

How to apply for Social Development Funding

**for your child's Shining
Horizons Program**



How to apply for Shining Horizons program funding for your child through Social Development

A practical guide for families seeking support for participation in Shining Horizons programs.

Important information about Social Development funding

Shining Horizons has an established working relationship with the New Brunswick Department of Social Development, and *many of our participants currently receive funding for their programs through the Social Development requisition model.*

If your child meets Social Development's eligibility requirements and participation in a Shining Horizons program is approved as part of their support plan, funding may be available to help cover the cost of participation.

For new families, the most challenging part is often navigating the application, assessment, and approval process. This guide is intended to help you understand where to start, what information to prepare, what questions to ask, and what to do if the process appears to stall.

Shining Horizons cannot determine eligibility or guarantee that funding will be approved. Funding decisions are made by Social Development.

Start here

1. Call Social Development at 1-833-733-7835 and ask about Family Supports for Children with Disabilities (FSCD).
2. Explain how your child's condition affects everyday functioning and participation, not only the diagnosis.
3. Gather professional documentation that describes the child's condition, functional impact, unmet needs, and recommended supports.
4. Ask Social Development to consider the appropriate Shining Horizons program as part of your child's Family Support Plan.
5. Before ending each conversation, ask what the next step is, who is responsible for it, and when you should follow up.

1. Ask about Family Supports for Children with Disabilities

For children under 19, the primary Social Development program to ask about is Family Supports for Children with Disabilities (FSCD).

Families can start the process in either of these ways:

- *Call Social Development* at 1-833-733-7835 and make a self-referral.
- *Ask a professional working with your child to call Social Development* and make a third-party referral on your family's behalf.

When calling, you can say:

"I would like to speak with someone about Family Supports for Children with Disabilities. My child has physical, developmental and/or mental-health-related needs that significantly affect everyday functioning and participation. I would like to know whether my child may be eligible for support."

You do not need to be receiving Social Assistance to ask about FSCD. Eligibility is not based on family income, although a family financial contribution may apply to approved services for families who have the means to contribute.

2. Explain your child's needs, not only the diagnosis

A diagnosis by itself may not explain why support is needed. When speaking with Social Development, explain how your child's condition affects everyday life.

This may include challenges related to:

- emotional regulation
- anxiety or coping
- social interaction
- communication
- sensory processing
- mobility or physical functioning
- coordination or motor skills
- confidence and participation
- following routines
- community participation
- independence
- school or other daily activities

Try to explain both:

- What is difficult for your child?
- What support could help your child participate and function more successfully?

The more clearly and specifically you describe your child's needs and how they affect everyday life, the easier it is for Social Development staff to understand the situation and determine what supports may be appropriate.

3. Gather supporting professional documentation

Social Development may require written information about your child's disability, condition, or functional needs. The FSCD program requires at least one written letter of support or assessment from a professional describing the nature and impact of the disability.

Supporting documentation may come from professionals such as:

- physician or nurse practitioner
- occupational therapist
- psychologist or school psychologist
- psychiatrist
- physiotherapist
- social worker
- speech-language pathologist
- another licensed clinical professional involved with your child

A useful supporting letter should explain:

- your child's condition
- how the condition affects everyday functioning and participation
- what needs remain unmet
- what type of support may help address those needs

If possible, ask a professional who knows your child to explain why structured therapeutic, social, sensory, physical, recreational, or skill-development programming may benefit your child. Specific examples from everyday life can be particularly helpful.

4. Tell Social Development about the Shining Horizons program

Tell your Social Development worker which specific Shining Horizons program you are requesting and how it relates to your child's identified needs and goals.

Shining Horizons offers different types of programming, including:

- **Therapeutic Riding**
- **Occupational Therapist-led Equine-Assisted Programming**

Depending on the child's individual needs, these programs may support goals related to:

- physical health and functioning
- balance, coordination, mobility, and motor skills
- sensory and emotional regulation
- mental health and well-being
- anxiety and coping

- social skills and communication
- confidence and self-esteem
- engagement and participation
- independence
- structured learning and skill development

Therapeutic Riding

Therapeutic Riding is a mounted structured program in which participants work toward individual physical, emotional, social, developmental, and mental-health-related goals through interaction with horses and riding activities.

Depending on the participant, goals may include improving balance and coordination, physical strength and mobility, confidence, emotional regulation, social interaction, communication, independence, and overall well-being.

Social Development identifies therapeutic-based recreation activities as one type of support that may be considered through FSCD. Therapeutic Riding may be considered within this type of support, but the request should still be described according to the child's individual needs, goals, and expected outcomes.

Occupational Therapist-led Equine-Assisted Programming

Shining Horizons also provides unmounted equine-assisted programs delivered by a licensed occupational therapist and structured around identified therapeutic and functional goals.

