

FosterlineBC

BC Foster Parents Association



Pictured: Carol Levac, Foster Caregiver

Inside Sophie's
Place

Faces of Fostering:
Carol's Journey



Supporting
Infant SEL

Substance Use
Resources

BC FOSTER PARENTS ASSOCIATION (BCFPA)

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Langley, BC V3A 7R3

We are located on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the Kwantlen, Katzie, Matsqui and Semiahmoo peoples.

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IN THIS ISSUE

- 2** President's Report
- 4** Notes from the Office
- 5** Faces of Fostering: Carol's Journey
- 7** Substance Use Resources
- 8** Advocacy VS. Activism
- 9** CRCL: Crisis Response, Community Led
- 10** Save the Dates: BCCYICW & AGM
- 11** Building Blocks: Supporting Social Emotional Development
- 15** Inside Sophie's Place
- 16** BCFPA YouTube Community Feedback Highlights
- 17** Sector News & Updates
- 18** Social Work Month
- 19** Books to Read this Spring: Caregiver, Youth, & Children
- 22** Community Resources

President's Report



Hello to all of the amazing foster caregivers in BC!

As I'm sitting here, it's sunny and warm outside. Certainly not like it usually is at the beginning of February in the north. It feels like I should say Happy spring. Our snow is almost gone, but for those of you in the north, you're all well aware that we're going to see another blast of -20 before spring does officially hit.

In Board news, we've begun meeting with the Ministry to discuss some of the motions brought up at the AGM in October. One of the motions that we've spent quite some time chatting about is the levelling and how a new home can have six kids, while a level 3 home can only have two. It sounds like we'll be meeting with them once a month, which is great!

We've had two elections for the board since the AGM. One has been for the Island. Sarah Scorey is back in that Island Delegate position for the next two years. We also did an election for the Interior, and Jana Fraser is now on our board. Congrats to both! We have two more elections to run, for the Coast and the Fraser delegate positions, so if you're interested, please consider applying.

We are beginning the process of discussing changes to the branches throughout the province. These discussions will take place with some of the leaders of the branches. Will keep everyone updated as to what those changes may be.

The AGM this year will be in Victoria, at the Inn at Laurel Point, which is an amazing location. The venue is within walking distance to downtown, and the view is amazing. I hope a lot of you are thinking about attending. I had never been to Victoria before, and the last time the AGM was there it was a really cool experience.

Anita Cymet has retired from the office. She was wonderful at gathering donations for the AGM, and she will be missed. She was a lovely person and always fun to be around.

The Board has been working hard to find a new Executive Director, and, after much interest, we have completed our interview and hiring process. We are extremely excited to be able to announce that Dan Malone will be our new ED soon! He brings with him a wealth of knowledge and expertise in helping and working with foster caregivers on the Island. We're very happy that he will be joining our team and look forward to working with him.

Happy Valentine's Day to everybody! I was reminded today by my 9-year-old that we haven't bought Valentine's Day cards for his class, so we're heading off to do that now.

Rocky Hindmarch
BCFPA Board President
Foster Caregiver, Prince George

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OUR MISSION

To represent and support all foster parents who provide quality in-home family care in BC.



OUR BELIEF

Supported and resilient caregivers raise empowered children and youth.



OUR VISION

Supporting children and youth to reach their full potential through exceptional care.



BC Foster Parents Association (BCFPA) is a provincial organization for foster parents, run by foster parents. We are a registered non-profit charity which aims to bring together foster parents, social workers and other stakeholders who are working to continuously improve the standard of care for children and youth in our province.

We provide information to the general public about fostering and recruitment services to the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies. We offer our community a support network through our local Branch affiliations and our Solutions Program, accessible fostering information and education, a hub to share news across our sector and insurance resources for foster caregivers. For over 50 years, we have consulted about the revision and development of policy and practice within BC's child welfare sector.

BCFPA's structure facilitates contact with all foster parents in the province. We provide funding to our Branches and Regional Councils, and we maintain a Board of Directors that represents the diversity of our province. BCFPA's Board of Directors provincially, regionally and at a community level are all volunteers, elected by their foster parent membership community.

Notes from the Office



There is a great deal of behind-the-scenes work happening internally at BCFPA these days. While we're planning a likely office move in 2027, we're doing our best to reduce the size of our abundant physical archive files by scanning everything possible for electronic storage. It's been quite an undertaking! I'm preparing to retire in June, so preparations to onboard a new Executive Director are underway. A new Strategic Plan has been created to direct the agency's future activities. Creating the timeline, goals, and responsibilities for all strategic plan activities will be an initial task for the new ED, setting a benchmark for our future trajectory.

The past few months, we've been invited by the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Representative for Children and Youth's office to participate in some committee work. Perhaps most impactful for foster caregivers, we're meeting with MCFD regarding a restructuring of the Caregiver Pre-Service Training. The work is well underway, and there is an aggressive timeline for completion. When we have official information to release, we'll be sure to do so through social media and our agency partners. BCFPA is meeting regularly with MCFD to discuss advocacy goals related to priorities from our AGM Motions. These priorities include adjusting wording and shifting processes related to policy and practice. We are also meeting regularly with the Representative for Children and Youth's office to enhance our partnership opportunities and ensure the work of both agencies is highlighted within our communities.

The newest version of the Foster Family Handbook is in draft form, and our team is working as quickly as possible to ensure new policy information is included and MCFD approvals are received. We are hopeful that the refreshed format will be easy to navigate,

and new visual themes will provide an engaging message of partnership and community care.

Over the course of the past 10 years, Anita Cymet has raised over \$250,000 for our services and bursaries for foster caregivers and children, not to mention securing countless donations for our AGM Camps for Kids fundraisers. Anita retired in December after a long career in fund development. She plans to spend her time pursuing her passion for working with animals, having long lunches with friends, and reading fantastic books! We extend our grateful thanks to Anita for her dedication and tireless work in support of our fostering community. We wish her a fabulous future, focusing on the activities that will bring her joy.

