

OKANAGAN FOSTER PARENTS ASSOCIATION



ANNUAL REPORT – 2016

This document is a companion document to

- *Attachment 1.1, Support to Family Care Network- 2016*
- *Quarterly Summary Report of Services 2016*
- *Provided by Okanagan Foster Parents Association*

The Okanagan Foster Parents Association (OFPA) provides support services to the Fostering communities in the Okanagan, Similkameen and Shuswap in the following areas:

1. Enhanced Communication
2. Education Program and and Training
3. Support to Caregivers, Crisis Support and Stabilization
4. Peer Support & Mutual Aid
5. Support to Caregivers with Protocol Processes
6. Identifcation of Common Issues
7. Recruitment and Retention
8. Continuous Quality Improvement
9. Liaison with local Aboriginal Foster Parent Support Networks

The Okanagan Foster Parents Association supports caregivers through a wide range of services. The primary goals are to provide information and education, as well as opportunities to build and strengthen relationships and to develop their skills.

Foster Parents in our region continue to meet the difficult needs of the children in their care. We are honored to provide support services to Foster Parents in our local areas.

Foster families are dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth of our community. We commend them for their devotion and commitment!

Board of Directors – 2016 - Okanagan Foster Parents Association:

- President- Bonnie Thompson - Penticton, BC
- Vice President- Melanie Filiatrault - Kelowna, BC
- Treasurer- Corinna Stickney - Penticton, BC (to Oct)
- Treasurer – Sue MacKay – Winfield (Nov-fwd)
- Secretary- Julie Holmlund – Lake Country, BC
- Sharon Kolenc - Oyama, BC
- Gerry Schalm - Princeton, BC to October 2016
- Joe McFadden – Vernon, BC to Oct 2016
- Wendy Adams- Vernon, BC (Nov fwd)
- Marilyn Marshall- Salmon Arm, BC (Oct-fwd)
- Dianna Williams- Oliver, BC (Nov fwd)

Foster Parent Coordinators - 2016:

- North Okanagan - Noelle Typusiak
- Central Okanagan – Catrina Roderick
- South Okanagan/ Similkameen – Leann Pitman Manuel
- Shuswap - Judy Flintoff

Our four Coordinators meet with the Team Leaders from the respective MCFD Resources offices quarterly, to develop and coordinate services to suit the specific needs of Foster Parents in each area.



Okanagan Foster Parents Board of Directors 2016
Gerry Schalm, Corinna Stickney, Julie Holmlund, Joe McFadden
Sharon Kolenc, Bonnie Thompson, Melanie Filiatrault



Our 2016 Coordinators from left to right: Noelle Typusiak (North Okanagan)
Leann Pitman Manuel (South Okanagan), Catrina Roderick (Central Okanagan) Judy Flintoff
(Shuswap), Joan Kirkbride (Executive Director),

1. Communication

Communication with caregivers is achieved through regular newsletters and group emails. These newsletters and emails provide information about upcoming educational and social events. Information on relevant community events is also sent out.

We liaise with a wide number of community groups to keep informed of what is available in the community. Peer groups, Foster Parent meetings, workshops and social events provide opportunities for caregivers to meet and network.

- **Newsletters** - 21 newsletters were sent out to caregivers in our area (about 322 homes)
- **Email notices and news** -906 email notices were sent, averaging 75 per month (total).
With most homes able to access the internet, we have found this to be an excellent form of communication.

Our Coordinators all continue to provide wonderful support services to caregivers in the Okanagan, Shuswap, and Similameen. Our relationship with MCFD staff continues in a spirit of shared vision and teamwork. Together, we provide support services that meet the needs of our Foster Parents and MCFD. Coordinators consult with Team Leaders and develop detailed Support Service Plans to guide the direction of services provided.

We assist the local Foster Parent Associations financially as needed and liaise with other Foster Home Support Agencies, Provincial Associations, the BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations and the Indigenous Caregivers of BC.

