

Social Return On Investment (SROI) Case Study: Families and Schools Together (F&ST)

Fast Facts

About Catholic Family Services: *Servicing and employing people of all faiths and cultures since 1957, our mission is “to strengthen ALL people and communities in the pursuit of wellness.”*

To that end, the agency provides a continuum of innovative and accessible services through a combination of counselling, community initiatives, school-based support programs, leadership development, and volunteer opportunities.

Services are offered to the most vulnerable people in Calgary and are not based on ability to pay.

By The Numbers:

- Catholic Family Service provided service to over 4,500 Calgarians in 2007.
- Almost 70% of service recipients report to not be of Catholic or other Christian faiths
- Families and Schools Together (F&ST) served 558 individuals in 10 different community sites in 2007.

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“F&ST gave us a chance to get to know the teachers at our kids’s school. I have noticed many changes in our family and we spend even more quality time together.” - A parent in Elementary F&ST

Program Background:

In Calgary, high stress and social isolation of families with children is becoming more commonplace. Parents work all day and arrive home late and tired, which limits their opportunity for meaningful contact with their children, to get involved in their schooling and to know their neighbors.

This reality can prevent strong and positive parent/child bonding. The absence of which is a major contributing factor to the stress and social isolation mentioned above.

Families and Schools Together (F&ST) is a proven prevention program that strengthens the safety net for children through enhancing their relationships with their families, peers, teachers, school staff and other members of their community.

Social Value Created

F&ST addresses the needs of children and their families by building internal protective factors that will assist family members to identify warning signs of stress, isolation and poor mental health. The F&ST program focuses upon the following:

- Encouragement of positive parenting;
- Identification of caring support within local community;
- The importance of a caring and supportive school environment to children;
- The need for consistency at school/home;
- The development of positive social skills

among children; and

- Promoting how stronger families contribute to safer communities.

By developing an awareness of the above, F&ST families become more likely to access support services if issues arise within their family.

Theory of Change

If we strengthen communication and connections between parents/children and schools, then children are more likely to experience success in school and parents have increased participation in the community

Significantly, four to five years after involvement in F&ST, children of parents that have a history of tobacco use, alcohol abuse or involvement in drugs are significantly less likely to adopt these behaviours, despite their

obvious use and prevalence among adults in the home.

How F&ST Works

F&ST is unique in that the program enhances a parents’ ability to be tuned in to their child’s development and to be consistent in their parenting. Acquiring these skills will in turn strengthen the resilience of the child.

The F&ST program occurs in three stages:

- 1) outreach and engagement, including home visits that invite parents to involve other family members in F&ST sessions;
- 2) eight to ten weekly sessions led by a team of parents who are F&ST graduates and specialized service providers who are prepared to assist participants to learn how to build stronger relationships with their children and across their communities; and
- 3) two years of follow-up through parent-led monthly groups (FASTWORKS) assist



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participants to maintain their relationships, i.e., with their children and across their communities.

F&ST Clientele

F&ST began as a program for elementary school children and their families. Programming has evolved to serve families with infant children up to three years of age and recently has been customized for Aboriginal children and their families. Elementary F&ST and Baby F&ST are the subject of this SROI.

Generally speaking, participants in Elementary F&ST come from a variety of backgrounds. Group composition remains fairly constant.

In 2007, 70% children came from two-parent families. An average of 4 people per family attend the program.

Over half of the families reported income under \$30,000 (53%). 24% of the mothers and 33% of the fathers attending the program had not completed high school.

Each F&ST session has a carefully planned agenda that includes opening and closing traditions and a family meal. Families get involved in activities that range from designing a family flag, sing-songs and lively exercises in communication to exercises that assist participants to address and describe their feelings.

Other agenda items include parent mutual support time, kids' time and parent-child play. The eight-week program concludes with a graduation ceremony that celebrates the successes of each individual family unit.

In 2007, 103 children attended the F&ST programs in Calgary-area schools along with their parents and extended family. While these children are not at the same immediate risk of family break-up as families involved in Baby F&ST, their experience of significant social isolation and poverty places every adult and child at-risk of involvement in ongoing problems such as family violence, substance abuse and limited education, diminishing their hope for the future.

Social Value Created

In the absence of a program like F&ST and Baby F&ST, families under stress are more challenged to reverse the trend of their deteriorating relationships on their own. This means that domestic violence will continue if it is already a factor and the family may routinely interact with police due to concerns about behaviour in the home.

When situations of domestic violence prevail, it is not uncommon for the women to remove herself and her children from the situation for a time, drawing upon the services of local shelters. It may be necessary to place the child in foster care for a period of time or indefinitely, if the situation at home does not improve.

Children under stress will be noticed at school. If the stress continues unchecked, these children will likely require the services of a teaching assistant to ensure that they do not fall behind in class.

In some instances, a child's behaviour will become so disruptive that their parent may be required to leave work in order to attend to a situation caused by the child. This will impact family finances, which can further contribute to the stress and other problems being experienced in the home.

