

# Update

## from the AFKA Executive Director



I hope you and your families are all doing as well as can be with the challenges we've been facing the last couple years. Many of you I know from various AFKA events and telephone conversations, however I know there are many more of you I have not had the pleasure to yet meet. I'd like to take a little bit of your time to introduce myself as the new Executive Director and to provide you with some updates from our team! I started in this new role on November 1, 2021 with the gates wide open and an amazing team to continue building the future of the AFKA.

I have been with the AFKA for over 9 years now, within a variety of roles. My family history includes being a bio-child within a foster home, a sister to many foster siblings, and a very proud mom to a 22 year old daughter who is adopted and a 19 year old son. I've experienced many situations and environments through my family history; ones I hope to share over time and hopefully help you see I understand your world from these lenses. Before coming to the AFKA, I was a special education teacher and leader in a school division as an educational coach and support to regular classroom teachers. I also have a great deal of training in providing support to individuals and groups through executive coaching, as well as health and wellness coaching; both areas requiring certification to be able to provide support to the level I can. My greatest love through all my training has been in appreciative inquiry, which uses a method of looking into any facet of life/work to see what is working well, what we would like to see more of, how we can overcome challenges together, and celebrating successes along the way.

My team and I have been spending the last few months renewing connections, establishing new relationships, gathering information from all of you through surveys and conversations, and planning some exciting things moving forward. Our biggest goal at this point in time is to gather as much information as we can from our membership to help us in planning new ways to support you through programs, training, and other forms of regular communication. You may see more things coming through your email from us; please take the time to provide us with the feedback we are looking for, so we can better assist the majority of those who respond from our membership. Thank you so much to all of you who have already begun to provide with feedback through the surveys!

It is also my goal to provide you with updates from our regular meetings with the Ministry staff that support our association in order to support you, Alberta's foster and kinship caregivers. I hope you find the information helpful; the amount of information shared will only be dependent on what is happening at that point in time and how much information there is to share.

A few updates I'd like to share for the last couple of months are as follows:

- The AFKA, in partnership with Little Warriors, has a pilot program beginning middle of March 2022 to provide a few different methods of therapeutic support to our foster and kinship caregiver members; more information will be shared via email and on our social media platforms next week.
- Conversations are happening between AFKA and various Ministry staff regarding the increase cost of living, challenges with availability of training for some caregivers, special rates, support plans, home inspections/environmental checklists, Assessment of Care Concerns process and support, administrative reviews and appeals process and support, and methods of resolution support. As policies and practice supports are updated, we will share those with you and be available for conversations about the benefits, challenges and potential impacts of these for you.
- AFKA Bursary applications will be completed online this year, with more information to follow in the next month.
- Nominations for AFKA Provincial Award Winners will be online this year, as well, with more information to follow in the next couple months.
- We are beginning to develop our plans for the October 2022 AFKA Training Conference and Awards Banquet, more information to follow in the next few months.

Please follow us for more information sharing and engagement with members on our Facebook and Instagram accounts. The links are as follows:

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Albertafosterandkinshipassociation>

Instagram [https://www.instagram.com/afka\\_caregiver\\_support/](https://www.instagram.com/afka_caregiver_support/)

If you'd like to become a member of the AFKA, membership is free for all licensed foster caregivers and approved kinship caregivers!

Sign up here:

<https://www.afkaonline.ca/membership/>

Please watch for more information updates, surveys, and focus groups to come your way from us! We truly appreciate your input and feedback, as we want to ensure we are supporting you in the best way we are able to.

Wishing you all the best,

Melissa Jones, BEd, MEd, CPC  
*Executive Director, AFKA*