

Support Workers

The Support Worker Program grew out of the natural helping network of experienced Foster Parents assisting other Caregivers

Who are Support Workers?

Support Workers are volunteer Foster Parents. Your Foster Parent Coordinator can also act as a Support Worker.

What situations do Support Workers help with?

Support Workers have been specially trained to assist you in formal situations commonly known as **Protocols**:

- Family Care Home Investigation
- Quality of Care Review
- Dispute Resolution for Caregiver

Support Workers also help Foster Caregivers find answers to many questions. This informal assistance can often bring a quick and simple resolution to a situation before it requires a more formal approach.

If I am facing an allegation of abuse or neglect, what options do I have?

If you are involved in a Family Care Home Investigation you should have someone with you as a support during meetings with MCFD. That person can be a family member, friend, a Support Worker, or someone else you have chosen. You may also hire a lawyer

What do Support Workers Do?

A Support Worker:

- Listens, provides emotional support, helps Foster Parents prepare for interview(s)
- Encourages Foster Parents to keep all documenting up-to-date
- Understands the traumatic effects of a Quality of Care Review or an Investigation
- Attends meetings at the Foster Parent's request
- Encourages the Foster Caregiver to speak on their own behalf and advocate for themselves
- Takes notes during meetings, that belong to the Foster Caregiver
- Provides information about MCFD policy and procedures
- Takes an oath of confidentiality: keeps everything the Foster Parent shares confidential

- may be called to testify in court (only the lawyer-client relationship is protected regarding maintaining confidentiality in court.)
- Is non-judgmental, and provides support regardless of the circumstances
- Assists the Foster Parent who decides to seek a review of the process

Limits to the Role – A Support Worker:

- Is not a professional counsellor or lawyer
- Does not speak for the Foster Parent, but assists the Foster Parent to prepare and speak for themselves
- Does not make decisions for the Foster Parent
- Does not give legal advice
- Must remain objective
- Has an obligation to report suspicions of abuse and/or neglect
- Has no role in determining the validity of a Foster Parent's claims, and has no decision-making authority

Why do I need a Support Worker?

If you are involved in a Protocol process with MCFD, it can be very stressful. A Support Worker can confidentially discuss your situation with you by phone or in person, and answer many of your questions. He/she will attend any meetings with you and take notes. You can ask another person to support you instead of, or in addition to, the Foster Parent Support Worker. Your Resource Social Worker will also give you support and information and keep you informed throughout the process.

We strongly recommend that you have a Support Worker with you when you attend any formal meetings or interviews.

How do I contact a Support Worker?

Below is a list of trained Support Workers available in your area. Your Resource Social Worker also has this list. You may contact them directly or ask your Coordinator or Resource Worker to contact them for you. Each Support Worker is bound by confidentiality.

*Documents available at www.fosteringokanagan.com/protocols-and-support or ask your Foster Parent Coordinator for a copy