

# ALBERTA FOSTER AND KINSHIP ASSOCIATION

## Provincial Mentorship Program



## Foster Mentee Handbook

Last Revised April 2022



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## Foreword

The Alberta Foster and Kinship Association is very pleased to offer a Provincial Mentorship Program to foster and kinship caregivers across Alberta. We have been very fortunate to have our program in place since 2013, and are especially grateful for the support our mentors have been providing to foster and kinship caregivers throughout the foster and kinship caregiver communities.

It is well known that providing a home for a child in care goes beyond traditional parenting. New foster or kinship caregivers often feel isolated and struggle with adapting to their new role. As a result of their struggles, many quickly burn out or become frustrated with trying to navigate their way through the system and end up closing their homes.

In consultation with stakeholders (i.e., CS Ministry and AFKA Collaborative Provincial Steering Committee, CFSA Placement Resource representatives, AFKA Board of Directors, AFKA Regional and District Association Presidents), it was agreed there is a desperate need to have a provincial mentorship program; a program to assist with retention of new foster and kinship homes coming into the system.

As a result of these ongoing needs provincially, the Provincial Mentorship Program exists to promote positive experiences in foster and kinship homes. In order to do this, mentors are recruited from the many experienced and knowledgeable foster and kinship caregivers in Alberta. New foster and kinship families receive long-term support from Provincial Mentorship Program mentors during their first year of providing care to assist with systemic issues/procedures and various other topics that may arise; other caregivers may access the long-term support if requested. Short-term mentoring may occur for all foster and kinship homes, as needed, to provide guidance and support throughout situations as they arise.

The short-term and long-term results of this provincial program are, and will continue to be, beneficial for all stakeholders: the mentees, the mentors, the child intervention system, and the children in care. The benefits for mentees, as well as mentors, will range from increasing skills, confidence, knowledge and motivation to feeling less isolated, having more support through an increase in networking with others, and having a better sense of how the greater child intervention system works provincially. For the child intervention system, benefits will range from assistance with meeting the needs of local CFS offices/DFNAs/Agencies to improving placement stability and better retention of foster and kinship homes. In the larger picture, children in care will profit the greatest in many aspects as a result of these benefits.

We hope you will find your experiences within the program to be extremely rewarding; through connection with others, building networks of your own, sharing stories, making the most of skills you already possess, acquiring new skills, and continuing to make memories that will last a lifetime.

Thank you for your dedication to creating the best possible outcomes for children and youth in care.

Warm Regards,

Melissa Jones  
AFKA Executive Director

# Introduction

Welcome to the Provincial Mentorship Program!

Alberta's first official mentorship program grew out of a pilot project developed and implemented by the Calgary Region in conjunction with the Calgary and District Foster Parents Association in 2007. The Calgary Region program continues to support new foster and kinship caregivers, creating a positive impact on caregiver retention. A larger province-wide program was established by the AFKA as a pilot from June 2012-March 2014 in the Edmonton Region and North Central Region. As of April 2014, the Provincial Mentorship Program expanded to encompass the province as a whole and to provide support to foster and kinship families, new and experienced. Due to the Calgary Region providing support through mentoring to newly licensed foster families and approved kinship homes within this region, the AFKA Provincial Mentorship Program will provide support in the Calgary Region to experienced homes through short term mentoring as required in addition to the many other supports and services offered by the AFKA to all provincial foster and kinship caregivers.

We hope this publication will be useful to mentors involved in the mentoring program. We wish you well on your mentoring adventure and are here to support you along the way.

## Why become involved?

### Mentors

- Continuous update and growth in knowledge of Child Intervention System
- Networking opportunities and recognition of desire to support others
- Sense of accomplishment by providing support to fellow foster and kinship caregivers
- Develop and refine one's own interpersonal skills
- Support through various AFKA networking platforms
- Program training hours credited as earned
- AFKA Membership

### Mentees

- Gain a greater understanding of role as a foster or kinship caregiver
- Increase networking and sense of belonging
- Receive impartial and trusted advice and guidance
- Develop new skills and knowledge
- Increase confidence and motivation to challenge oneself to achieve new goals and explore alternatives
- Safe and confidential
- Create action plans that work with the family
- AFKA Membership