With this being my last newsletter message, I'd like to leave you with words of appreciation and thanks. I have loved working with and for BC's foster caregivers since 2006 and have a vast appreciation for all that you sacrifice and the hardships you endure for the love of your chosen career. I have experienced profound learning about compassion, strength, acceptance, unconditional love, and keeping a sense of humour through it all. My hope is that my team and I leave a legacy of advocacy that has improved your lives somewhat and maybe made the practice of fostering a little bit easier. Thank you for all you do within your communities – so many children and families would be lost without you.

With love and appreciation,
Jayne Wilson
Executive Director



Carol's Journey: Carrying Love Beyond Goodbyes

Interview by Michelle Relevante | Photo by Marjie Armstrong

How did your fostering journey begin?

I've always loved kids. I began fostering in 1986, shortly after high school. Over the years, I've welcomed children and youth with a wide range of needs into my home including medically fragile children. I've also supported children who entered care during times of family illness or crisis. Every child has had their own story, and each one has shaped my journey.

Looking back on your journey, was there a particular moment that told you this was the path you were meant to take?

There wasn't one single moment. It was made up of many small, meaningful moments. Simple things like baking together and hearing a child tell me how much they love spending time with me really confirm that this is what I'm meant to do in life.

How has fostering shaped your family?

Fostering created a different kind of family for us—one that continues to grow and evolve. Children may come and go, but they become part of our family and remain connected to us. I have six children of my own, and for many years, I quietly wondered how fostering impacted them. Hearing them now speak positively about fostering—and knowing that some of them are even considering fostering themselves—feels like a full-circle moment. It reassures me that this journey didn't just matter to the children who came through our home, but to our family as a whole.

When a child first arrives, how do you help them feel safe and welcome? What helps you begin building trust?

I try not to overwhelm them. I keep things calm and quiet, get to know them, and ask about their

interests. I always let them choose a teddy bear or toy that they can keep from day one.

The focus on the first day isn't rules. It's about gentle connection through colouring, play, and calm conversations. Trust builds when children are given time to settle at their own pace.

How do you support a child's connection to their family, culture, and community?

Supporting a child's connection to their family, culture, and community is very much a shared effort. Schools and daycares play a big role, and I work closely with teachers, social workers, and other community supports. I talk openly with children about their families and culture, pay attention to what feels familiar to them, and serve foods or support routines that reflect that whenever possible. When additional support is needed, I reach out to community resources. It truly takes a whole village of people working together.

Is there something that surprised you about yourself once you started fostering?

Learning how to say goodbye. That was my biggest fear. It's never easy, but it hasn't been as hard as I expected. I go into each placement knowing my role is temporary, but I pour care into every moment we share. I try to be fully present while we're together and trust that the connection we build can stay with a child long after they leave my home.

What's something you wish more people understood about fostering?

I wish more people understood that children in care are not "damaged goods", and that their parents love their children — no matter the circumstances. Every family carries their own stories. What children and families need most is compassion and support, not judgment. With so much division, hate, and racism resurfacing and spilling over into our communities, children feel the impact too.

How do you care for yourself when things feel overwhelming?

I'm very lucky to have a strong support system. My children and extended family live nearby and are involved, and some are approved to help with caregiving. We're a large, close-knit family, and everyone lives nearby. We spend a lot of time together, and having that mix of adults to connect with and children to play together really helps create a sense of support. It makes a big difference! Fostering can feel overwhelming when you're isolated so community really matters.

What would you say to someone considering fostering?

You don't need to be perfect, and your home doesn't need to be perfect. Children need to feel loved, safe, and be able to rely on the adults around them. Everything doesn't have to be perfect—you just need to be open and willing to offer the stability they need. Fancy toys aren't what matter most. What children truly need is to feel that they matter and that their voice is heard. If you worry about getting attached or about saying goodbye, that's not a weakness. It's a sign that you care deeply and have love to give.

What do you think foster caregivers need most?

Open, honest communication as well as transparency. Better information sharing is important. Foster parents need access to information that helps them support a child and avoid triggers. When caregivers understand a child's history and needs, they are better equipped to create safe, supportive homes from day one.

What's one word you hope children would use to describe their time with you?

Adventurous. I want children to leave with happy memories of our time together. I know those memories will stay with them for life.



Substance Use and Toxic Drug Information and Resources

*Purple ribbon: a symbol of awareness and understanding. Overdose Awareness Day: August 31

The toxic drug crisis continues to put children and youth in care (CYIC) at serious risk of overdose and other harms. This continues to be a growing concern for foster parents, caregivers, care providers, and workers who support young people in complex situations.

Below are resources and tools to help plan for safety and provide effective support. They ensure consistent information across the province to help keep CYIC safe.

BC Provincial Resources

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toward the Heart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC Centre for Disease Control - Harm Reduction & Substance Use Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundry - Where Wellness Takes Shape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emoji Codes: Decoded
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help Starts Here 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With Open Arms: Supportive conversations among friends FNHA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training, Naloxone, Narcan, overdose, drug poisoning Toward the Heart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifeguard App HelpStartsHere

Health Authority Resources

First Nations Health Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overdose Prevention & Harm Reduction: Get Informed • Indigenous Harm Reduction • Not Just Naloxone Program 	Interior Health Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance Use Services Available for Youth (SAY) Interior Health • Youth Substance Use Services & Resources Health & Wellness IH
Fraser Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth substance use services - Fraser Health 	Island Health Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health & Substance Use Services Island Health
Northern Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services by community Northern Health • Family Toolkit Here to Help 	Vancouver Coastal Health Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth substance use services and resources Vancouver Coastal Health

Advocacy Versus Activism - Reflections from BCFPA's Outgoing Executive Director, Jayne Wilson

Spending 20 years working with an agency focused on systemic advocacy teaches you a thing or two about setting priorities and how to approach government leaders and teams when seeking change.

Firstly, it's important to have a clear understanding of the difference between advocacy and activism. On the surface, both are seeking change to a system – whether social, political, economic, or environmental, etc.

