

BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations FosterlineBC



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The BCFFPA is a provincial organization for foster parents, run by foster parents. We are a registered Society aiming to bring foster parents, social workers and others together in order to continuously improve the standard of care for BC's children in care. BCFFPA provides education, training and professional development as well as advocacy, support and assistance for the foster parents of BC.

**FosterlineBC** (previously InfoLetter) is a quarterly publication (January, April, July, October).

**Submissions**—Forward articles, personal stories or ideas to the BCFFPA office. Materials may be edited for length and suitability.

**Advertising**—Please contact the BCFFPA office for advertising opportunities, sizes and rates.



## President's Report

Congratulations all foster parents and their families on Foster Family Month. We talk every year about how important we are to the children of BC and how much we do for them but we have to remember that we are important every month, not just in October.

I believe that, if I was a normal person, there is no way I would do what we do—so by extension you aren't normal either! We are foster parents—what we are is extraordinary. It takes a special person to take a hurt, scared and often neglected young person into their family. We give them respect, guidance and acceptance as well as the hard to learn boundaries that all other children take for granted. We maneuver through the bureaucracy of MCFD, discover who to talk to, who will get the job done and what specialist to rope in to assist a child to reach their potential. Then we work with the education system, which often seems to have it in for our kids (whoever thought suspensions teach kids anything besides how to maximize the amount of free time). Then you take care of the day-to-day chores of home, meals and laundry. YOU ARE EXTRAORDINARY!

If your local MCFD is doing something for foster parents this month please participate. Take the opportunity to mix with other extraordinary people—maybe have a snack and remind yourself what good things you do every day.

I would like to welcome Rocky and Monica to the provincial Board of Directors as delegates for the North and Coast Fraser Regions. I look forward to working with them. If you are from either of these areas please give them a call and let them know how things are going in your local community. We need to keep our communities communicating to achieve positive results for foster parents.

I would also like to congratulate Doug Hughes on his move to the Health Ministry and to thank him for all of his assistance to foster parents and children in care. I have enjoyed working with him and will miss his humor and his ability to tackle the hard subjects. I look forward to working with Cory Heavener, whom we've heard some wonderful things about. Together we'll continue to tackle more of the difficult to resolve issues in the province.

In closing, I'd like to say, once again, Happy Foster Family Month and continued congratulations for a hard job well done.

Heather Bayes  
President



### Our Mission

The BCFFPA represents and supports all Foster Parents to provide quality in-home foster care in British Columbia

### Our Vision

Supporting children and youth to reach their full potential through excellence in foster care

### Our Belief

Resilient Foster Parents = Empowered Children and Youth

## Notes from the Office

Foster Family Month is a perfect time for me to express my admiration for foster parents. I work with people like you every day and I'm always amazed by your commitment and dedication. It's a job you can't ever close the door on or leave behind at the office. Your homes are your workplace. This fact speaks to your generosity of spirit and selflessness.

Ronda and I have been participating on weekly Foster Family Month planning calls with the Ministry across the province. Keep your eyes peeled for events and acknowledgements that will be popping up in your communities. I know that many of you don't feel valued and that some local Ministry offices may lack the budget or personnel to plan an event—but always remember that the kids in care in BC would be lost without your contributions. Those of us who understand what you do everyday are so grateful for your presence. You're making the world a better place.

October brings with it the time for early membership renewal at BCFFPA. Renew or take out a new membership before December 1st and you'll be eligible to win this year's gift—a \$250 Visa card!

I was fortunate to be able to attend the Executive Director's meetings for CFFA in Ontario in June. They are a driven bunch of knowledgeable individuals and I feel very appreciative of the opportunity to work with them on some common projects.

Heather and I have been requesting meetings with the Minister and Deputy's office over the past few months, but with all the recent changes at Provincial MCFD, we haven't been successful yet. We have a meeting scheduled with the Representative for Children and Youth in late October.

The office is always quieter during the summer. The team has spent the additional quiet time pursuing information related to the Motions passed at the AGM and I have written and submitted a few grant applications in support of the Advocacy Program.

Wishing you all a wonderful Foster Family Month and a safe, fun Halloween!

Jayne Wilson  
Executive Director



**fosterlineBC**  
**1-800-663-9999**  
**We're here for you**





### ***Thanks From the Minister of Children and Family Development***

I want to express my sincere appreciation to British Columbia's roughly 3,100 foster families who embrace the often challenging yet crucial role of caring for young people when they need it most. Thank you so much for opening your hearts and your homes to so many of our province's most vulnerable children and teens.

*Stephanie Cadieux  
Minister of Children and Family Development*



### ***Thanks From the Deputy Minister of Children and Family Development***

Foster parents come from all walks of life but share one thing in common – they are ordinary people who take the extra ordinary step to share their time and their family with children who need them. To the incredible foster families throughout B.C.: thank you for providing supportive, caring homes and making a positive difference in the lives of children and youth.

*Mark Sieben  
Deputy Minister of Children and Family Development*

### ***Thanks from the Provincial Director of Child Welfare***

As the newly appointed Provincial Director of Child Welfare I would like to offer my gratitude to all the dedicated foster families who support our children and youth in care. Providing a safe and nurturing home environment makes all the difference in the life of a child.