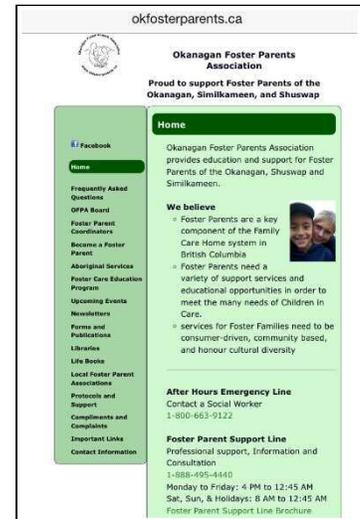
There were 20 Social events total in the four areas. Some events were planned and hosted by Foster Parent Associations, some were MCFD Appreciation events, and some were hosted by OFPA. We advertised and promoted all the events and attended most of them.

OFPA Web site www.okfosterparents.ca

Our website has a vast amount of information for Foster Parents to access online. It is continually being updated and use of the website continues to grow.

Some information that is available on the website:

- Upcoming events
- Current and previous newsletters
- FAQs- on a variety of pertinent fostering topics
- Becoming a Foster Parent
- Library lists
- Important web links



Our website averaged 1285 visits per month by 711 unique visitors.

There has been an increase in usage and has we have received positive feedback from Foster Parents, MCFD and other fostering agencies around the province.



We use Face Book as a way of reaching Foster Parents. Various articles and information are posted regularly. We have added a South Okanagan Facebook page to keep caregivers informed.



We have also added **Twitter** as a means to notify people of upcoming events and other relevant

Community liaison

Foster Parent Coordinators work closely with community partners in their areas, especially:

South Okanagan: FASD Family Support Worker; ARC Programs; Child & Youth Mental Health; Youth Probation; Penticton & District Community Resource Society; South Okanagan Boys & Girls Club; CYSN; OSNS Child Development Centre; Infant Development Centre; En'owkin Centre;

BCFFPA; Indigenous Caregivers of BC.; Adoptive Families Association; Oonakane Friendship Centre; Penticton Public Health; Safe Babies Advisory Committee

Central Okanagan: Child and Youth Mental Health; Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP); Killoona Friendship Society; Okanagan Metis Children & Family Services; Lake Country Native Association; Indigenous Caregivers of BC; The Bridge Family Services; Okanagan Boys and Girls Club; Community Connections; BCFFPA; Adoptive Families Association; Starbright Child Development Association; Interior Health Authority- Public Health Unit; CATCH Community Network; ARC Programs, including FASD key worker; Kelowna Alcohol and Drug Services; Kelowna Youth in Care Network; Westbank First Nations; University of British Columbia Okanagan; Safe Babies Advisory Committee, Youth Substance Use subcommittee

North Okanagan: North Okanagan Youth and Family Services Society; BCFFPA; Mental Illness Family Support; Interior Health Authority, Public Health; Social Planning Council; Safe Babies Advisory Committee; North Okanagan ECD Committee, North Okanagan Neurological Society and Boys and Girls Club; Indigenous Caregivers of BC.

Shuswap: Shuswap Family Resource & Referral Centre; Aspiral Youth Partners; Shuswap Children's Association; Public Health Nursing; Drug & Alcohol Services; Mental Health Services; BCFFPA; Safe Babies Advisory Committee; Indigenous Caregivers of BC.

2. Education & Training

B.C. Foster Care Education Program

Contracted trainers 2016:

- South Okanagan- Linnette Gratton
- Central Okanagan- Sue Foisy
- North Okanagan- Noelle Typusiak

84 modules were taken in-class

185.5 modules were taken on-line



The BC Foster Care Education Program was offered twice in our region in 2016. It was offered in Kelowna (series 2), Vernon (portions of program). Decreased numbers of Foster Parents requiring this training has led to decreased offerings in each area. This was discussed and approved by the local MCFD Resource teams in each area.

Caregivers are very satisfied with the classes and the presenters, according to the evaluations completed after each module. The training is also available to Foster Parents online through Interior Community Services. We partner with Interior Community Services in Kamloops to facilitate this. The preferred method of training by MCFD is "in-class" but in some instances, Foster Parents are approved to take all or part of it online.

We have been very involved Provincially, assisting the development of the new PRIDE Pre-Service. We will continue to assist with the development of the PRIDE CORE modules that will replace the existing Education program.

