Complex Support Needs Designation

The **Complex Support Needs Designation (CSND)** recognizes service providers that deliver specialized, coordinated supports to adults with complex support needs.

Definition & Eligibility Criteria

Adults with complex support needs are individuals who meet all of the following:

- are 18 or older and have a developmental disability,
- are eligible for services from Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD),
- pose a significant risk, and/or are destructive to themselves, others or property,
- have, or have had a history of, **one or more** of the following diagnoses or life experiences:
  - intensive or specialized treatment for psychiatric and/or behavioural issues,
  - termination from services due to challenging behaviours,
  - involvement in multi-system medical and/or mental health services,
  - incarceration(s) or involvement with the criminal justice involvement,
  - chronic substance abuse/dependency problems and/or self-harm behaviour.

Diverse Supports

Standard services generally meet the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities; however, those with complex behavioural or medical challenges require a broader, specialized support network. This may include:

- **Natural supports,** such as unpaid family, friends and acquaintances,
- **Formal supports**, including paid agency staff, home care and/or public guardians,
- **External supports** from specialized services, such as psychologists and Alberta Health Services,
- **Risk management strategies** that identify response plans, communication around risk, and risk mitigation,
  - Individual-specific supports:
    - Adequate physical space for requirements,
    - Resources to build community connections,
    - Specialized medical supports or interventions,
    - Crisis response supports.
  - Staff-specific supports:
    - CET-compliant mandatory training (e.g., Positive Behaviour Supports, Crisis Intervention, Medication Administration, etc.),
    - Ongoing mentoring and workplace learning,



- Efficient communication systems,
- On-call support,
- Flexible staffing,
- State-of-the-art technology.

The CSND Review Process

Service providers that support individuals with complex support needs must apply for a CSND review. The review follows the same structure as a Creating Excellence Together (CET) survey and may be completed in conjunction with a Level 1 or Level 2 survey.

Service Tiers

Service Tiers outline the recommended training for staff supporting individuals with differing levels of complex support needs. Refer to the Service Tiers Tool for details.

Benefits of Pursuing CSND

Service providers pursuing CSND can benchmark their services, supports, strategies, and staff development against **standards that reflect best practices in the sector**. This ensures that:

- services are designed to effectively mitigate risk for individuals and staff,
- staff are equipped to respond with proactive, skilled approaches,
- customized services are available for individuals and/or guardians seeking alternatives to traditional service or treatment options, and
- the workforce is managed strategically to reduce organizational liability.

Upon the successful completion of the review, service providers receive a **CSND Certificate**, signaling their commitment to safety, quality, and person-centred supports.

CSND for Service Providers Accredited by Equivalent Standards

Service providers that are accredited by **equivalent standards as identified by PDD**, and that support individuals who meet the CSN definition/criteria, may apply for a stand-alone CSND review by:

- contacting the ACDS Accreditation Department at accred@acds.ca,
- providing the name, position, phone number and email of your organization's primary contact, and
- providing evidence of accreditation through an approved accrediting body.

Additional Resources

- Government of Alberta PDD Policy Manual - Supports for Complex Service Needs
- ACDS Accreditation - Overview
- Creating Excellence Together Standards - Overview
- Complex Support Needs - Overview

For assistance, contact your Accreditation Coordinator directly or email the Accreditation Department at accred@acds.ca.