*Cory Heavener, Provincial Director of Child Welfare  
Ministry of Children and Family Development*

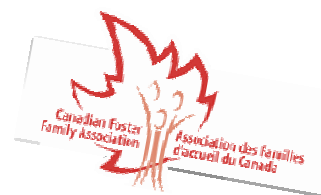
Foster parents are a special breed: A combination of love, care, firmness, boundaries, structure, nurture, forgiveness, compassion and toughness. We are blessed as social workers to be able to call these "angels" our partners in co-parenting.

*The South Okanagan Resource Staff  
Ministry of Children and Family Development*

### ***Thanks from the Rep***

I would like to offer my personal thanks to all of B.C.'s foster parents, who provide support, comfort and safe harbour to some of our province's most vulnerable young people. Foster parenting is tremendously important work in ensuring that children and youth get all the support they deserve and require, especially to learn and succeed at school. Don't hesitate to contact my office if a child or youth in your care needs help in accessing the services to which they are entitled.

*Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond  
Representative for Children and Youth*



On behalf of the Canadian Foster Family Association, I am pleased to have the opportunity of thanking foster families across Canada for the work they do throughout the year for children and youth. Because of your dedication and commitment, our communities are healthier and our youth become stronger citizens.

*Sheila Durnford  
President, Canadian Foster Family Association*

Thank You messages continued on page 12...



## Happy Foster Family Month from BCFFPA Locals!

Contact the Local in your community to find out more about activities, events and meetings with other foster parents in your area.



Interior Community Services would like to send out a heartfelt appreciation to those who commit themselves on a daily basis to care for children and youth in care and for supporting many families in our communities. You "Caregivers" give of yourselves in many ways when inviting, including, caring for and empowering young people within your homes and lives. Thank-you so much for being there! For providing a home and opportunities at critical moments in the lives of so many!

## THREE CHEERS FOR FOSTER FAMILIES!!

*You are the backbone of the child welfare system. You take children in need into your homes, care for them, love them and when the time has come, help them transition on.*

*It's not just the Foster Mom and Dad, but also the other kids in the home, relatives, grandparents. What an amazing group of people!*

*We would like to give you all our heart-felt THANKS!*



**Okanagan Foster Parents Association**  
[www.okfosterparents.ca](http://www.okfosterparents.ca)





## Rider Claims for Damages Caused by Children with Developmental Disabilities Pose Challenges for Insurance Adjusters

There has been an increase in the number of claims BCFFPA has received from foster parents of children who are diagnosed with autism or other developmental disabilities. These claims range from easy to repair damages that are under the deductible amount for the insurance policy, to extensive damages to carpets, walls and furniture. Processing these claims in particular poses some challenge for adjusters.

All foster parents contracted to the Ministry or a Delegated Aboriginal Agency receive coverage under the Rider Insurance, **provided they have obtained their own home or tenant insurance policy.** Though you receive this additional protection, it does not necessarily indicate that each claim you submit will be eligible for coverage under the Rider policy. The wording of the policy specifically states that the damage must be intentional and malicious on the part of the child in care. This criteria is the "mechanism" that triggers coverage under the Rider Insurance.

The challenge for adjusters when assessing damages done by children with developmental disabilities is that, in some cases, the foster parent states that the child who has damaged the home has a diagnosis that would imply they are functionally unable to form intent. Given the privacy considerations of children in care and the third party nature of a claims adjuster's relationship with a foster family, adjusters are called upon to make very general judgment calls based on the statement of circumstances provided by the foster parent submitting the claim.

If there might be doubt about the child's ability to form intent, perhaps a statement from your Guardianship Worker would be a beneficial supplement to your documentation. In the meantime we are speaking with our contacts regarding the possibility of including damages done by children with developmental disabilities under the Rider program.

BCFFPA has recently heard of the following circumstances:

**Circumstance:** Foster parent has been directed by MCFD to hold claims until a child moves.

*Guidance: Please submit claims as they happen! The additional work and cost of accumulated claims can be burdensome for adjusters and the Ministry office budgets.*

**Circumstance:** Foster parent is told by worker that the Rider Insurance will cover all damages to the home

*Guidance: This is incorrect. Your own home/tenant insurance company should be contacted for any claim that does not arise from intentional damage caused by a child in your care.*

**Circumstance:** MCFD refusing to pay deductible on an eligible Rider claim

*Guidance: Appendix D of the Caregiver Support Service Standards states that:  
The Ministry cover costs when: i) the damage falls below the deductible, ii) damage is accidental and below the*

*deductible, iii) the foster child was unable to form intent, and iv) that the foster parent's deductible cost is reimbursed by the Ministry. [Paraphrased, please refer to specific wording of the policy.]*

**Circumstance:** MCFD directing foster parent to submit claims through their own home insurance instead of the Rider program or foster parents are told that the Rider does not cover them.

