

## **Early Pregnancy Care Program**

### **About FamS**

FamS (NSW Family Services Inc) supports non-government organisations in New South Wales that are providing services to families experiencing stress. They encourage and help these organisations to provide quality support services.

### **What are family services?**

The family services sector supports families under stress. Typically, services in this sector help families (with dependent children) whose capacity to function is limited by the stresses of life – either internal issues such as mental health or external issues such as dealing with government agencies.

Family services are essentially PREVENTATIVE services, not crisis services. They focus on strengthening and supporting families and building on family members' existing skills so that a crisis is less likely to happen.

### **What are their values?**

All family service organisations share a set of values. They aim to:

- Acknowledge that all families need support, and that while some get it through their own informal networks, others need to access services for it
- Affirm and strengthen families' social, cultural, racial and linguistic identities
- Work together with families in relationships based on respect and trust
- Provide a confidential and professional service
- Help families take control of factors that will enhance their independence and self-reliance
- Be flexible and responsive to emerging family and community issues
- Be part of the local community and contribute to community building.

### **What programs do they offer families?**

Each family service is different because it will have grown out of the needs in its own local community. Some provide general support, while others have specialist staff such as counsellors and experts in child development. Programs available at one service may be different from those offered at other services.

Typical programs include:

- Counselling, with individuals or in family sessions
- Advocacy and referral, where families may be having problems dealing with government agencies or other agencies
- Group activities and courses on parenting, self-esteem, relationships, money management, household management, etc
- Children's activities, including special programs for children affected by domestic violence or other issues
- Self-help groups where people share their experiences (e.g. grief, sexual assault, domestic violence)
- Community-building activities where family members get to know other people and build supportive networks

- Information about resources available for families, particularly those struggling with financial hardship.

Any family member can contact their local family service when they have concerns about how their family is managing. Family services also take referrals from other service providers.

### **How can they help families?**

Family services organisations provide support to families in three main ways:

1. **Prevention** – This includes encouraging and giving information to parents to help them fulfil their parenting role to the best of their abilities. This type of help is offered to all families who need it.
2. **Early intervention** – This means working with families who are showing signs of distress in order to prevent it from escalating. Families often need help at particular stages (e.g. with babies, toddlers or teenagers), and children with additional needs may need help at any time.
3. **In a crisis** – Highly vulnerable families can face long-term difficulties (e.g. the risk that a child may be removed from a family's care). While family services aim to prevent such problems in the first place, they can help in a crisis or refer families to other services that can give crisis help.

For more information see the FamS website for Services available in your local area.  
<http://www.nswfamilyservices.asn.au>

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