



## What is a Family Support Specialist?

If your child is eligible for Part C Infant and Toddler services, your family will be assigned a Family Support Specialist, often referred to as an FSS. The FSS is required to meet with you and/or your child two to four times per month. These meetings, or home visits, can occur in a location of your choice (your home, at CDC, in the community, a child care center, etc.). However, your active involvement and participation is required. The FSS is not a therapist, rather a coach, who supports parents in learning to promote their child's developmental well-being. Their position requires a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree in child development, elementary or special education, or a related field. Further, the State of Montana requires that they become certified as a Family Support Specialist (FSS). This certification requires them to demonstrate the following skills which they can use to support you in addressing your concerns and priorities:

- assessing child development in partnership with families
- developing a plan which outlines and addresses families' concerns and priorities
- **identifying** services and supports that benefit the child's development
- developing teaching strategies for families that they can implement during the natural routines of the day (bath time, bedtime, playtime, mealtime)
- developing strategies to address challenges (behavioral, sleeping, eating)
- directing families to resources on topics of interest (literature, video tapes, special equipment, names of people to contact)
- **accessing** services for children and families (Medicaid, school services, therapies, medical services, community programs)
- providing emotional support to families

Further, they are knowledgeable on a variety of topics as they relate to children with challenges in development. If they don't have the knowledge, they will make every effort to find it for you. Some of the areas they have information about include:

- Infant and Toddler development
- Parenting tips for dealing with challenging behaviors
- Assistive technology (e.g.: specialized equipment, communication devices)
- Specific disabilities and syndromes
- Sensory challenges and intervention strategies
- Working together as a team
- Advocating for your child
- Moving into adolescence
- Rights, rules, and regulations