*Guidance: Some Resource Workers are unaware of the Rider policy details. Please refer your Worker to BCFFPA or give us a call for further direction if you are unsure about whether to submit under the Rider.*

**Circumstance:** Foster parents in one region being told that they do not require their own home/tenant insurance policy

*Guidance: According the recently released 5th Edition of the Foster Family Handbook (pg. 53), "All Family Care Homes must have household insurance; it is a requirement of [your] agreement with the ministry."*

**Circumstance:** BCFFPA denies claims

*Guidance: BCFFPA only processes and advises regarding criteria for the Rider program. You are always welcome to submit a claim with the necessary paperwork and we will forward it to the claims adjuster for their regular processing. The adjuster assesses and makes the decisions regarding settlement of a claim.*

**Circumstance:** Rider claims can be denied

*Guidance: Though a claim is submitted, the Rider adjuster does not deny claims. The adjuster determines whether or not the claim is eligible under the program, but the claim is not actually denied.*

If your Resource Worker needs more information regarding the Rider Insurance program, please direct them to our office or to the webinar which is available for anyone to watch 24/7 through our website—[www.bcfosterparents.ca](http://www.bcfosterparents.ca).

Having trouble getting homeowner or tenant insurance due to your fostering profession?

**Megson  
FitzPatrick**  
INSURANCE SERVICES

Call Megson Fitzpatrick  
Insurance Services  
Ralph Libby or Barb Fowler  
will be happy to assist you.  
250-595-5212  
[www.megsonfitzpatrick.com](http://www.megsonfitzpatrick.com)



## BC Foster Children Meet Selena Gomez in Vancouver

BCFFPA foster parent members and the children in their care had a special treat on August 14th—BCFFPA received a donation from **TransCanada Pipelines** of a limited number of box tickets at Rogers Arena for the Selena Gomez concert! The lucky families who were chosen were hosted by Minister of Children and Family Development, Stephanie Cadieux. Together they shared a fun time, good food and created some tremendous memories. Here's what the children had to say about the experience...

### Rosie, age 9

"My favorite part of going to the Selena Gomez concert was meeting her face to face! I got to ride in a plane for my very first time and this was also my first concert. It was fabulous!"

### Mel, age 14

"I turned 14 in August, just before we went to see Selena. I had an awesome time at her concert. My favorite songs she performed were 'My Birthday', 'Stars Dance' and 'Come and Get It'. I really like being up on the balcony and how amazing it was to watch her sing and dance on her cool stage. I really loved meeting Selena Gomez. I had so much fun!! Thank you for picking us to go."

### Tina, age 9

"I was so excited to see Selena Gomez, we got to watch her show from the balcony box. We were sooo high up, it was so exciting! Thank you for all the munchies, fruit and pizza."

### Zaya, age 10

"The concert was amazing and a great experience to meet Selena Gomez. It was nice to meet the Minister of Children and Families too because when I grow up I'd like to be a politician."

### Feri, age 8

"I'm glad I got to meet Selena Gomez."

### Marty, age 3

"It was loud. Selena Gomez is pretty."

### Sara, age 8

"I was really excited to see Selena because I love her, and we have the same birthday. The concert made me so happy and getting to meet her. The whole day was so exciting!"

### Aaron, age 9

"This has given me a new experience I have never had in my life. The concert was really good and I got to get my picture with Selena! I will never forget this."

### Axel, age 11

Winning the tickets and getting to see the Selena Gomez concert was one of the best experiences in my entire life! Meeting her was awesome. I will never forget this happened to me."

"It was a delight for me to be able to be there to share such an exciting evening with the kids and their foster parents. What a terrific bunch of kids—so fun, so excited, so resilient. The bonds and mutual caring between the families was immediately evident and I was really pleased to be able to chat with the foster parents about their experiences. The kids sang and danced their way through the concert and I am just so pleased I was able to see them treated to such a memorable event."

...Minister of Children and Families Stephanie Cadieux

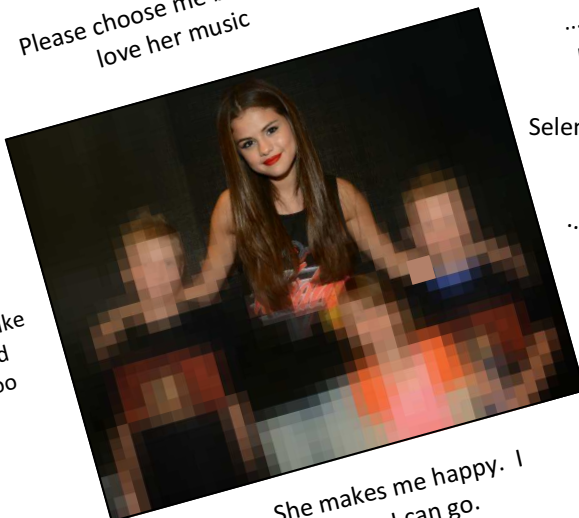
"We at TransCanada Pipelines were honoured to share this night with such an amazing group of inspiring kids and foster parents."

...TransCanada Pipelines

Please choose me because I love her music

I'm so excited

I want to be just like Selena. I sing and dance and act too



She makes me happy. I hope I can go.

...Zaya would like to meet the Minister

Selena is awesome. I'm her biggest fan

...I've seen her on tv sometimes...



She looks like my sister

...her music helps me feel good, it would be my first concert ever



## BCFFPA AGM 2014

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The Prince George Local Foster Parent Association and BCFFPA Provincial office will be co-hosting the 2014 AGM in Prince George.

Save the following dates and make your hotel booking early for best rates!

