to identify unhelpful strategies and stop using them, explore the child's strengths, identify what has worked best in the past, identify ways to reduce parental stress and set achievable goals.
		To identify and reduce problems that may be preventing parents using effective strategies	Explore issues with parents such as stress, fatigue, and frustration; provide short- or longer-term counselling or refer to counselling services, help family access respite and draw on formal and informal support networks to build coping capacity.
	Current supports are not helping to reduce behavioural issues	To help the family identify and access different or additional supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the family to review the child's assessments and any recommendations to see whether these have been addressed; if not, to work on implementation. Work with the family to clarify what is/isn't helping. Explore the benefits of different approaches – e.g., behavioural psychology, play therapy, medication review, school-based supports. Provide support to access additional supports including advocacy, help with funding and referrals.
		To explore whether other factors are contributing to the behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess parenting, family, or environmental factors through talking, observation and home visiting; observe the child in different environments, and talk to other professionals about what they think is contributing to behaviour

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify whether parental mental health, drug and alcohol use or other factors are affecting the child and whether other referrals are needed <p>Discuss concerns frankly with the family and encourage them to access supports; advise of duty of care; consult with other agencies if necessary and take appropriate action if there are serious safety concerns.</p>
		To support the family to explain their concerns to care team and explore different approaches within current supports.	Support and advocacy for parents in communicating with professionals, and in working with the care team.
The child is experiencing challenges in a range of settings (home, school, community) and parents are not sure how to support them.	The child is having difficulty making sense of and coping with different rules and expectations in different settings	To help family and school and better understand FASD (Psycho-social education)	Seek specialist advice on FASD including information, training and resources to support parents and teachers.
		To help family and school implement FASD informed approaches	Share FASD resources with school, attend Student Support Group meetings to share information or connect school staff with the child's therapy team.
		To adapt expectations and demands on the child	Support parents and teachers to set and implement goals to change aspects of child's environment; facilitate communication in the care team and help the family access funding. Support parents to implement plans in the home and overcome challenges.
			Help parents explain the child's needs to family members to ensure everyone has realistic expectations of the child; help parents choose activities for the child that they are most likely to succeed at.
	The child has difficulties with self-regulation, managing sensory input or impulsivity.	To ensure the child is receiving appropriate therapeutic supports	Assist the family to access recommended therapies (OT, speech, psychology), locate providers, help organise appointments, referral and NDIS applications.
The child struggles with peer relationships, doesn't have friends	The child has difficulties with social communication and understanding other's perspectives or needs	To support the child in making friendships	Social skills groups, 1:1 support to child, mentoring, behavioural interventions, referral to play therapy/psychology.
			Help family identify opportunities to build friendships, support, and scaffold child's social interactions, find environments in which child is likely to be at their best.

Social workers who are likely to come into regular contact with children and young people with FASD include:

Area	Job roles	Roles
Child protection	Case workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of children and families • Protective intervention with children and families • Placement and support of children in out of home care; case plans, supervising contact with parents.
Therapeutic supports	Therapists/Clinicians Mental Health Social Workers	Therapeutic supports to children in care, counselling, play therapy, trauma therapies, behavioural therapies and interventions.
Children in out of home care	Foster care Permanent Care Kinship care	Support and assessment of carers, placement of children in care, supervision of placements; supporting carers to meet the needs of the child including referral, advocacy, funding support and as part of the care team.
Youth Justice	Youth Justice supervision workers Custodial staff	Supervision of young people involved in the justice system, organising FASD and other assessments, writing case plans, planning placements and support services.