

Update

from the
AFKA Executive Director



April 2022

Dear AFKA Members,

Happy Spring, everyone! Even amongst the odd day of snowfall and dropping temperatures, the signs of Spring have been a welcome support to my own hope for warmer, sunny days ahead.

Happy National Volunteer Week! The AFKA wouldn't be able to do all we do without the support of volunteers. Our amazing volunteers have supported so many foster and kinship families through our Provincial Mentorship Program, Caregiver Allegation Support Team, Children's Camps, Indigenous Cultural Teachings Weekends, various committees, and fundraising initiatives. Your volunteers at your local and regional levels have also been a large part of being the voice of the caregiver; through bringing forward concerns to the AFKA, as local and regional association presidents, and supporting you through regional networking, training, and resolution support. The AFKA Board of Directors also play a very significant volunteer role by engaging with the local and regional associations, building connections with caregivers, culminating relationships with community partners, and supporting the work done through the AFKA office team. Thank you to ALL the volunteers that help make what we do possible.

Our Caregiver Supports Pilot, in partnership with Little Warriors, is well underway. We still have many weeks left of theme-based group support sessions available for licensed foster and approved kinship caregivers to sign up for, as well as two practical, strategy-based workshops specific to this pilot before the end of June. If you'd like to see what's coming up and register for one or more of them, check them out here:

[Caregiver Supports Pilot - Alberta Foster and Kinship Association \(afkaonline.ca\)](https://afkaonline.ca)

The AFKA and Align met with the Caregiver Supports Unit within the Ministry of Children's Services on April 20, 2022 to discuss the situation for caregivers regarding extraordinary expenses. A briefing note was provided to this Ministry team in March 2022 to share the data gathered from our member survey. We had a good discussion with the team regarding the issues and our thoughts for potential future support. Unfortunately, no clear answers or direction were provided to us, nor was there a commitment with a time frame to follow up with additional information from that team for our caregivers. The team had stated they wanted to try to fully understand what is happening in the regions, as the Ministry is going through a number of reviews and will be able to use the information provided through the briefing note as helpful input into those reviews. They agreed to take the information we shared to the Regional Directors with a goal to see what is happening regionally and to provide further communication, as needed, to regional staff. The AFKA and Align have also requested further discussions for negotiating basic maintenance increases for caregivers. We will continue to update our membership as information is provided.

Our website has been updated with some important links for you to be aware of:

We have an art contest going on!! The [Family Fun Art Contest](#) is open until May 31, 2022. Visit the following link for information on what it's all about and how to enter:

[Family Fun Art Contest - Alberta Foster and Kinship Association \(afkaonline.ca\)](#)

Descriptions of the new [provincial PRIDE pre-service and in-service training](#) for Alberta's foster and kinship caregivers, as well as registration information:

[Children's Services Provincial Caregiver Training - Alberta Foster and Kinship Association \(afkaonline.ca\)](#)

The online [AFKA Bursary application](#) is open until June 15, 2022. Information and online submission here:

[Bursary - Alberta Foster and Kinship Association \(afkaonline.ca\)](#)

The AFKA will be scheduling networking sessions with some of the regions over the spring/summer this year. We look forward to meeting with caregivers and CFS staff to have some focused discussions and share information about local and regional associations. Contact your local and regional association president to find out more about meetings, events, information or support related to your region, as well as how to become involved in your local or regional association:

[Regional and Local Association Presidents - Alberta Foster and Kinship Association \(afkaonline.ca\)](#)

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/>

Additional Information:

- 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.
- Online submissions for the AFKA 2022 Awards will be open the first week of May 2022
- There have been questions raised at the Ministry level regarding mileage rates. To clarify, the increase seen by some were at the Federal level of government, not the provincial level. The government of Alberta did not receive an increase in mileage rates and, therefore, remain the same for staff and for caregivers.
- The provincial review of caregiver supports is currently underway. The AFKA was surveyed based on programming; caregivers will be contacted in some format in the near future for feedback. More information about participation for caregivers will be shared once we receive it.
- Updates to the Children's Services Enhancement Act Policy Manual are released twice per year. The next update is scheduled for release in May, with updates to both policy and practice. These updates will be shared to our membership through email, so watch for that information to come next month.

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