Educational opportunities and workshops were presented in each area on a wide variety of topics. Most of our workshops are presented free of charge to Foster Parents. When it is necessary to charge a fee, it is a minimal amount, or refunded following attendance. The following workshops were presented in our area this year and many more community and online training opportunities were advertised to our Foster Parents.

Some of these were:

- SAFE BABIES
 - Safe Babies training- certificate -4 full programs were offered in our area
 - Safe Babies- 12 additional specific topic trainings
 - Safe Babies Core and Refresher in home trainings are available. Caregivers who are unable to attend class were identified as needing a way to access Safe Babies. This “take home” training was developed by our Coordinator in the Shuswap. The Safe Babies Refresher home training has been used in the other communities as well.
- FASD
- Non Violent Crisis Intervention
- First Aid/CPR
- Childhood Anxiety
- The Business Side of Fostering
- Missing Children Policy training
- Complex Trauma (UBC- Okanagan)
- Effects of Trauma
- Trauma, Bonding and Attachment
- Anxiety and Motivational Interviewing
- Substance Misuse
- Bonding and Attachment
- Discipline Without Damage

Training topics reflect the priorities of each area. Training needs are assessed on an ongoing basis. We encourage all Foster Parents to complete Period of Purple Crying online training for Foster Parents as well as the Too Hot for Tots online training.

***Other workshops were planned and offered but were cancelled due to low registration. We believe this is because of homes that have a number of children with various needs, it is becoming more difficult for them to attend or find child care.*

We are planning to offer our own “online web-based” training in 2017. Through our email system, we also advertise many webinars to our caregivers, often at low or no cost.

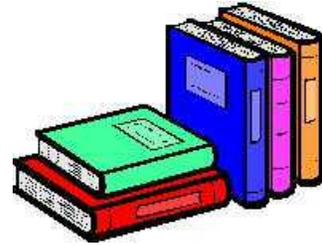
Foster Parent Libraries

All of our library materials are listed on our website:

www.okfosterparents.ca

Our fully stocked libraries continue to be an excellent resource for Foster Parents.

We have a complete set of the Dr Gordon Neufeld DVD series, which has been popular. Other series on DVD proving popular are Foster Parent College, Beyond Consequences by Heather T. Forbes, Dr Karyn Purvis and the Dr. Bruce Perry DVDs.



3. Support to Caregivers, Crisis Response and Stabilization

Crisis support- Coordinators are available, if needed, during a crisis. This service was provided 37 times in 2016

Each area provides Foster Parents with a brochure of local crisis support phone numbers

Support to Caregivers This service is provided in a variety of ways to all caregivers. We have tracked the number of individual Foster homes receiving direct support or information.

- Support/month- an average of 112 homes accessed individual support services each month
- Home visits are provided when requested
- Support to BCFFPA Locals - OFPA provides each local Foster Parent Associations with financial support to allow the them to provide extra training and social events. Coordinators support these events and provide advice as required. We also assist with building and maintaining locals and partnership committees.

4. Peer Support

Support groups - Eleven support groups meet in our area. We encourage, support and advertise these groups to all Foster Parents

Peer mentoring relationships are established, when requested. 3 relationships were formally established

Social events-20 social events were held this year with and for Caregivers. These included Barbecues, Christmas parties and Foster Family Appreciation events.



5. Protocol Support

Coordinators and trained Support Workers provide support during Protocol Investigations only if requested by the Foster Parent. While it is 'strongly recommended' by the Ministry to accept

support from us, there is no requirement to do so. We currently have 17 trained support workers available, including our Coordinators.

Support is also available for assistance with 'Resolution of Issues' as well as non-Protocol issues. Trained support workers are available in each area.

We are tracking with MCFD to see how many people are not choosing to be supported through support workers. In 2016, 17 caregivers received support and 2 chose not to. 13 caregivers received support on non-Protocol issues.

6. Identification of Common Issues

Common issues are identified in a number of ways.