Advocates focus on dialogue, persuasion, facts, and clear arguments to build rapport and sway opinions, utilizing an influential approach that requires persistence.

Activists employ more direct methods with vigorous action intended to draw attention to their cause and fight for change. While activism plays a critical role in driving attention and urgency, it is not always the most effective approach on its own and can be shortsighted when it isn't paired with sustained systems-focused work.

Having worked in partnership with the Ministry of Children and Family Development for 20 years, I've learned through observation and experience that we can increase the odds of progress towards a goal, but we can never control the outcome. It appears to me that respectful approaches that build strong relationships and dialogue are the key. I've witnessed and been at the table for hundreds of advocacy and system-related conversations. Engagement from the ministry increases when we approach an advocacy priority supported by a clear understanding and expression of what change we're asking for, a clear description of the impact on the community, strong researched statistics to verify our points, a suggested solution that benefits all parties, and a calm, methodical approach. Advocacy is the long, calm game.

It's definitely frustrating when change takes years to achieve, or when governments shift priorities, or MCFD team members leave, requiring us to start introductions and priority discussions from the beginning – but that's the job. The goal is to keep at it, continue to engage, create strong, respectful relationships and connections, and to understand the roadblocks intrinsic to the system itself. When we're lucky enough to have

sustained engagement without an election or change in leadership priorities, we've been able to advocate for and successfully achieve some pretty amazing process, policy, and practice shifts.

Since I started working at BCFPA in 2006 and accepted the Executive Director position in 2010, BCFPA's hardworking team of staff and board leads have worked directly with the Ministry of Children and Family Development to achieve many significant changes for the community.

- 3 significant increases for foster caregiver maintenance and service payments (2006-2008, 2019, 2023)
- 2 increases in mileage rates for foster caregivers (2006, 2016)
- Developed and co-signed the Foster Parent Rights with the Minister of Children and Family Development (2009), each of which later informed significant amendments to Chapter 5: Children and Youth in Care Policies (2021)
- Established open communication channels, inviting us to meet with the Minister of Children and Family Development twice annually (2011)
- Established open communication with MCFD senior leaders for dialogue regarding any issue that arises (since 2014)
- Worked with MCFD to amend the Caregiver Support Service Standards (2006) and later to collaborate on the development of the Resource Work Policies (2017)
- Developed several new bursaries for children and foster caregivers (currently 8 bursaries available)
- Created collaborative partnerships with BC Lions, Vancouver Canucks, and Science World, offering free tickets for foster families as well as discount programs accessible to all BCFPA members
- Secured affordable extended health benefits for foster caregivers through Green Shield (2017)
- Informed MCFD of a Canadian pension program appropriate for independent contractors (including foster caregivers) and reported results of a survey of all caregivers regarding pensions (2023)
- Hosted the Canadian Foster Family Association

- Annual General Meetings (2006 and 2017)
- Partnered in the consortium of BC foster caregiver service agencies and programs that produced and hosted the International Foster Care Organization's conference (2011)
- Advocated for out-of-care agreements to have standard payments equivalent to fostering, which are now in place (2023)
- Increased the Rider Insurance Program coverage from \$300,000 to \$500,000, secured a new Rider Insurance Underwriter (2021), and created the Under-Deductible Losses Program (2021)
- Ensured that old MCFD policies were no longer applied when replaced by new policies (2013)
- Ensured that babysitters did not require criminal record checks and that wording to support this was included in the Foster Family Handbook and MCFD policies (2013)
- Ensured that the 60-Day Notice policy is fairly reflected in the policy and appropriately applied (2019)
- Produced over 50 videos on fostering topics hosted on YouTube
- Co-hosted Foster Family Month and BC Child and Youth in Care Week events with MCFD at the Legislature and community venues
- Core agency member in the Residential Review project and the Social Sector Advisory Committee, meeting periodically to review the current environment and plans for strategic sector shifts
- Committee member and lead to develop/revise the Foster Family Handbook, Social Media Policy for

- Foster Parents, Foster Caregiver Review Policy (and other policy documents)
- Collaborated in all reviews of Chapter 8 policy and Family Care Home Agreement amendments and kept informed of any legislation, policy, or practice development or updates by MCFD
- Secured bursaries for foster parents to attend BCFPA's Annual General Meeting
- Created provincial and regional fostering recruitment and awareness campaigns
- Responsible for delivering new online foster caregiver pre-service, in-service, resource worker, and kinship caregiver training (2017)
- Completed a home studies project to reduce the backlog of fostering applicants (2018)
- Secured funding for BCFPA's Solutions Program, based on a peer-to-peer support model (2018)
- Advocated for permission slips to be signed by foster caregivers (announced in 2018)
- Developed written and video resources used for provincial and interjurisdictional training
- Rebranding to reflect BCFPA's provincial mandate

It has been a pleasure to serve the fostering community in BC for all these years, and I hope to see many positive developments in the sector under the upcoming new leadership appropriate for independent contractors (including foster caregivers) and reported results of a survey of all caregivers regarding pensions (2023)



CRCL

CRCL: Crisis Response. Community Led.

CRCL is a mobile, community-led crisis response team funded by the province and developed and administered by the Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division. It is intended to support individuals 13 years of age and older who are experiencing a mental health crisis.

If a mental health crisis is occurring, CRCL can dispatch a team of at least two crisis responders. CRCL services are delivered by people with a combination of lived expertise and professional experience in mental health. CRCL can come to you, on your terms, to listen with understanding and compassion.

Learn more and find CRCL in your community at [crcl.ca](https://www.crcl.ca).



BC Child & Youth in Care Week 2026

Join Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks and partners in another wonderful year of celebrating the strength, creativity, resilience, and tenacity of children and youth in and from care!

When: June 1, 2026 - June 7, 2026

Community Celebration Grants

Applications open until April 13, 2026
Get up to \$250 to help fund a BC Child & Youth in Care Week event and celebrate the children and youth in care in your community.