These programs should be described according to the professional intervention being provided rather than simply as recreation. Depending on the child's needs, the occupational therapist may address emotional and sensory regulation, anxiety and coping, social participation, communication, executive functioning, confidence, independence, and participation in everyday activities.

When requesting funding, clearly explain what challenges your child is experiencing, what goals they are working toward, and how the requested Shining Horizons program may help address those needs.

5. Ask your Social Development worker these questions

Before ending a conversation, try to obtain clear answers to these questions:

- Has my child been formally referred to FSCD?
- Has eligibility been determined?
- Is any additional documentation required?
- Who is currently responsible for our file?
- What is the next step, and who is responsible for it?
- Is the requested Shining Horizons program being considered as part of my child's Family Support Plan?
- Do you need information directly from Shining Horizons or one of my child's health professionals?

- How will approved funding be managed — through Social Development or through a family-managed arrangement?
- Is there a family contribution?
- When should I expect the next decision or contact?

A useful final question is: “Could you please tell me what the next step is, who is responsible for it, and when I should follow up if I have not heard anything?”

6. Keep a simple record

Keep a record of the date, the person you spoke with, what was discussed, documents requested or submitted, what Social Development said would happen next, and the expected follow-up date. Keep copies of letters, assessments, and emails.

7. Do not assume funding has been approved

Applying does not mean that program costs have been approved. Before relying on Social Development funding, ask your worker to confirm:

- that the requested service has been approved
- the amount, frequency, or number of sessions approved
- the effective start and end dates
- how the funding will be managed
- whether Shining Horizons needs a requisition or other authorization before invoicing

Shining Horizons can provide program descriptions, costs, frequency, professional credentials, and other information requested by Social Development.

If your application appears to be stalled

The application and approval process can sometimes take time. If you have submitted the requested information but are not receiving clear answers, continue to follow up and ask what is still outstanding, who is responsible for the next action, and when you should expect an update.

Step 1: Contact the assigned Social Development worker

“Can you please confirm the current status of my child’s application, whether anything remains outstanding, and what the next decision point is?”

Ask for a specific follow-up date.

Step 2: Follow up in writing

After a phone conversation, an email can help create a clear record. For example:

“Thank you for speaking with me today. My understanding is that all requested documentation has now been provided and that the next step is Can you please let me know if anything else is required. Could you also advise when we should expect an update?”

Step 3: Ask to speak with a supervisor

If the file has not progressed and you cannot obtain a clear explanation, it is reasonable to ask to speak with a supervisor. This does not necessarily mean you are making a complaint; it may simply help clarify responsibility or resolve an outstanding issue.

Step 4: Ask for a family-centered meeting

If several professionals or services are involved, ask whether a family-centred meeting can be arranged. This can allow the family, Social Development, and relevant service providers to discuss the child’s needs, current services, unmet needs, proposed supports, responsibilities, and next steps.

Step 5: Seek independent advocacy when necessary

If reasonable attempts to resolve the issue have not resulted in access, a decision, or a clear explanation, families may wish to seek independent advocacy.

- New Brunswick Advocate: 1-833-453-8653. The Advocate supports the rights and interests of children and youth and may assist with barriers to services.
- Ombud NB: 1-888-465-1100. Ombud NB can receive complaints about administrative fairness involving provincial government departments and other public organizations.

How Shining Horizons can help

Shining Horizons cannot determine eligibility or approve Social Development funding. However, we can provide information to support your request, including:

- A description of the requested Shining Horizons program
- Program frequency and duration
- Program cost
- Professional credentials of the person delivering the service
- Therapeutic or functional goals addressed by the program
- Confirmation of availability
- Additional information requested by your Social Development worker

Where appropriate, a Shining Horizons staff member or health professional who is already familiar with your child may also provide relevant information about the child's participation and needs.

A useful way to describe your request

Rather than saying only, "I would like Social Development to pay for riding," consider explaining:

"My child has significant needs related to..... These difficulties affect their ability to..... We are requesting consideration of the Shining Horizons..... program because it addresses..... We would like this need and proposed service to be considered as part of our child's Family Support Plan."

Keep the focus on the child's functional needs: what the challenge is, how it affects everyday functioning and participation, what need is currently unmet, and how the requested program may help address that need.

A final note about timing

The application and approval process can sometimes take time. If you do not receive a clear response, continue to follow up and ask what the next step is, who is responsible for it, and when you should expect an update. Keeping a record of your contacts and submitted documents can be very helpful.

Shining Horizons Equine-Assisted Wellness Centre

If Social Development requires information about one of our programs, please contact Shining Horizons. We will work with families and their Social Development representatives to provide the information needed to consider the request.

Best of luck with your application.

The Shining Horizons Team