- MCFD and Foster Parent Partnership meetings are held in all areas (19 in total)
- Local and small group meetings in Vernon, Kelowna, Penticton, Princeton, Salmon Arm, Lumby and Armstrong
- Children in Care Committee (Vernon),
- Formal and informal discussions with Foster Parents
- Town Hall meetings
- Team Meetings - Coordinators in each area attend team meetings with the Resources team to discuss any issues identified in the network.
- Resources Team Leaders and OFPA Coordinators meet as a group quarterly to discuss issues and concerns, review goals and outcomes and to share ideas.



Once issues are identified, OFPA Coordinators work with Foster Parents and MCFD to find solutions

7. Recruitment

OFPA works with MCFD to promote fostering in a positive manner and help with public awareness. We provide newspaper articles, distribute posters, put banners up, maintain our web site, and distribute pamphlets. We attend and 'man booths' at Volunteer Fairs and community events.

We received 275 Fostering inquiries in 2016. Inquiries are responded to and forwarded to MCFD. Information Sessions are handled differently in each area. Coordinators attended /assisted at 29 Information sessions. Many inquiries are generated from our website.

Pre-Service orientation was held 6 times with OFPA Coordinators assisting or co-facilitating in the presentations. They are presented differently in each area. We will continue to assist with this training as required.

New Pre-Service materials (PRIDE Pre-Service) have been developed Provincially and will be ready for implementation in 2017. Much of this training will be offered online through Victoria but we are investigating how we can help new/ prospective caregivers to connect locally.

Facebook is used as a means to share information with Foster Parents, but also as a Recruitment Tool. We retain control over this site. A particularly popular set of postings was done for Foster Family Appreciation month in October. We posted an Appreciation message every day in October. Our highest viewing was our Mother's Day Post at 1298 views.

Retention

Much of the services we provide and the relationships we develop with Foster Parents, help and support Foster Parents to continue fostering, when things get challenging. This encouragement is vital to the retention of our valued Foster homes.

Retention activities -

- Letters to the Editor were sent to local newspapers to commend the work Foster Parents do.
- Banners were put up in all areas to celebrate Foster Parents
- Starfish glass ornaments were given to homes who have fostered for more than 10 years
- Thank you Seed gift cards were given to each Foster Parent in all four districts as a token of appreciation for all they do for children.
- We attend the MCFD Foster Parent Appreciation events and all local Fostering events



8. Continuous Quality Improvement

- Monthly team meetings of OFPA Coordinators
- Regular meetings with Resource Team Leaders and teams
- Quarterly meetings of Coordinators and Team Leaders from the Okanagan Service Delivery Area to discuss goals, outcomes and initiatives.
- Satisfaction Surveys are completed every 2-3 years regarding our services

9. Liaise with local Aboriginal Support Agencies

Splatsin Social Workers receive the group emails sent by Shuswap and Vernon Foster Parent Coordinators, to forward to Splatsin Foster Parents. Splatsin Foster Parents are welcome to attend OFPA training and to borrow OFPA library books and DVDs.

Ongoing liaison with the Aboriginal Coordinator in the South Okanagan.

Provincial Committee work

The Okanagan Foster Parents Association supports various Provincial committees with their work on the Foster Care Pre-Service and Education Programs, Recruitment and other projects. We participated this year on committees reviewing the new PRIDE Pre-Service material and Recruitment campaign design. This participation ensures a Foster Parent Support point of view. Often feedback is requested from the BC Federation of Foster Parents Associations, requesting

Foster parent viewpoint on various issues, which we facilitate quickly and easily through our Coordinators email network.

Salute to Foster Parents

Foster Parents are the most valuable part of the Child Welfare system. You are the ones who take children in, care for them, love them, work with their Social Workers and a multitude of others on the 'Team', then tearfully let them go. Back to their families, on to adoptive families or aging out.

We are very humbled and honored to help and support Foster Families on this amazing journey. It has been called "The Hardest Work You Will Ever Love!"

Thank you for the work you do and the care you provide to these amazing kids and their families!



Respectfully Submitted

Okanagan Foster Parents Association
January 2017

Questions or comments may be addressed to:
Joan Kirkbride, Executive Director
execdir@okfosterparents.ca
250-868-9285