Youth Recognition Awards

Nominations open until April 27, 2026
Recognize the amazing achievements of children and youth in and from care across BC ages 6-24!

Visit bcchildandouthincareweek.com for more information and to submit applications and nominations.

BCFPA AGM & Conference 2026

Attend BC Foster Parents Association's 59th annual AGM & Conference this fall in Victoria!

When: October 16, 2026 - October 17, 2026
The Annual General Meeting will take place at 9:00am on October 17th. No cost for attending the AGM only.

Where: Inn at Laurel Point
680 Montreal St, Victoria, BC V8V 1Z8

Visit bcfosterparents.ca and subscribe to our email newsletter at the bottom of the webpage to stay informed regarding AGM bursary applications, event registration, and more.

Plan on attending? Book your room now, before **September 11, 2026** to receive the discounted rate of \$235/night for a standard guest room. To book call **1-800-663-7667** or email reservations@laurelpoint.com and quote BCFPA.





Building Blocks: Supporting Early Social Emotional Development

In the first three years of life, the human brain sees its highest period of development. During this life stage, the emotional centers of the brain, including parts of the prefrontal cortex, are taking shape. Much of the groundwork for this early, foundation-building development happens within the first twelve months. What happens during this time informs how a child will interact with the world around them as they grow, eventually contributing to the overall health and structure of our society in future generations. As caregivers, the weight of this knowledge can serve as a reaffirmation of purpose, but it can also be quite daunting, especially when the nature of being a foster caregiver means that you may not always get the opportunity to capitalize on key development windows. The good news is that these windows of opportunity don't slam shut; they simply serve as a guideline for optimal times to introduce certain interaction and learning opportunities. We'll go over this more in the latter portion of the article, but know now that the best time to start supporting an infant's social and emotional development is the present, and doing the work is much easier than one might believe.

Understanding Social Emotional Development

What is Social Emotional Development

Social emotional development, or social emotional learning (SEL), is, in a nutshell, the process during which children learn to identify and manage their emotions, build trusting, meaningful relationships with others, and create a strong sense of self. This means that from day one, infants are observing those around them, mainly their primary caregivers, to inform how they build trust, form secure attachments, and their ability to express themselves in a healthy way. All of this shapes how they interact with others throughout their future. Babies who have a recognizable routine and feel safe

and cared for develop a sense of trust in others and in the world around them. The strength of this trust becomes the foundation for their relationships and choices far into the future. Forming secure attachments leads to more confident and resilient people - taking more healthy risks and bouncing back from "negative" emotions.

The Timeline of Social Emotional Development in Infants

Every infant is unique and will develop at their own pace, although there is a general path that most tend to follow, marked by key development stages. This typical path moves from basic reflexes to intentional communication, displays of preference, and ultimately

the emergence of a sense of self.

0-3 months: Young infants possess sophisticated social abilities, actively seeking connections by turning towards faces and reacting to voices when awake. Eye contact and acknowledgement, including speech, are vital in responding to this desire for connection. At this stage, infants express their own needs and desires through reflexive cries, as well as facial and body movements. Learning what needs are being communicated and being available to meet these needs establishes trust, taking advantage of the earliest window to establish secure attachments.

4-7 months: At approximately the 3-month mark, babies experience a “social awakening”, during which their social skills see dramatic progress. This is the point in SEL where infants are really beginning to develop their communication tools, modelled by those around them. You’ll likely first notice this is occurring when an infant displays their first intentional smiles in direct response to social stimulation. These new deliberate smiles indicate that a baby understands a vital piece of social interaction - responding to one another. Another marker of this development stage may be sleep regression, as baby learns many new skills and begins to display increased alertness with longer stretches of being awake and engaged. You’ll also notice that babies begin to practice speech and conversation, even if they aren’t yet able to form full words. To take advantage of this developmental stage, participate in conversation (displaying conversational structure and speech) and be conscious of modelling emotional awareness and regulation.

8-12 months: This period brings another noticeable increase in social awareness. Infants will begin to show a preference for those who are familiar to them, displaying nervousness around strangers and separation anxiety. At the same time, you may notice that baby is getting better at physically expressing their emotions. At this stage, it’s a great idea to facilitate short, positive interactions with new people in familiar environments. This demonstrates that safety and healthy social experiences extend beyond their primary caregivers. Another way to take advantage of this developmental stage is to continue modelling emotional awareness and regulation, with an increased effort to identify and put a name to different emotions, building baby’s emotional vocabulary and intelligence.

How Social Emotional Development Connects to Cognitive Growth

An infant’s emotional and cognitive skills are closely connected, developing alongside and supporting one another. A baby that feels emotionally secure is more likely to feel confident taking positive risks and exploring the world around them, while being more likely to persist in a frustrating situation, learning more from the experience in the end. This kind of healthy exploration and resilience supports the development of critical thinking skills such as observation, problem-solving, and creativity. At the same time, this strong foundation further increases the chance that, throughout their lives, a child will continue to step out of their comfort zone to learn.

SEL is also intertwined with language development. Through the support of SEL, baby is learning vocabulary, pronunciation, speech patterns, language structure, social cues, and conversational structure. Studies show that children who have strong emotional skills have stronger communication skills, often being able to express their thoughts with more clarity.

Supporting Social Emotional Development

Your day-to-day routines and interactions with a baby are the most impactful piece in supporting their SEL. Each time you respond to their needs, model an emotion, or display social behaviours, they are observing you and learning a valuable lesson, building essential skills, and strengthening the bond between caregiver and child. There are a number of ways to intentionally integrate SEL support into each and every day.

Understanding Learning Capacity

It’s often said that children are like sponges, especially at these younger ages, soaking up the information they’re fed. While this is true to a point, we all need time off when we get tired. Understanding a baby’s readiness cues can play a big part in not only their learning trajectory, but also in building an early foundation to understand healthy boundaries and social/emotional consent. This protects their sense of security as well as their ability to regulate while also contributing to their future understanding of healthy relationships.