BCFFPA 2014 Conference & AGM May 23-24, 2014

Ramada Downtown Prince George
440 George Street
Prince George, BC V2L 1R6

1-800-830-8833
250-563-0055

Rates: \$116 (single/double occupancy)
\$15 (additional occupant)

- Please quote Block Code CG3022 under BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations.
- Cut off date to receive this rate is April 20, 2014.

Already in the works...

- ☆ We have requested that the Ministry offices in each region provide funds to sponsor attendance at AGM 2014. We should hear more about this in the new year.
- ☆ We have engaged Deborah MacNamara, PhD, to speak for the day on The Art and Science of Transplanting Children.



2014 Early Membership Renewal Drive

Renew your BCFFPA membership before the end of November 2013 and you will be entered to win a **\$250 Visa Gift Card** to make your Christmas shopping a little bit easier.

The majority of membership fees are redistributed to BCFFPA's Local Foster Parent Associations to support community activities for foster parents. Your membership supports BCFFPA's programs and you can participate in the governance of the Federation at Local and Provincial levels.

Members are often asked to attend MCFD events and to assist the Ministry by joining a committee or working group to gather information towards practice and policy change.

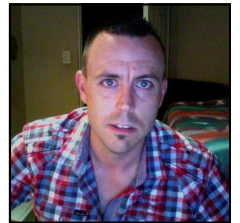
Fill out the membership form on the back of this newsletter to renew or join for 2014.



Welcome New BCFFPA Board Members

Welcome to Rocky Hindmarch, BCFFPA's new North Region Delegate!

Rocky is a resident of Prince George and has been fostering for 13 years. His goals are to assist foster parents to work more effectively with the Ministry and to build a solid support team for the North Region.



We also welcome Monica Buchanan, who will represent the Coast Fraser Region on the Provincial Board of Directors.

Monica utilizes her background as a Therapist and Wellness Coach to care for challenging adolescents as a foster parent. She has been fostering since 2000.

Membership Benefits for BC Foster Parents

BC foster parents can receive tickets to events through *Kids Up Front Foundation*. To be placed on the mailing list e-mail the Provincial office at office@bcfosterparents.ca or Debbie Drewitz at drewitz@telus.net



You can donate to BCFFPA through Canadahelps!



Are Children in Your Home Suffering from Anxiety Disorders (reprinted from kidshealth.org)

What Is Anxiety?

Anxiety is really just a form of stress. It can be experienced in many different ways — physically, emotionally, and in the way people view the world around them. Anxiety mainly relates to worry about what *might* happen — worrying about things going wrong or feeling like you're in some kind of danger.

Anxiety is a natural human reaction, and it serves an important biological function: It's an alarm system that's activated whenever we perceive danger or a threat. When the body and mind react, we can feel physical sensations, like dizziness, a rapid heartbeat, difficulty breathing, and sweaty or shaky hands and feet. These sensations — called the fight-flight response — are caused by a rush of adrenaline and other stress hormones that prepare the body to make a quick getaway or "flight" from danger.

The fight-flight response happens instantly. But it usually takes a few seconds longer for the thinking part of the brain (the cortex) to process the situation and evaluate whether the threat is real, and if so, how to handle it. When the cortex sends the all-clear signal, the fight-flight response is deactivated and the nervous system starts to calm down.

Normal Anxiety

Everyone experiences feelings of anxiety from time to time. These feelings can range from a mild sense of uneasiness to full-blown panic (or anywhere in between), depending on the person and the situation.

It's natural for unfamiliar or challenging situations to prompt feelings of anxiety or nervousness in people of all ages. You may feel it when you have a big presentation at work, for example, or when life gets overly hectic.

Kids might feel it, too, in similar situations — when facing an important test or switching schools, for example. These experiences can trigger normal anxiety because they cause us to focus on the "what ifs": What if I mess up? What if things don't go as I planned?

Some amount of anxiety is normal and can even be motivating. It helps us stay alert, focused, and ready to do our best. But anxiety that's too strong or too frequent can become overwhelming. It can interfere with someone's ability to get things done and, in severe cases, can start taking over the good and enjoyable parts of life.

Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health conditions. That's partly because everyone experiences stress and worry. There are many different types of anxiety disorders, with different symptoms. But they all share one common trait — prolonged, intense anxiety that is out of proportion to the present situation and affects a person's daily life and happiness.

Symptoms of an anxiety disorder can come on suddenly or can build gradually and linger. Sometimes worry creates a sense of doom and foreboding that seems to come out of nowhere. Kids

with anxiety problems may not even know what's causing the emotions, worries, and sensations they have.

Disorders that kids can get include:

- **Generalized anxiety.** With this common anxiety disorder, children worry excessively about many things, such as school, the health or safety of family members, or the future in general. They may always think of the worst that could happen. Along with the worry and dread, kids may have physical symptoms, such as headaches, stomachaches, muscle tension, or tiredness. Their worries might cause them to miss school or avoid social activities. With generalized anxiety, worries can feel like a burden, making life feel overwhelming or out of control.
- **Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).** For a person with OCD, anxiety takes the form of obsessions (excessively preoccupying thoughts) and compulsions (repetitive actions to try to relieve anxiety).
- **Phobias.** These are intense fears of specific things or situations that are not inherently dangerous, such as heights, dogs, or flying in an airplane. Phobias usually cause people to avoid the things they fear.
- **Social phobia (social anxiety).** This anxiety is triggered by social situations or speaking in front of others. A less common form called **selective mutism** causes some kids and teens to be too fearful to talk at all in certain situations.
- **Panic attacks.** These episodes of anxiety can occur for no apparent reason. During a panic attack, a child typically has sudden and intense physical symptoms that can include a pounding heart, shortness of breath, dizziness, numbness, or tingling feelings.
- **Agoraphobia** is an intense fear of panic attacks that causes a person to avoid going anywhere a panic attack could possibly occur.
- **Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).** This type of anxiety disorder results from a traumatic past experience. Symptoms include flashbacks, nightmares, fear, and avoidance of the traumatic event that caused the anxiety.

