

BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations
Code of Ethics & Practice Standards
(Revision 2012)



The BCFFPA Code of Ethics, Practice Standards and Peer Review Guidelines document was first adopted by the membership at the 1996 AGM after 11 years of development.

The BCFFPA Code of Ethics is a living document that has developed over time to bring greater clarity, greater integration between the ethical statements and practice standards, and to ensure that the Code addresses all aspects of relationships caregivers find themselves in.

What is a Code of Ethics?

Ethics, simply put, means to do the right thing. We do the right thing when we take a course of action that mitigates or minimises the degree of harm or potential harm to individuals or groups.

Code of Ethics is an expression of the values of an occupational group, and the principles that guide members' actions.

Values are what we consider to be important.

Ethical statements are general statements of principle that members agree to uphold.

Practice standards provide specific guidelines for actions that follow from the ethical statement.

An ***ethical dilemma*** arises in a situation that brings two ethical statements into conflict with each other. Judgement is often required to decide what course of action is most ethical in relation to the principles.

What is the Purpose of a Code of Ethics?

A Code of Ethics serves the following purposes:

- Ethical statements and practice standards provide guidelines that assist us in deciding what actions to take from an ethical viewpoint.
- A Code of Ethics is the expression of values and principles of a particular occupational group for its members and the general public. It is an important element in the identity of a group.
- A Code of Ethics permits the self-regulation of an occupational group by providing a basis for developing practice standards and eventually, for reviewing the actions of its members.
- A Code of Ethics has educational value in assisting members to develop their judgement in weighing alternative courses of action in difficult situations.

How do the Code of Ethics and Practice Standards Affect Members of the BCFFPA?

When members sign their membership applications, they indicate acceptance of the BCFFPA Code of Ethics and Practice Standards.

A process for peer review is the next stage of development. Peer review is a complex function through which an occupational group maintains accountability to the public by applying standards to its own members. The goals of peer review are self-regulation by an occupational group; the maintenance of standards and accountability; and discipline with a view to educating the individual members and the membership at large.

In the meantime, it will be important to assist members to become familiar with the Code of Ethics and Practice Standards and how they apply to fostering day-to-day.

BCFFPA's Code of Ethics - Overview

I. Commitment to the Foster Child and Their Family

Value	Ethical Statement
Safety/Nurturance	I will provide a safe, nurturing environment conducive to the development of each foster child.
Rights	I will respect the Rights of Children in Care.
Privacy	I will respect the confidentiality of the child in care and the child's family.
Heritage/Kinship Ties	I will strive to support the cultural and religious heritage of children in care; I will assist in maintaining kinship ties.
Individuality	I will recognise and acknowledge the individuality and uniqueness of each child.

II. Commitment to Professional Practices

Value	Ethical Statement
Teamwork	I will work collaboratively and strive for relationships based on dignity, integrity and mutual respect.
Effectiveness	I will support positive professional practices in the placement, planning and care of children.

III. Commitment to the Fostering Profession

Value	Ethical Statement
Competence	I will strive to be competent in my role as foster parent.
Continuous Improvement	I will actively promote excellence in fostering.
Professional Development	I will participate in continuing education to maintain and develop my skills as a foster parent.
Integrity	I will not exploit my relationships within the profession, the association and the community for personal or financial gain.
Respect	I will base my relationships with my colleagues on dignity and mutual respect.

IV. Commitment to the Community

Value	Ethical Statement
Welfare of Children	I will advocate for policies and services, which will meet the needs of children, families and communities.
Responsibility to the Community/Public Trust	Recognising the Public Trust placed in me as a foster parent, I will provide a positive role model for children and families in the community.

Ethical Statements and Practice Standards

I. Commitment to the Foster Child and the Child's Family

- **I will provide a safe, nurturing environment conducive to the development of each foster child.**

Practice Standards: The foster parents will...

- Uphold the *Rights of Children in Care* as outlined in *Part 4, Section 70 of the Child, Family and Community Services Act*.
 - Consult the child in planning (age and development permitting); inform the child of their plan of care and decisions that affect the child.
 - Advocate for and participate in developing the child's plan of care.
- **I will respect the confidentiality of the child in care and the child's family.**

Practice Standards: The foster parent will...

- Share appropriate information about the child and child's family with other agencies and professionals only as needed or required by law.
- **I will ensure that relationships with the child and child's family are based on and reflect integrity and respect.**

Practice Standards: The foster parent will...