Babies will show clear signals when they're ready to engage and when they need a break. Bright, open expressions and excited movement are signs that baby is ready to engage. Likewise, vocal initiation, such as mimicking language or babbling, is a sign that baby is actively seeking social stimulation in the form of conversation. On the other hand, body language that indicates a desire for distance (arching back, turning away, crawling or scooting away) and general fussiness is a signal to press pause. You will likely notice that the timing of these signals lines up with their need patterns - with baby wanting to engage more when rested and fed.

While infants tend to follow highly similar development patterns, their personalities will begin to show quite early on. Some babies will display a preference for social engagement, seeking more stimulation from others, while some babies will be more content with quieter environments, preferring one-on-one interaction. While neither is better or worse when it comes to SEL, learning your baby's preference and tailoring your support to them - with slower, shorter sessions or longer, more stimulating sessions - could be quite beneficial.

Co-Regulation

Self-regulation skills begin to develop early on in infancy, beginning with co-regulation. Babies look to their caregivers in new situations to form an understanding of an appropriate reaction to something that is new to them. Your reaction teaches the baby how to handle big emotions and how to feel in response to certain events. For example, if a pan were to fall, creating a loud sound, an infant with a secure attachment may look to an adult to determine whether or not they should feel fear as a reaction before they react themselves. Displaying calm in this moment teaches the baby that unexpected loud sounds are not inherently frightening.

Modelling Speech and Conversation Structure

Speaking to a baby is an invaluable tool in supporting their early development. While there's nothing incorrect about baby talk, modelling daily speech is the best way to support their growth. Holding normal conversation - even if baby can't yet talk back - and providing context through narration not only teaches vocabulary but also helps infants to understand enunciation and conversational structure, among other things.

Fostering Resilience

Having awareness of an infant's needs and how they communicate them while making yourself consistently available to these needs builds a crucial sense of safety and trust. Having support available in times of discomfort and distress - especially when support comes with co-regulation and modelling emotions - works to prevent children from forming reactive responses around certain feelings or needs. At the same time, introducing frustration through mild age-appropriate challenges works to build resilience and the management of emotions in new and potentially upsetting situations. Babies raised in an environment where caregivers are sensitive to their needs and emotions, without being overly sheltered, are often more equipped to build balanced stress response systems.

Consistency and Routine

Daily routines are a great foundation to build SEL into, making important, consistent interactions even more impactful with intention. A strong routine, in which an infant can anticipate what comes next, is a secure setting for seamlessly working to expand vital skills. There is no right way to integrate supportive learning practices. Finding what works for you and baby and making it a habit is the key. This can be narrating routines, mimicking conversation about your day or plans, modelling facial expressions, etc.

Wake-up and bedtime are especially good opportunities to support emotional regulation, as transitions between wake and sleep are often challenging. Sticking to a consistent routine, even a short one, helps to soften that transition period with familiarity and mental cueing. Bonus tip: dimming lighting in the evening and exposing baby to sunlight in the morning helps to support a healthy circadian rhythm.

Play

Play is a baby's full-time job, and it's the primary way that they learn about themselves and the world around them. While certain ages will inform whether you're modelling or following along, the key role of a caregiver when it comes to play is presence and attentiveness. Here are some different games and play structures that support SEL through fun:

Turn-taking Games: Games that center around a back-and-forth exchange help to teach crucial social structure and cues. These games can be played with very young infants and grow in complexity as baby develops the ability to participate in various ways. Examples: Sound echoing/mimicking, playing catch/rolling a ball.

Mirror Games: Mirrors tend to be quite fascinating for babies. At 18 months, they're beginning to develop a sense of self and can begin recognizing their own image. This is a great time to use mirrors to model and identify various emotions/expressions, giving baby an opportunity to mimic you. Younger babies are also capable of getting positive stimulation through mirror play as well, tracking faces against high-contrast backgrounds.

Peek-a-boo: This classic game contains some very valuable lessons for young children, including how to manage separation anxiety (in the 8-12 month age range) and object permanence. "Disappearing" and consistently returning shows baby that when you go out of sight, you will return to meet their needs, while also teaching that objects can still exist even when not actively being observed. Peek-a-boo can grow with infants, as well. As baby gets older, try using larger objects to hide yourself (blankets, furniture, etc.), put more distance between you and baby, and explore different objects or game variations.

Sensory Play: Facilitating safe sensory play is an incredible way to support cognitive development while helping infants learn to manage stress. Experiencing different textures and sensations, new ones in particular, can create an uncomfortable situation for babies. Intentionally creating a safe environment for them to explore these physical sensations and resulting emotions, while being present to co-regulate and provide comfort, helps baby learn to manage big feelings and take those healthy risks. It can also be a great tool for developing fine motor skills, as baby grabs and splashes.

Music and Dancing: Babies are capable of understanding rhythm and melody as early as the womb, long before language is a form of communication that is available to them. Music is also a powerful way to channel and process emotion, making it an incredible way to introduce SEL from day one. Infants will often respond to music as well,

moving their bodies along, resembling dancing more and more as they grow. This movement, on a regular basis, lays a great foundation for mobility and motor skills. Additionally, the repetitive nature of lyrics in children's music is an engaging and comforting language development opportunity.

Outdoor Play: The natural pace and required flexibility of outdoor play, in tandem with the variety of textures available in outdoor environments, work towards building emotional resilience, regulation, and balanced stress management systems. At the same time, the open space fosters feelings of freedom and independence, encouraging babies to offload energy in new and more efficient ways.

Imaginative Play: This more creative and elaborate style of play typically begins in the toddler stage and continues throughout childhood and youth. For some, it may even extend into adulthood. Open-ended imaginative play opens an opportunity to safely explore social roles, new or big emotions, and new information or interests. By playing out new roles and stories, children are practicing building empathy through new perspectives while processing their own feelings about different experiences. Being present provides an opportunity to validate emotions and assist in expanding on new learning moments.

To best support healthy imaginative play, keep props simple and open-ended, allowing for the integration of creative thinking. Toys that are too stylized or specific don't provide as many play options and can lead to shorter attention spans.