Causes

Experts don't know exactly what causes anxiety disorders. Several things seem to play a role, including genetics, brain biochemistry, an overactive fight-flight response, stressful life circumstances, and learned behavior.

A child with a family member who has an anxiety disorder has a greater chance of developing one, too. This may be related to genes that can affect brain chemistry and the regulation of chemicals called neurotransmitters. But not everyone with a family member who has an anxiety disorder will develop problems with anxiety.

Things that happen in a child's life can set the stage for anxiety disorders in childhood or later in life. Loss (like the death of a loved one or parents' divorce) and major life transitions (like moving to a new town) are common triggers.

Continued on page 13...

BCFFPA Regional Delegate Reports

Coast Fraser Region by Monica Buchanan

Summer has been fairly quiet in the Coast Fraser region. Support work has slowed down and foster parents have been focusing on summer activities with their kids.

Chilliwack Foster Parent Association continues to be populated with foster parents who are needing assistance with the restrictive operations of the delegated Aboriginal agency in the region. MCFD foster parents in Chilliwack are well served and have very accessible resources, information and assistance.

Tricity's Local was approached during the summer by New Westminster-Burnaby Local asking if they would consider joining together. A vote was taken by New West and all members were in favor. Tricities and New West are now one larger group and will be voting on a name change at the October Local meeting. Thanks to Jan for the update!

Congratulations to Tamara Smith who was voted in to a second term as Abbotsford Local's President. She and her team have strong contacts with the local Ministry office and receive support through them for Local activities.

Surrey Local hosted a family picnic complete with door prizes at Hawthorne Water Park in June. It was a great success. Fall meetings begin in September and please feel free to join them each month for a coffee and chat. (BCFFPA website has contact information.) Another family event will be planned for the Christmas season.

Vancouver Island Region by Les Toth

Thanks to the efforts of the Representative of Children and Youth, Vancouver Island University has announced a tuition waiver program to support youth in care. The pilot project was launched in September. Eligibility includes:

- Application and acceptance to Vancouver Island University
- Must be 18 or turning 18 in the 2013/2014 academic year
- Demonstrate financial need
- Recommended by a child and family services agency

More information is available at www.viu.ca/waiver.

The Island region is really feeling the restriction of MCFD tight finances.

Foster Parent Support Services Society continues to provide comprehensive services to the Island with active regional coordinators and ongoing trainings, meetings, information and support. Current and back issues of the Island Connection newsletter is available online at <http://fpsss.com/newsletter/>.

Much loved Sidney foster parent, Peter Smith, has passed away. Peter and his wife, Janet, fostered over 50 babies between 1982-2002 and raised six children of their own. Peter actively participated in the foster parent community and was well known and loved by many. We send our fond remembrances to his family during a difficult time.

Interior Region by Kevin Daniel

First off I would like to thank all those foster parent and service providers from the Interior that travelled to our regional AGM to speak passionately about the issues that directly affect them and the areas they represent.

In September, networking opportunities took place in Kamloops for the Thompson/Cariboo/Shuswap and for the West Kootenays as well. Between these two events we gathered information from approximately 16 different communities.

Also over the summer we saw a long standing issue come to a close in the Kelowna area. With a release of the 5th edition of the Foster Family Handbook, the Kelowna area has adapted its practice to follow the guidelines for babysitting instead of the regional variation in practice that we've worked with for the past two years.

Other areas of the Interior are experiencing different types of problems from lack of foster homes to empty beds. With the new school year beginning and Locals becoming active again with the planning of future events and training sessions, I'm hoping to receive more info of what's going on in our area for our next newsletter. Till then, stay safe and Happy Foster Family Month!

North Region by Rocky Hindmarch

The Prince George Local is in the process of creating a support team of caregivers who have all attended the Support and Advocacy training.

A 4th Annual Foster Family Camping trip was held this summer and with the start of the Fall, weekly foster parent socials begin again.

Monthly partnership meetings are held between MCFD, two delegated Aboriginal agencies, AXIS and BCFFPA. A partnership meeting was held in the spring to discuss common issues between MCFD and foster parents. We now have to work on those issues over the next few months.

The Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parent AGM in September had a strong Northern foster parent contingent in attendance!

BCFFPA's 2014 AGM in Prince George is now in the planning stages and we're looking for ways to invigorate interest from northern foster parents who live in outlying areas. If you have ideas, please contact me!

Over the summer, BCFFPA's Executive Director met with the recently appointed foster parent support coordinator from *North Peace Community Resources Society*, Heather Best. She comes from a mental health background and is very open to hearing your ideas and giving what support she can. See her contact information on page 14!

