

Peer Support for new Foster Caregivers

This program was developed to provide peer support to new Foster Parents during the critical first months of fostering.

New Foster Caregivers will be connected to an experienced Foster Parent "Partner" who will provide information and support.

Senior partners will not replace professional resources. Partners will act alongside the new Foster Parents as a support.

New Foster Parents

What can a Support Partner do for you?

1. Provide encouragement and reassurance.
2. Provide support from a Foster Parents' perspective.
3. Help clarify various roles of MCFD workers and assist in developing a working relationship with the Resources Social Worker.
4. Help you feel less isolated.
5. Provide information on Foster Parent Support Line, After Hours Line, documentation, respite and relief, billing forms, parental visits, resources, etc.
6. Accompany you to a local Foster Parent meeting and introduce you to other Foster Parents in the area.
7. Invite you to attend workshops with them.
8. Answer questions you might think too silly to ask your worker. (There are no silly questions!)
9. Direct you to where to get answers to your questions. Your partner will not replace professional resources.

Do I Have to Have a Support Partner?

If you already have family, friends or neighbors who are Foster Parents, you may think you don't need a partner. We feel that you can always use a second point of view, another Foster Parent to discuss your concerns or answer your questions. We hope you will still accept a partner to help you through the first few months you are fostering.

Experienced Foster Parents

What will I be expected to do?

1. Make the initial contact and ideally meet with your partner.
2. Provide encouragement and reassurance.
3. Provide support from a Foster Parents' perspective.
4. Help clarify various roles of MCFD workers and assist in developing a working relationship with the Resources Social Worker.
5. Help your partner feel less isolated.
6. Provide information on Foster Parent Support Line, After Hours Line, documentation, respite and relief, billing forms, parental visits, resources, etc.
7. Introduce him/her to other Foster Parents in the area.
8. Be available by your choice of communication: phone/text/email.
9. Direct your partner to where they can get answers to their questions.

What can't a Support Partner do?

1. Do not give any advice you are not qualified to give. Never give legal or medical advice.
2. Be cautious giving any behavior management advice. All suggestions must conform to Foster Parent standards, positive parenting techniques, and must not be in opposition to directions from the Social Worker or other professionals. Encourage your partner to call the child's Social Worker.

Who Can Become a Support Partner?

Anyone who has fostered for at least two years and is willing to spend some time helping new Foster Parents get started is encouraged to participate. The time commitment depends on the need of the new Foster Parent and could last up to six months. You will be matched to new Foster Parents according to the community you live in and age of children you foster. You should be knowledgeable about the Standards for Foster Homes.

Ready to Join the Peer Support Program?

Please contact the Foster Parent Coordinator for your area:

Shuswap	250-515-1522	Shuswapsupport@okfosterparents.ca
North Okanagan	250-558-0939	NOKsupport@okfosterparents.ca
Central Okanagan	250-870-8991	COKsupport@okfosterparents.ca
South Okanagan	250-462-6907	SOKsupport@okfosterparents.ca