

Update

from the AFKA Executive Director



March 2022

Dear AFKA Members,

The last month has been very busy in a variety of ways for our association. We have been collecting data from the membership, using that data to guide our decisions, and sharing relevant information with stakeholders and Ministry staff. Many thanks to those of you who took the time to complete the surveys, often only consuming 1-3 minutes. Your feedback is valuable and is being used in all we are doing. We share these surveys, as well as training events through our email distribution list and social media platforms.

Updates for Surveys:

Supports for Caregivers - We presented options to the membership about potential training and support for caregivers through a pilot partnership with Little Warriors. The feedback we received highlighted a large interest in providing the supports suggested, as well as additional possible themes/supports moving forward. These themes and ideas for support will be considered in the future. As a result of the survey feedback and interest level, we now have the AFKA and Little Warriors Caregiver Support Program Pilot running for the next few months. We have caregivers who have signed up for the Be Brave Bridge Program Pilot, the weekly Caregiver Support Groups (theme based), and will have two future training sessions developed for registration in the near future. All these activities are trauma-informed, practical support and guidance with relevant issues and suggestions caregivers can relate to, with a focus on the caregiver. Watch for registration links for the caregiver support groups and the additional workshops through our email distribution, social media platforms, and AFKA website. Based on feedback from these activities, we will be able to see if

they are viable to continue in moving forward after the pilot. Therefore, if you participate in any of these activities, your feedback will be very valuable!

Injury Prevention Education - The Injury Prevention Centre, University of Alberta, approached our association for feedback regarding possible safety topics of interest to foster and kinship caregivers. Thank you to those of you who responded to this survey. It was a survey designed to give ideas to the Injury Prevention Centre team to assist them in developing information for sharing with parents and caregivers through posters, fact sheets, social media posts, etc. All the data we received from you, including additional ideas, was shared with this team. We have already been provided with draft versions of the information they'd like to develop; we will share these through our social media platforms once they are complete and ready for sharing. We are excited to be seen as an important contributor to other organizations supporting families and children.

Foster and Kinship Caregiver Cost of Living Feedback Requested - This survey was created and sent to our membership, to assist in identifying extraordinary expenses experienced during this point in time for foster and kinship caregivers. We asked this question as we needed some concrete data from our membership to take to the Ministry when highlighting this issue. There was a great response from this survey, with the majority of responses referring to significant increases in fuel, utilities, and groceries. The results from this survey were combined and put into a request to the Ministry for discussion. I am hoping to have some more information to share with you in the next reporting period. Thank you so much to all of you who participated in this survey; your voice and experience is important in the AFKA trying to present needs to the Ministry.

Additional Information:

- AFKA Bursary applications will be available online this week; watch for the link and information shared through our email, website and social media platforms
- Planning for our 2022 Training Conference and Awards Banquet is underway; dates for this event will be October 27-30, 2022. Registration will be online and membership will be notified as soon as it is open.
- We are hosting a "Family Fun" art contest for children and youth of foster and kinship caregivers! Watch for more information being share about this in the next couple weeks.
- We are beginning to plan our first virtual focus group session with our membership; more information on this in the next month.
- Information regarding online submissions for the AFKA 2022 Awards will be shared in the near future
- The AFKA's Wellness Blog will be presented weekly in the near future, with submissions from the AFKA team who support you through programming, referrals, and training ... and bring a unique perspective to the voice they wish to share with you
- We have some wonderful training coming your way, through virtual sessions provided by the AFKA. We've had some really great feedback for the sessions provided thus far; we look forward to bringing more practical and thought provoking workshops to you. Please feel free to share any topics or trainers you've experienced and would like us to consider in the future!

I attended a collaborative meeting this last month with Executive Directors from other provincial associations across Canada. It was very enlightening to see the concerns and needs of foster and kinship caregivers are very similar in each province; however, how the associations function is quite varied based on resources and relationships. We are very fortunate to have a great team, Board of Directors, and collaborative relationship with our Ministry, department and agency teams. I look forward to continuing to build on these relationships in working together to do what's best for kids and families in Alberta. We focus on what we can do and continue to have necessary conversations with Ministry, department, and agency staff to ensure our caregivers' voices are heard and that we are able to support our membership to the best of our ability.

New information regarding Alberta PRIDE Training (ie. registration procedures and listing of courses) has been released, with more information to come. For the information we have received to date, please visit the following link:

<https://www.afkaonline.ca/whats-happening/events-training/>

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

Sign up here:

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

Please follow us for more information sharing and engagement with members on our Facebook and Instagram accounts; links below. 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