Self-Care: Barriers and Basics for Foster/Adoptive Parents—Fall 2005 *Adoptalk*

Published by the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) by Deena McMahon

A licensed independent social worker, Deena McMahon has worked with families and children for more than 20 years. She is currently director of in-home services at Therapeutic Services Agency, where she supervises more than 25 staff who deliver in-home services in nine east central Minnesota counties. She also conducts parenting assessments, provides attachment therapy, is a staff consultant for social services agencies, and presents at regional and national training events. Through the years, Deena has developed expertise in the areas of childhood trauma, childhood sexual abuse, grief and loss, family violence, adoption, and attachment.

When a foster or adopted child has special needs, parents must juggle appointments with mental health therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists, psychiatrists, ophthalmologists, allergists, and asthma specialists. They must attend IEP meetings, keep in touch with the school principal and their child's teacher, check in with the social worker, and establish a schedule for personal care attendants (PCAs). Ongoing appointments and emergencies keep parents so busy that attending to their own feelings and needs may be put on hold.

Self-care, however, is crucial for foster and adoptive parents. The physical and emotional toll of caring for traumatized children can be overwhelming. Children can project hurt onto parents and, at the same time, blame parents for feelings of loss and despair. Parents must understand both the complexities of foster care and adoption, and their child's unique needs. With that knowledge and an ongoing commitment to self-care, parents can more easily remain effective and balanced.

Barriers to Good Self-Care

Unfortunately, adoptive and foster parents face many barriers to taking care of themselves.

To start, the phrase—"Take care of yourself!"—has become so trite that, for many, it has lost all meaning. When someone casually tells an adoptive mom whose kids have special needs to take care of herself, she may feel frustrated and angry. It's easy to say. It's not easy to do.

Second, many who choose to foster and adopt are natural caregivers. They have pets, partners, children, and aging parents who all require care and attention. Most days, the amount of energy they devote to others' needs far exceeds any energy directed to their well-being. In fact, many caregivers are uncomfortable being on the receiving end of others' attention and assistance. They don't want to be too needy, or seem like they are not up to the challenges they have taken on.

Third, many adoptive and foster parents really want to be there for their families. They want to remember birthdays with a homemade cake. They want to be the cheerful volunteer at their child's school. They want to deliver a meal to a sick friend, help out at church, and serve on task forces that address children's needs. So, they work longer and try harder to meet their families' needs.

Fourth, too many parents simply do not know what would help them. They know something is missing, but can't put their finger

on just what might make them feel better. Parents are often told, "Call if there is anything you need," but it is hard to call and ask for help, especially when you cannot even articulate what you need. This leaves many parents vulnerable and exhausted.

Even more significantly, too many foster and adoptive parents believe they somehow shouldn't need support. Many times I have heard parents say that they are in no position to complain or ask for help since they chose to foster or adopt their children. But even when parents know what challenges the child faces, it is often impossible to predict how living with a certain child will change a family.

Compounding matters, recent disasters—9/11, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the earthquake in Pakistan, and the prolonged conflict in Iraq—remind us all that there are always other people who are worse off. We are taught as children to be happy with what we have since other people have it much harder. It is little wonder we sometimes feel guilty because our ongoing trauma pales in comparison to these catastrophic tragedies.

The Road to Good Self-Care

From working with parents, I know that to overcome social, mental, and emotional barriers to self-care, you must first come to understand the importance of taking care of yourself, and then build self-care into your daily routine. You must believe that you are worth taking care of, and that your happiness and well-being are not peripheral to, but essential for good parenting. Once you can accept that:

- **Give yourself permission to need something.** It is okay to ask for help. Having needs and trying to meet them is not a sign of incompetence or weakness. It is part of healthy family life. Thirst is your body's signal to drink and prevent dehydration. In the same way, when you feel stressed out, it is time to take a break so you can regain perspective and deal with the issue at hand more constructively.
- **Keep it simple.** Make life choices that fit your family. Develop consistent routines. Create a safe environment. Understand and respect both your limits and those of your children. Resist the impulse to over-commit what little time you have. Prioritize. Save energy for things that really matter, and seek outside help as soon as you need it. When possible, take advantage of respite opportunities and PCAs to relieve some of the stress during really rough times.
- **Stop comparing yourself to other adults and families.** They do not live your life, and they are not raising your children. Get comfortable with compromising and being different. Your child may talk, think, achieve, behave, and live differently than other children. Instead of measuring your family's worth by other people's standards, set expectations for your family based on your children's capabilities and your family's reality.
- **Know which part of the day is the hardest and have a plan to make it go more smoothly.** If getting ready for school is rough, prepare as much as you can the night before. If bedtime is hard, start early and set a predictable routine. Decide beforehand how you will respond to behaviors that make that time of day so trying. Accept that you won't get anything else done, and do only what you must to get through the hard parts.

Continued on page 12...

Thank You to BC's Foster Parents



Russell Pohl
BCFFPA Vice President

My thank you extends to every month of the year for your hard work, dedication and love to our children in care. Happy Foster Family Month!



Tamara Smith
BCFFPA Secretary

This month is an important time for caregivers to step back and be recognized for the work we do with a very special population of young people. Don't miss your opportunity to be acknowledged!