### Child Intervention System

- Meet the needs of local CFS offices, DFNA's and Agencies
- Improve retention of foster and kinship families
- Improve motivation and sense of support among foster and kinship families
- Improve quality of care
- Improve placement stability
- Experience positive and supportive home environments
- Improve consistency in support programs

## Our Mission

Together We Can: Empowering Alberta Foster and Kinship Caregivers ... Every Day

## Our Vision

The AFKA Provincial Mentorship Program believes in foster and kinship caregivers. Through collaboration, training, mentoring and non-threatening support, families who care for children will feel empowered and able to successfully self-advocate. In a safe environment, foster and kinship caregivers will be supported to develop confidence, motivation and additional skills as caregivers. It is through this positive self-growth that we, as individuals, can have a positive impact on the lives of others.

## Program Objectives

The objectives of this provincial mentorship program are to:



- Provide opportunities for experienced foster and kinship caregivers to further develop their own knowledge base through targeted mentorship training
- Provide opportunities for experienced foster and kinship caregivers to further their interpersonal skills by providing support to others
- Promote and support the recruitment and retention of new foster and kinship caregivers
- Provide confidential support to new foster and kinship caregivers during their first year of providing care
- Provide support as needed to all foster and kinship caregivers
- Provide a venue for collaboration and networking

## Two Program Options:

### Long-Term Support

For all licensed foster and approved kinship caregivers in Alberta

Provide consistent, one-year support with a designated mentor

Available to caregivers, post assessment of care concern

Foster and kinship caregivers will be matched with an approved mentor within their own program and region (where possible)

### Short-Term Support

For all licensed foster and approved kinship caregivers in Alberta

Provide temporary support with a designated mentor as situations arise

Foster and kinship caregivers will be temporarily matched with an approved mentor within their own program and region

# The Referral and Matching Process



Participation in the Provincial Mentorship Program can occur through two methods: application and referral.

To participate in the Provincial Mentorship Program, online submission forms for application or referral can be completed on the AFKA website at <https://www.afkaonline.ca/programs/mentorship/>.

## Definitions

### Application:

- Caregivers who want to provide/receive support and match the criteria can submit a Mentor/Mentee Application form directly to the program. Mentorship program staff will contact the support worker (or equivalent) to provide a reference for the application of a new mentor. All mentor applications are reviewed by program staff with the potential mentor's support worker.
- Caregivers who would like to receive additional support from a program mentor can submit a Mentee Application Form directly to the program.

### Referral:

- Child Intervention Workers suggest a referral to potential mentor and mentee candidates who fulfill the necessary qualifications/criteria. If the potential mentor or mentee is interested, a referral can be submitted. All Mentor referrals are reviewed by mentorship program staff with the Support Worker (or equivalent).
- Mentor referral forms serve to assess a mentor's background, skills, and experiences. Mentee referral forms, on the other hand, allow a mentee to request further guidance in a range of areas that an experienced mentor typically encounters. Mentor referrals are required; mentee referrals are not.
- Mentor referrals may be requested at times other than during the program intake process to ensure mentors maintain a good working relationship with Children's Services/DFNA/Agency staff and are able to continue to positively support program mentees. Additional referrals will be requested at the discretion of the Mentorship Program staff or AFKA Executive Director.

### Matching:

- When matching mentors and mentees, a variety of factors are taken into consideration, including but not limited to, the needs of the mentee, skills and experience of the mentor, personalities, and geographic location. Typically, mentees have placements in their home prior to matching. However, should a new caregiver like to have a conversation with a mentor ahead of a placement, this may be accommodated through a short-term match.

Mentor	Mentee	Mentor-Mentee Relationship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a currently licensed foster or approved kinship caregiver with unique knowledge and experience to share with an individual in need of support</li> <li>• has a willingness to provide support to other foster caregivers</li> <li>• is approved by support worker (or equivalent) as an appropriate person to provide effective support and has a good working relationship with their department/agency/DFNA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A currently licensed foster or approved kinship caregiver who is advised by a mentor</li> <li>• a person who would like the extra support of a mentor for guidance navigating various aspects of the Child Intervention System</li> <li>• practices and applies what has been learned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an agreement between a mentor and mentee sharing experience and expertise</li> <li>• a comprehensive process that includes matching, additional training and clear goals</li> <li>• confidential conversations</li> <li>• goal is to create a lasting source of support even after the official match is over</li> </ul>