Interested in expanding your knowledge and skillset in supporting early childhood development? Visit bcfosterparents.ca/the-early-years/ to access free resources and learning modules.





Inside Sophie's Place: Where Collaboration Creates Safety for Children and Families

by Michelle Relevante

Walking through the doors of Sophie's Place Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, you immediately sense that it is not a typical service environment. Thoughtfully designed to be calm, welcoming, and safe, the Centre offers children and youth a place to breathe and feel at ease during some of the hardest moments of their lives. Every detail is shaped by an understanding of trauma and healing.

Opened in Surrey in 2012, Sophie's Place was established to support children and youth ages 0-17 living in Surrey who have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse. The Centre is named in honour of

its patron, Sophie Tweed-Simmons, daughter of musician and philanthropist Gene Simmons. The name was chosen intentionally to give the Centre a warm, personal identity—one that feels approachable and child-centred.

Child-friendly spaces and age-appropriate activities encourage play and self-expression which helps ease anxiety and create a sense of comfort. Families can also access resources in multiple languages. Most importantly, children have a place where they can safely express what has happened to them and know their voice matters.

At its core, Sophie's Place brings together advocacy, coordination, and support. What stands out most is the Centre's deeply collaborative approach. Professionals from multiple disciplines work on site, including officers from the Surrey Police Service Special Victims Unit, as well as partners from the Centre for Child Development, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the City of Surrey, and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. This model allows young people to be supported in one neutral place, rather than having to navigate multiple systems or repeatedly retell painful experiences. The Centre also reduces the burden on children and families who might otherwise be left to navigate complex and intimidating systems on their own.

Sophie's Place work takes place within a rapidly growing community. Sophie's Place now supports more than 7,000 children each year, and demand continues to increase. Population forecasts for Metro Vancouver show that Surrey is on track to surpass Vancouver's population by 2038 and is expected to reach one million residents by 2051, becoming the first municipality in British Columbia to do so. As Surrey's population continues to rise, so too does the number of children and families who need timely access to specialized, trauma-informed services. Leaving the Centre, there is a strong sense of hope. Sophie's Place stands as a powerful example of what is possible when systems are designed around the wellbeing of children and families.

Community Feedback Highlights

The BCFPA YouTube Channel hit 5,000 subscribers!

Here are some topics our community told us they want to see next.

Income tax and financial planning

Navigating Goodbyes and Maintaining Connection

Reducing stigma for children and youth in care

FASD

Preparing for retirement

Reducing stigma for children and youth in care

Mental health and addictions

Digital safety

Responding to complex behaviours

Guided meditation and other wellness practices

Navigating privacy including social media, information sharing, and document safety

THE 411: Sector News & Updates



Ministry Funding the Expansion of Anti-Violence Programming

In December of 2023, it was announced that \$18 million in funding would be dedicated to funding anti-violence initiatives under the Canada-British Columbia bilateral agreement to end gender-based violence. This funding will enable the advancement of work outlined in Safe and Supported: BC's Gender-Based Violence Action Plan (bit.ly/4rsFF6C).

Recently, MCFD committed to providing \$750,000 of that broader federal funding to expand domestic-violence intervention programming.

One of the recipient organizations is Options Community Services in Surrey, receiving \$150,000 to increase available services and accessibility for its Caring Dads program. This program supports fathers working to break domestic violence cycles, providing therapy-based programming to help fathers recognize the impact of their words and actions, as well as develop skills to foster healthier family relationships. Previous funding enabled Options to offer the program in Punjabi and to launch an empowerment program for mothers. With additional funding, Options will continue to build on positive community impacts.

The remaining \$600,000 will go to bringing similar programs to more communities across the province. This funding will also help to reduce wait times while improving program accessibility to services for fathers, ensuring the timely intervention of abusive behaviours in home settings and family relationships.

Source: MCFD Press Release

Ministry Updates Safety Planning Policies

In January of last year, the ministry introduced a list of policy changes in the interest of strengthening safety planning practices, as part of an ongoing commitment to improving services for children, youth, and families. The goal of these changes is to help families stay connected while addressing safety concerns for children and youth across BC.

Safety planning for children and youth involves short-term, voluntary safety plan agreements. These agreements are developed collaboratively with parents/guardians in the interest of providing the best care to the child or youth. Safety plan agreements support the continued connection of families, enabling children/youth to remain with their parents/guardian or another trusted legal adult (as arranged by the parent/guardian) while working to mitigate safety concerns. These plans are put in place while the family awaits an outcome of a court order, investigation, or protection assessment.

These implemented policy changes, in the form of amendments to the Child, Family, and Community Service Act, support more effective safety planning by:

- defining the purpose and scope of safety plans;
- confirming that participation is voluntary;
- if the parent(s)/guardian(s) agree, following the inclusion of additional parties, such as a child's Indigenous community; and
- improving existing safeguards to protect families,

Source: MCFD Press Release

Keeping Lhtako Dene and Huu-ay-aht Children Connected to Their Families

The Ministry of Children and Family Development continues to make progress on ensuring that Indigenous and First Nations communities have full jurisdiction over their families, children, and youth, preserving vital connections to communities, culture, language, and tradition. Most recently, agreements were signed with the Lhtako Dene Nation on October 8, 2025, and Huu-ay-aht First Nations on December 16, 2025.

These historic agreements, coming into effect on January 6, 2026 (Lhtako Dene Nation) and March 16, 2026 (Huu-ay-aht First Nations), will help guide interactions, planning, and decision-making specific to child-welfare decisions, and support children and youth to remain safely and strongly connected to their families, communities, and culture.

The agreement with Lhtako Dene Nation, which establishes a path forward that recognizes past, present, and future generations, is guided by a number of objectives, including:

- embedding Lhtako Dene knowledge, traditions, and practices into child and family services; and
- promoting cultural continuity and meaningful Nation involvement in all aspects of service delivery.