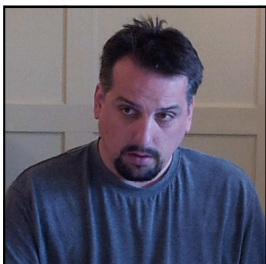
Marcy Perron
BCFFPA Treasurer

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all foster parents for making a difference in the lives of the children placed in their homes. Your love and dedication, for however long, will stay with these children forever.



Les Toth
BCFFPA Island Delegate

All the best to the foster parents in our province and thank you for your service to BC's children.



Kevin Daniel
BCFFPA Interior Delegate

Happy Foster Family Month to BC's foster parent community. Thank you for your dedication and all the work you do for our kids in care.

Self Care—Barriers and Basics continued...

- **Join a parent support group.** Meeting with other parents who have similar experiences and feelings is one of the most powerful and renewing activities for anyone raising children who have special needs. Just knowing that you are with people who "get it" is affirming. Group members may also be able to trade respite care with you. If a group is not an option, find at least one person outside your immediate family with whom you can be real, and whom you can trust to understand.
- **Have down time every day.** Maybe it's a morning walk. It might be 10 minutes with the paper and a good cup of coffee. It can be writing in your journal before bed. It could be the drive into work, or times of silent prayer in church. Your mind, body, and soul need time to regenerate from life's stresses. If you have no down time—a time without distractions and demands—you cannot benefit from moments of reflection and calm that may help you to center and stay balanced.
- **Routinely have something to which you can look forward.** Maybe it's coffee with a neighbor after the kids are at school. Or a glass of wine Friday night. Or date night with your partner. It could be going alone to the grocery store Saturday morning or having an uninterrupted bath. Remember, waiting too long to reward yourself for a job well done is not an effective way to shape your behavior. Immediate positive reinforcement works for adults too.
- **Accentuate the positive.** It may not be easy, but as you step back to evaluate how you and the family are doing, find time to laugh at the silly situations that come up. Recognize the good in yourself and your children. Celebrate every step forward, no matter how small. Stay connected with your partner. Eat something you really enjoy. (Nutrition is important. Indulgence is wonderful.) Find affirmation in the process of raising an adopted child.

Caring for children who have special needs is a matter of the heart. Self-care is a mind-set and a positive choice. If you can find a balance between caring for your children and meeting your own needs, you will ultimately be much better equipped to do both.

Extended Health Care Packages by Canada Financial

Canada Financial's Ian Bideshi is available to put together individual extended health benefit insurance packages for foster parents. Currently he is offering a 10% discount for foster parents who utilize Canada Financial's services.

Ian has helped over 110 foster parents and has saved them thousands of dollars over the past 15 years. Canada Financial also offers segregated funds which have some guarantees for your investments.

Contact Ian at 604-862-4262 for more information.

Anxiety Disorders continued...

Kids with a history of abuse are also more vulnerable to anxiety.

Growing up in a family where others are fearful or anxious also can "teach" a child to view the world as a dangerous place. Likewise, a child who grows up in an environment that is actually dangerous (if there is violence in the child's family or community, for example) may learn to be fearful or expect the worst.

Signs & Symptoms

Although all kids experience anxiety in certain situations, most (even those who live through traumatic events) don't develop anxiety disorders. Those who do, however, will seem anxious and have one or more of the following signs:

- excessive worry most days of the week, for weeks on end
- trouble sleeping at night or sleepiness during the day
- restlessness or fatigue during waking hours
- trouble concentrating
- irritability

These problems can affect a child's day-to-day functioning, especially when it comes to concentrating in school, sleeping, and eating.

And it's common for kids to avoid talking about how they feel, because they're worried that others (especially their parents) might not understand. They may fear being judged or considered weak, scared, or "babyish." And although girls are more likely to express their anxiety, boys experience these feelings, too, and sometimes find it hard to talk about. This leads many kids to feel alone or misunderstood.

The good news is that doctors and therapists today understand anxiety disorders better than ever before and, with treatment, can help kids feel better.

Treatment

A child's anxiety disorder can be treated by a mental health professional. A therapist can look at the symptoms, diagnose the specific anxiety disorder, and create a plan to help a child cope.

A type of talk therapy called cognitive-behavior therapy (CBT) is often used. In CBT, kids try out new ways to think and act in situations that can cause anxiety, and to manage and deal with stress. The therapist provides support and guidance and teaches new coping skills, such as relaxation techniques or breathing exercises. Sometimes, but not always, medication is used as part of the treatment for anxiety.

Helping Your Child Cope

The best way to help your child is to acknowledge the problem in a supportive, nonjudgmental way. Talk openly about your child's symptoms and really try to understand how they are affecting everyday life. It can also help to talk to other adults in your child's life, such as teachers and coaches.

Be patient and positive as your child undergoes treatment and finds new ways to cope. Sometimes it helps to talk to your child about your own stresses and how you've been able to overcome them. Remind your child that letting go of worry allows space for more happiness and fun.

Rest assured that with the right care, your child can overcome anxiety and learn to face the future ready and relaxed.