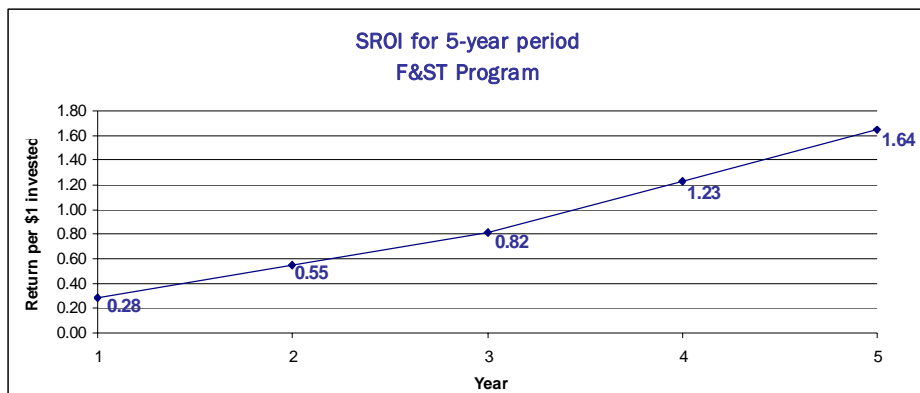
The families of children described above require a new way of living and being together. They need support to ensure that their learning becomes a permanent, family routine.

Case Study: Profile One for F&ST

Parent A, was a single parent residing in a low-income neighborhood with five children ranging from 5 to 13 years of age. She was unemployed and had numerous health problems resulting from current and past abusive relationships.

Parent A had minimal interaction with her children's schools and had no networks of support in her community. She had required intervention services in the past but had an interest in strengthening her parenting skills. She agreed to participate in F&ST when she was contacted through the school.

Graph 1: 5-year SROI for F&ST



During the program, Parent A exhibited confidence in her parenting. Her relationship with her children blossomed.



SROI Case Study: Families and Schools Together (F&ST)

Table 1: Calculation of Social Value Created by F&ST

Profile 1: F&ST Program kindergarten - grade 4							
SROI Indicators Included:	\$\$ value per change	% of co-hort experiencing this change.	\$\$ value for co-hort	Notes - 103 children were involved in the FAST program in 2007.			
1	No longer required to need the time of an educational assistant	\$2,800	5%	\$13,843	Average time/cost for child requiring a teaching assistant is 5 hrs per week over 10 months @ \$14 per hour. 5 children no longer needed to access this time.		
2	Reduced stress on family leading to reduced need for police intervention	\$2,052	3%	\$6,341	Reduced stress, domestic violence was no longer a factor, regular monthly interventions by police were not needed @ \$342 per visit, per month. Assumed 6 months.		
3	Reduced stress on family relationships leading to use of shelters	\$595	3%	\$1,777	Three families reduced stress so that domestic violence was no longer a factor, therefore women's shelters were not used. Minimum stay, one week.		
4	Stress on child is reduced, which reduces the need for child welfare involvement	\$275	10%	\$2,748	Children under stress would access approximately 11 hours of child welfare support before either resolving the problem it being escalated. 10 children no longer needed this time.		
5	Stress on child is reduced, reducing the need for child to be placed in care	\$5,940	3%	\$17,743	Minimum stay would be three months. Minimum cost per night in foster care is \$66 per night. Three children were diverted from prospect of being taken into care.		
6	Parent no longer required to leave work regularly, therefore wages increase	\$1,632	5%	\$8,069	5 parents indicated they were no longer required to leave work and lose income. Likely on minimum wage, therefore \$ 8.50 per hour. Assuming loss of 2 days/month.		
7	Family participates in recreational activities	-\$16	25%	-\$407	Parents each pay \$5.28 for a \$25 dollar pass. 25 families accessed a pass in 2007.		
8	Substance abuse	\$1,414	20%	\$29,128	Older children do not become involved in substance abuse. This occurs 4-5 years after the program.		
SOCIAL VALUE CREATION SUMMARY TABLE F&ST:			YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	YR 4	YR 5
Social value created annually for co-hort:			\$50,113	\$51,366	\$52,650	\$83,094	\$85,172
Total annual investment in co-hort:			\$177,000				
SROI ratio over 5 years:			0.28	0.55	0.82	1.23	1.64
Present value of social value created:			\$290,709				

Profile One Case Study (con't)

There was an increase in communication and play thereby lessening the previous pattern of conflict and reactive discipline.

The teachers noticed a significant change in the children. Their grades improved, attendance increased and they became full participants in the classroom.

Parent A experienced more positive connections with the other parents,. She began to believe she could change her life. She asked the group for help with her resume and successfully obtained a job. She made the decision to access quality child care.

Over her time in FASTWORKS, she became an advocate around barriers to families living in poverty. She continues to volunteer in her community and remains committed to making a difference.

Profile Two: Baby F&ST

Based upon the success of the F&ST approach,, Baby F&ST was developed to meet the needs of young moms who were struggling with normal bonding with their infant children.

Baby F&ST participants are invited to include their child's grandparents or other extended family, in order to ensure that their child experiences the most supportive environment possible.