MCFD's agreement with Huu-ay-aht First Nations, also establishing a path forward that recognizes past, present, and future generations, is outlined by:

- a commitment to providing \$30,000 to support Huu-ay-aht jurisdiction;
- a shared interest in centering Huu-ay-aht First Nations' values, cultures, and traditions;
- supporting Huu-ay-aht's enhanced involvement in decision-making regarding their children and youth;
- a focus on prevention to ensure children and youth remain at home whenever possible, while actively ensuring their safety;
- providing culturally appropriate services.

Source: MCFD Press Release

Happy National Social Work Month

March is National Social Work Month, and the staff and board at BC Foster Parents Association are pleased to spend another year recognizing and celebrating the hard work and immeasurable contributions made by social workers in our communities across British Columbia and Canada.

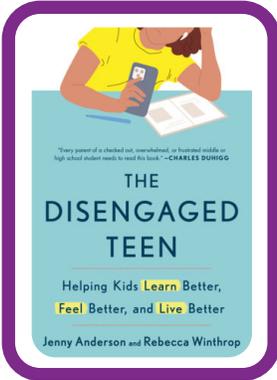
We see their tireless efforts that contribute to creating change while supporting, guiding, advocating for, and connecting our communities, amongst so much more.

On behalf of the entire team at BCFPA, to the social workers in our communities, and across British Columbia and Canada, thank you!



Books to Read this Spring

Parents & Caregivers



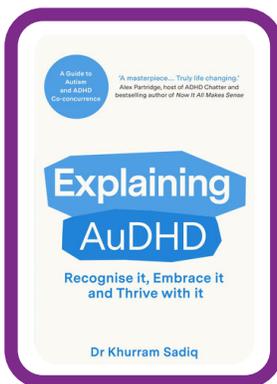
The Disengaged Teen by Jenny Anderson and Rebecca Winthrop

A powerful toolkit for parents of both checked-out and stressed-out teens that shows exactly what to do (and stop doing) to support their academic and emotional flourishing.

Adolescents are hardwired to explore and grow, and learning is mainly how they do this. But a shocking majority of teens are disengaged from school, simultaneously bored and overwhelmed. This is feeding an alarming teen mental health crisis. As kids get older and more independent, parents often feel powerless to help. But fear not, there are evidence-backed strategies to

guide them from disengagement to drive, in and out of school.

For the past five years, award-winning journalist Jenny Anderson and the Brookings Institution's global education expert Rebecca Winthrop have been investigating why so many children lose their love of learning in adolescence. Now, weaving extensive original research with real-world stories of kids who transformed their relationships with learning, they identify four modes of learning that students use to navigate through the shifting academic demands and social dynamics of middle and high school, shaping the internal narratives about their skills, potential, and identity.

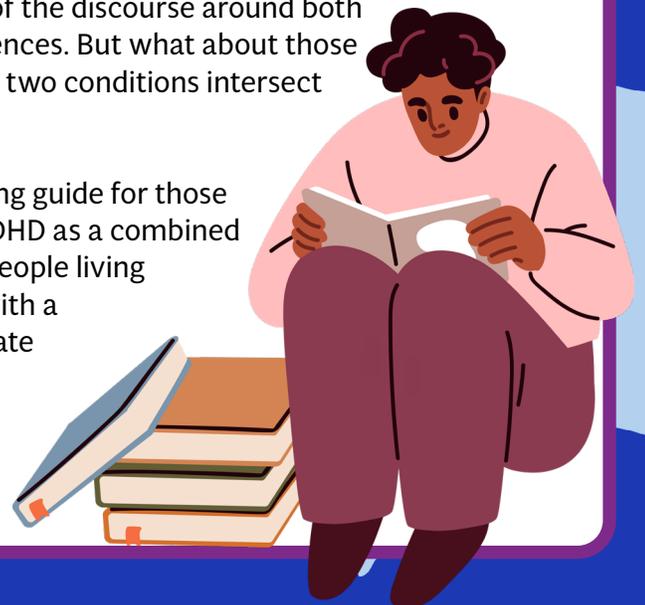


Explaining AuDHD by Khurram Sadiq

You've probably heard of Autism or ADHD by now. Often thought of as contradictory conditions, much of the discourse around both focuses on their neurological differences. But what about those diagnosed with both? Where do the two conditions intersect and overlap?

Explaining AuDHD is a straight-talking guide for those trying to understand Autism and ADHD as a combined diagnosis. Using real-life stories of people living

with AuDHD, this book offers advice for those grappling with a diagnosis, and provides a framework for readers to advocate for themselves and discuss it with loved ones.



Teen & Preteen



DBT Tool Kits for Teens by Atara Hiller, PsyD **Ages 13-17**

When stress, school drama, and family problems feel overwhelming, DBT Tool Kits for Teens offers practical strategies to handle it all. Coping skills from Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) are often called “life skills” because they teach people how to manage tough emotions, create healthy relationships, and deal with stressful situations more wisely.

As a DBT-certified clinician for adolescents and families, Dr. Atara Hiller knows how to make these powerful skills easier for teens to understand and apply.

- **COVERS ALL FIVE DBT MODULES:** Mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and Walking the Middle Path
- **14 READY-TO-USE DBT TOOL KITS:** Suggestions on which DBT skills to try for common struggles like test anxiety and peer pressure
- **NO DBT EXPERIENCE NEEDED:** Clear explanations with step-by-step instructions make DBT skills accessible to any teen who needs them
- **TEMPLATES, WORKSHEETS & CHEAT SHEETS:** Fill-in-the-blank pages, checklists, and trackers make these coping skills for teens easier to apply



The Last Bookstore on Earth by Lily-Braun Arnold **Ages 12+**

The world is about to end. Again.

Ever since the first Storm wreaked havoc on civilization as we know it, seventeen-year-old Liz Flannery has been holed up in an abandoned bookstore in suburban New Jersey where she used to work, trading books for supplies with the few remaining survivors. It's the one place left that feels safe to her. Until she learns that another earth-shattering Storm is coming . . . and everything changes.