- Refrain from exploiting the relationship with the child or child's parents for sexual, personal or financial gain.
 - Refrain from spoken words or actions that discriminate against children in care and their families.
- **I will strive to support the cultural and religious heritage of children care.**
 - **I will assist in maintaining kinship ties.**

Practice Standards: The foster parent will...

- Support and encourage the child to preserve their cultural and religious heritage and familial connections.

- Accept children's choices to pursue or abstain from religious, cultural and linguistic activities.
 - Respond to the child's ethnic and cultural heritage in a respectful manner showing an awareness of ethnic and cultural differences.
- **I will recognise the individuality and uniqueness of each child.**

Practice Standards: The foster parent will...

- Assist children in making their own choices regarding personal belongings, grooming, selection of clothing; choice of leisure or recreational activities within legal and safety guidelines.

II. Commitment to Professional Practices

- **I will work collaboratively and strive for relationships based on dignity, integrity and mutual respect.**

Practice Standards: The foster parent will...

- Inform all parties of basic expectations including hours of access to the home, family rules and routines.
 - When necessary inform other professional parties of rights, roles and responsibilities relating to children in care.
 - Share vital information about the child on a need-to-know basis with other professionals; record information shared and with whom.
 - Raise issues and concerns regarding the actions of colleagues through appropriate committees, channels and representatives and in accordance with legislation and policy. Example: Duty to Report, Resolution of Issues, Protocol for Investigating Allegations of Abuse & Neglect, Peer Review Guidelines.
- **I will support positive professional practices in the placement, planning and caring for children.**

Practice Standards: The foster parent will...

- Consider the needs of my biological/foster family in making decisions about taking in or retaining a child in the home.
- Accept child placements only when the terms, policies and practices permit the exercise of one's professional judgement and skills and only when the agreed upon expectations meet the skills and experience approved by my designation (ie. Regular, Level I, etc.).

- Negotiate and adhere to the terms of all contracts fairly and honestly and with respect to conditions of termination.
- Manage and account for all monies received under the Family Care Rate; maintain an up-to-date record of all expenses relating to the care of the child.
- Keep records in accordance with Ministry policy:
 - reports as required by caregiver's contract
 - daily log for each child
 - Life Book for each child in care for more than 6 months
 - basic information on each child (eg. medical, school, professional contacts, historical background)

III. Commitment to the Fostering Profession and the Association

- **I will strive to be competent in my role as foster parent.**

Practice Standards: The foster parent will...

- Know my personal limits and recognise the need for self-care; accept no commitment that will impair the effectiveness of my service.
- Decline or withdraw from service if time needed for development of sufficient skills to care for a child poses risk to the child or members of the household.

- **I will act to promote excellence in fostering.**

Practice Standards: The foster parent will...

- Preserve and enhance the dignity and integrity of fostering in one's work within the Association and the community.

- **I will participate in continuing education to maintain and develop my skills as a foster parent.**

Practice Standards: The foster parent will...

- Recognize the need for lifelong learning based on self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses.
- Participate in education or training as specified in BCFFPA training criteria to develop, maintain and update skills.

- **I will not exploit my relationships within the profession, the association and the community for personal or financial gain.**
 - Permit no exploitation of one's professional position for gain or benefit in other contexts.
 - Ensure that outside interests do not interfere with professional judgement.
 - Recognize the potential for both actual and perceived conflict of interest where dual relationships exist with organizations, colleagues or families.
 - Disclose a conflict where one exists and remove one's self from discussion and voting.
 - Accept no gifts or gratuities of significance that may potentially influence one's judgment in the exercise of professional duties.
- **I will base my relationships with colleagues on dignity and mutual respect.**

Practice Standard: The foster parent will...

- Respectfully and accurately represent the views of colleagues.
- Base views on personal observations and accurate presentation of the facts.
- Use appropriate channels to express opinions, concerns and other responses.
- Demonstrate respect in one's interactions with colleagues regardless of ability, culture, gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, race and religion.
- Show no tolerance for behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual.

IV. Commitment to the Community

- **I will advocate for policies and services, which will meet the needs of children, families and communities.**

Practice Standards: The foster parent will...

- Identify barriers to services and gaps in services; direct recommendations for new or improved services through appropriate channels.
- Attend community and service provider forums when possible to do so.

- **In recognition of the public trust placed in me as a foster parent I will provide a positive role model for children and their families in the community**

Practice Standards: The foster parent will...

- Demonstrate a nurturing, caring role towards children and their families.
- Conduct my personal life in a manner that does not compromise my professional responsibilities or diminish the public trust in foster care.