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Read Carefully Before Signing

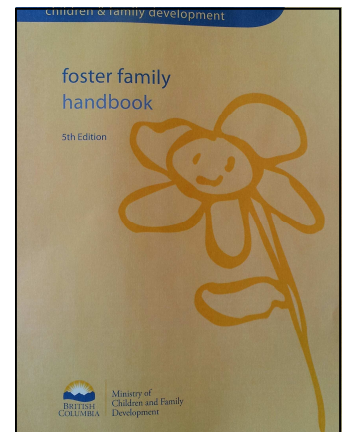
We caution caregivers to **CAREFULLY** read and understand your contract or modifications to that contract before signing. Once it is signed it is difficult to have it changed, and you may find yourself out of pocket.

The 5th Edition of the Foster Family Handbook is now available!

Speak to your Resource Worker if you haven't received your copy yet, or download it from the Ministry website at:

<http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/pdf/handbook.pdf>

The new Handbook contains clearer guidelines intended to resolve recent concerns experienced regarding Babysitting and engaging Relief caregivers.



Community Resources

Provincial Resources

BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations	1-800-663-9999
www.bcfosterparents.ca	
After Hours Foster Parent Support Line	1-888-495-4440
Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents	1-866-291-7091
www.fafp.ca	
Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks	1-800-565-8055
www.fbcyicn.ca	
Adoptive Families Association	1-877-236-7807
www.bcadoption.com	
Pacific Post Partum Support Society	604-255-7999
www.postpartum.org (also supporting adoption placements)	
Parent Help Line	1-888-603-9100
Parents Together	604-325-0511
Parent Support Services of BC	1-800-665-6880
www.parentsupport.bc.ca	
Representative for Children & Youth	1-800-476-3933
www.rcybc.ca	
FAE/S Support Network	604-507-6675

Coastal Fraser

For contact information for local foster parent groups or support in your area, please call 1-800-663-9999.

Hollyburn Family Services	604-987-8211
www.hollyburn.ca	
Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society	778-331-4500
www.vacfss.com	
Family Services of Greater Vancouver	604-279-7100
www.fosterhub.ca	
Fraser Valley Foster Parent Association	604-533-1924
Abbotsford Community Services Foster Parent Caregiver Support	604-859-2165
South Vancouver Youth Centre	604-325-2004
www.svyc.ca	
(Ask about their foster parent support workers!)	

Island

For contact information for local foster parent groups or support in your area, please call 1-800-663-9999.

Foster Parent Support Services Society	1-888-922-8437
FPSSS (Victoria)	778-430-5459
FPSSS (Nanaimo)	250-390-9686
FPSSS (Campbell River)	250-286-0555
Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents	
(Nanaimo office)	250-591-0069

Interior

For contact information for local foster parent groups or support in your area, please call 1-800-663-9999.

Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents	
(Westbank office)	250-768-4229
Okanagan Foster Parent Association	
www.okfosterparents.ca	
Central Okanagan	250-868-9285
North Okanagan	250-558-0939
South Okanagan	250-488-0561
Shuswap	250-253-4499
Okanagan Metis Children & Family Services	250-868-0351
Interior Community Services	1-877-376-3660
www.interiorcommunityservices.bc.ca	

North

For contact information for local foster parent groups or support in your area, please call 1-800-663-9999.

AXIS Family Resources	1-877-392-1003
(24/7 support)	Press 205
www.axis.bc.ca (satellite office locations online)	
North Peace Community Resources Society	
Fort St. John	250-785-6021 (ext. 235)

We are in the process of developing our Community Resources page. Please submit your relevant contacts to jayne@bcfosterparents.ca.

Advertise Here! (1/2 page size)

Readership, Exposure & Frequency

- **FosterlineBC** reaches over 3400 foster parents, agencies, community service locations, businesses and other individuals 4 times each year.
- Increase exposure for your business by advertising in **FosterlineBC**

Cost

- 1/2 page ~ 4 issues per year ~ \$925
- 1/2 page ~ single issue ~ \$250
- 1/4 page ~ 4 issues per year ~ \$650
- 1/4 page ~ single issue ~ \$175
- Business card ~ 4 issues per year ~ \$475
- 1/4 page ~ single issue ~ \$125

For information on advertising in FosterlineBC, contact a staff member at BCFFPA! **1-800-663-9999**

1/4 Page Size

Business Card Size

'IT PAYS TO BE A MEMBER'

Please complete & return to: **BCFFPA 207-22561 Dewdney Trunk Road, Maple Ridge, V2X 3K1**

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ City & Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____ Region: _____

Local Association _____

Level of Foster Home: (tick one) Restricted ____ Regular ____ Level I ____ Level II ____ Level III ____ Contractor ____ Other ____

This is a: **New Membership** ____ (OR) a **Renewal** ____ .

1 year: individual \$30.00 ____ OR couple \$35.00 ____

2 year: individual \$50.00 ____ OR couple \$60.00 ____

*\$10.00 of this membership fee will be used by the provincial body for administration of the program and development of services to foster parents. The balance of the fee will be returned to your region or local association.

I/we contract with (i.e. delegated agency regional agency MCFD etc.) Name: _____ OR my affiliation with the BCFFPA is (i.e. staff, MCFD, non-foster parent): _____. As members of the B.C. Federation of Foster Parent Associations, I/we agree to abide by the By-laws, Policy and Procedures, and Code of Ethics of the Federation. _____

[signature(s)]

Please bill my VISA ____ M/C ____ # _____ Expires ____ / ____

BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations

#207-22561 Dewdney Trunk

Maple Ridge BC

V2X 3K1