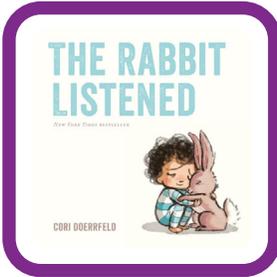
Enter Maeve, a prickly and potentially dangerous out-of-towner who breaks into the bookstore looking for shelter one night. Though the two girls are immediately at odds, Maeve has what Liz needs—the skills to repair the dilapidated store before the next climate disaster strikes—and Liz reluctantly agrees to let her stay.

As the girls grow closer and undeniable feelings spring up between them, they realize that they face greater threats than the impending Storm. And when

Maeve's secrets and Liz's inner demons come back to haunt them both, they find themselves fighting for their lives as their world crumbles around them.



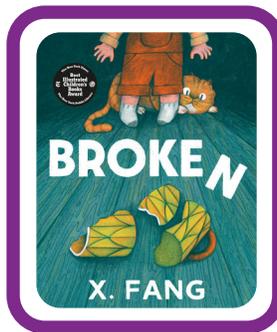
Children & Infant



The Rabbit Listened by Cori Doerrfeld **Ages 0-3**

When something sad happens to Taylor, all the animals think they know how to help. One by one they come, but nothing they say makes Taylor feel better. Until the rabbit arrives . . . and the rabbit knows just what to do.

The Rabbit Listened is about healing heartaches big and small, and taking the time to listen.



Broken by X. Fang **Ages 3-7**

When Mei Mei accidentally breaks her ama's favorite cup, she's convinced it's the end of the world. What if Ama is angry? What if she yells? What if she kicks Mei Mei out of her house? Mei Mei can't face it. But when Mimi, the innocent cat who witnesses her crime, ends up being blamed, the guilt is too much! Mimi's accusing eyes follow Mei Mei until she just can't take it anymore, and the truth comes spilling out.

With vibrant and moody cinematic illustrations and pitch-perfect pacing, X. Fang's newest picture book is filled to the brim with comedic drama and the comforting sweetness of a grandparent's forgiving hug.



Big Feelings, Little Feelings by Andrea Mills **Ages 4-8**

From happiness and surprise to fear, anger, and sadness, each feeling is brought to life through colorful, funny characters that make learning about emotions fun and relatable.

Kids will discover how to identify, understand, and manage their emotions – and that it's okay to feel happy, sad, angry, or anything in between.

Inside, you'll find:

- A unique, color-coded approach that groups emotions, giving children the words to express them
- Funny, expressive characters that show emotions in an engaging, child-friendly way
- Simple language and practical prompts that encourage kids to recognize and share how they feel
- Expert input from a qualified psychotherapist, ensuring a sensitive and supportive approach to talking about feelings

FOSTER COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Provincial Resources

BC Foster Parents Association bcfosterparents.ca	1-800-663-9999
After Hours Foster Parent Support Line	1-888-495-4440
Indigenous Perspectives Society fostercaregiversbc.ca	1-844-391-0007
Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks fbcyicn.ca	1-800-565-8055
Belonging Network belongingnetwork.com	1-877-236-7807
BC Council for Families	604-678-8884
Pacific Post Partum Support Society postpartum.org	604-255-7999
Parent Help Line	1-888-603-9100
Parents Together	604-325-0511
Parent Support Services of BC parentsupportbc.ca	1-800-345-9777
Representative for Children & Youth rcybc.ca	1-800-476-3933
FAE/S Support Network	604-507-6675
Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre	1-800-665-1822

Interior

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

Okanagan Foster Parent Association okfosterparents.ca Central Okanagan North Okanagan South Okanagan Shuswap	250-870-8991 250-558-0939 250-462-6907 250-515-1522
Okanagan Metis Children & Family Services	250-868-0351
Interior Community Services interiorcommunityservices.bc.ca icsfp.info East Kootenay West Kootenay Cariboo Kamloops and area	1-877-376-3660 250-426-6013 778-460-5174 250-609-201 236-421-0031

Island

For contact information for local foster parent groups or support in your area, please call 1-800-663-9999.	
Caring Families Society caring-families.ca	1-888-922-8437
Victoria Nanaimo/Cowichan Valley Comox Valley Campbell River Port Alberni	778-430-5459 250-618-8327 250-896-7929 250-204-1566 250-735-1124

North

For contact information for local foster parent groups or support in your area, please call 1-800-663-9999.	
AXIS Family Resources axis.bc.ca	1-877-392-1003
Community Bridge (Fort St. John) communitybridge.ca	250-793-2261

Coast Fraser

For contact information for local foster parent groups or support in your area, please call 1-800-663-9999.	
Hollyburn Family Services hollyburn.ca	604-987-8211
Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society vacfss.com	778-331-4500
Foster Hub fosterhub.ca	1-877-926-1185
Archway Community Services archway.ca	778-880-8555
Fraser Valley Foster Parent Association fraservalleyfosterparents.org	1-877-797-7701
South Vancouver Youth Centre milieu.ca	604-325-2004
Pacific Community Resources Society pcrs.ca	604-587-8100
The Children's Foundation childrens-foundation.org	604-434-9101

IT PAYS TO BE A MEMBER!

Please complete and return to BCFPA: 208-20641 Logan Avenue, Langley, BC V3A 7R3 or join or renew via our website at bcfosterparents.ca

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____ Region: _____

Local Association (BCFPA Branch): _____

Level of Foster Home: (select 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 office for administration of the program and development of services to foster parents. The balance of the fee will be returned to your regional board or BCFPA branch.

I/we contract with ___ MCFD ___ ICSFA Other: _____

OR my affiliation with the BCFPA is (i.e. staff, MCFD, non-foster parent): _____

As members of the BC Foster Parent Associations, I/we agree to abide by the Bylaws, Policy and Procedures, and Code of Ethics of the Association. _____
[signature(s)]

Please bill my VISA or MC # _____ Expires ____ / ____

[signature for approval]

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@bcfpa