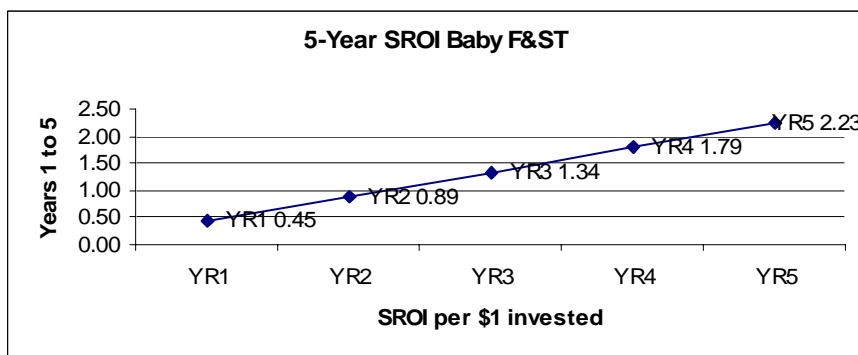
Baby F&ST Clientele

The 16 babies and young moms and their 41 extended family members participating in Baby F&ST (2007) shared common characteristics:

- young moms were between the ages of 13-23;
- the age of children ranged between 0-3 years;
- 48% of moms were heading single parent families;

- family income for 23% of young moms was under \$19,999;
- 28% of the young moms had employment income while 72% relied on income transfer payments or family support;
- grandparents or extended support network also often attended, invited as key figures with an active role to play in both the young mom and child's life.

Graph 2: 5-year SROI for Baby F&ST





SROI Case Study: Families and Schools Together (F&ST)

How Baby F&ST Works

Young moms are taught how to massage, play and bond with their child, and to create a more supportive family atmosphere with the assistance of extended family. At each session, participants move from individual to family based activities. Baby F&ST adapts to the adolescent developmental stage of the young mothers, while also building family integration. They learn baby massage with their babies under a year old, floor play with their 1-2 year olds and reading (literacy) with their 2-3 year olds. Participating families in F&ST have the opportunity for on-going support through involvement in FASTWORKS, a 2 year follow up program focused on community participation and building leadership skills.

Case Study: Profile 2 Baby F&ST

Parent B is a young mom, age 15, with a 2-month old baby. The biological father has minimal involvement. The young mom resides with her parents, and is dependant upon them for income support. Her relationship with her mother had started to deteriorate, prior to her becoming pregnant.

While adoption was initially considered, the young mom decided to keep her child. She tried to attend the local

community school but was ostracized by her peers. She attended Louise Dean School to complete her high school education and expressed an interest in being closer to her mom again. They agreed to attend Baby F&ST and experienced a far greater understanding of each other's role. The program gave her the strength to obtain counseling to rebuild the mother/daughter relationship. The grandmother learned that she was not a 'bad' parent, just a parent of a teen who ended up pregnant.

Table 2: Five-year Social Value—Baby F&ST

Profile Two: Baby F&ST							
SROI Indicators Included:	\$\$ value per change in Year 1	% acheiving change	\$\$ value for co-hort	Notes			
1 stronger parental bond	\$5,940	8%	\$7,888	reduced lilelihood of child placed in care (1 child @ \$66 per night. Infant daily cost would be higher.)			
3 better health for the child - less family doctors visits.	\$1,300	25%	\$5,200	less likely to need visits to family doctor, visits to clinics or hospitals - applied to one child in 2007 cohort.			
4 Positive interaction between father, mother and child, reducing domestic violence	\$595	8%	\$762	mom and child would otherwise end up in shelter - minimum of one week @ \$85 per night.			
5 grandparent has more positive relationship with young mom	\$900	8%	\$1,152	reduces inter-family friction. Grandparent less likely to need mental health services subsidized @ \$75 per hour.			
6 mental health of young mom increased	\$8,878	8%	\$11,364	young mon less likely to be suicidal or require mental health services - applied to one mom in 2007 cohort.			
Social Value Creation Summary Table			YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	YR 4	YR 5
Annual social value created for co-hort:			\$26,366	\$26,366	\$26,366	\$26,366	\$26,366
Total annual investment in co-hort:			\$59,000				
SROI ratio over 5 years:			0.45	0.89	1.34	1.79	2.23
Present value of social value created over 5 years			\$131,829				

Conclusion

F&ST and Baby F&ST are preventative programs that are composed of: a weekly program that assists parents to create stronger, more positive relationships with their children and up to two years of follow-up and support to assist families internalize their new way of being over the long term.

As a prevention program, F&ST changes behaviour and lifestyle choices over the long term. This means that the social value created by the program can be projected into the future.

As illustrated in Table 3, the annual SROI of F&ST programs grows as the families and children live with less stress and improved relationships. With multiple co-horts involved, the value returned in years 3-5 will offset years 1-2, as families evolve from direct program involvement into long term, permanent change.

Table 3: Five-year Social Value Average F&ST & Baby F&ST

	SROI Ratios				
	YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	YR 4	YR 5
Profile 1:	0.28	0.55	0.82	1.23	1.64
Profile 2:	0.45	0.89	1.34	1.79	2.23
SROI	0.36	0.72	1.08	1.51	1.94