# MENTOR

## Characteristics

- Eager to learn
- Desires to help
- Able and willing to work as a team player
- Patient
- Nonjudgmental
- Positive role model
- Acts with courtesy and respect
- Good listener
- Inspiring and Motivating
- Respects differences among people or groups from various backgrounds
- Effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills

## Roles & Responsibilities

### Follow program expectations:

- Complete mandatory orientation session virtually or via phone
- Complete all required forms (i.e.: Confidentiality, program expectation agreement, data collection consent)
- Regular contact for one year with mentee within the long-term support level (e.g., text, call, email, etc.)
- Submit communication reports after every contact and attempted contact with mentee
- Complete mid-year feedback surveys and long-term support exit surveys within 5 days of receipt
- Keep in touch with important program communications, responding to all emails and phone calls within 48 hours
- Notify program staff and mentee of vacation time or time away limiting ability to provide mentoring
- Submit expense reports for in-person mentoring, meetings, and program specific training to program coordinator, as approved
- Arrive on time for in-person meetings with mentee (or must contact mentee at least 24 hours prior to meeting to reschedule)

### Provide straightforward guidance based on past experiences in areas such as:

- Navigating the child intervention system
- Finding support in the community
- Building relationships
- Getting involved in the caregiver community
- Handling crises
- Working with bio families
- Day-to-day problem solving
- Goals and action plans that will work for the mentee

### Work with mentee in various ways:

- Provides direct **guidance** and **support** to answer the concerns of mentee
- Builds a **positive relationship** and climate for open communication
- **Motivates and inspires** mentee to take action or to keep going
- Gives and receives **constructive and honest feedback** in a positive manner
- Respects mentee's **trust** and remains **confidential** with received information
- Assists mentee in obtaining additional **resources**
- Agrees on goals and sets an **action plan** with mentee
- Guides mentee to use the **Communication Chain** for various issues as they arise



# MENTEE

## Characteristics

- Eager to learn
- Patient
- Acts with courtesy and respect
- Team player
- Sets goals
- Accepts personal responsibility
- Takes risks

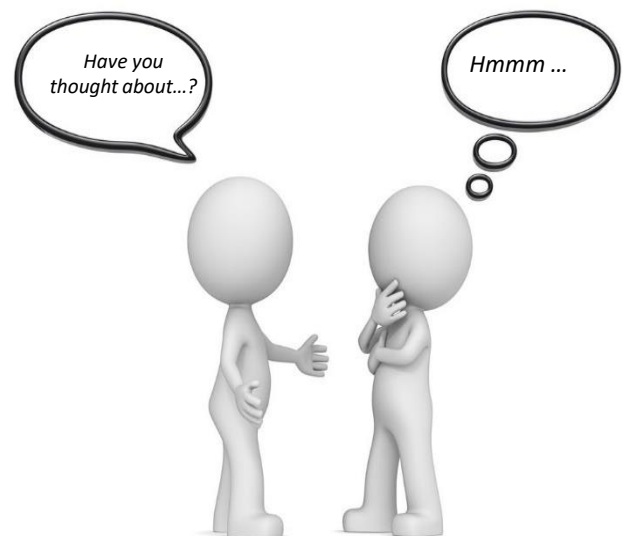
## Roles & Responsibilities

### Follow program expectations:

- Participate in mandatory orientation session virtually or via phone
- Sign program forms (i.e., Confidentiality, Program Expectations Agreement, Data Collection, Release of Liability)
- Regular contact with mentor when matched (long-term support)
- Complete match Mid-Point Mentee Survey online or via phone and Mentee Program Exit Survey via online survey (long-term support)
- Arrive on time for in person meetings with mentor  
(or must contact mentor at least 24 hours prior to meeting to reschedule)

### Work with mentor in various ways:

- Take **initiative** to develop learning as needed
- Take initiative to **ask for support** from mentor as needed
- Develop an **action plan** with assistance from your mentor
- Act with **courtesy** and **respect** in communicating with mentor
- **Practice** and **demonstrate** what has been learned through the mentoring process
- Return phone calls, emails, text, etc. promptly and **be prompt** with commitments or meetings with mentor
- Forever support networks and friendships are the goal of this program, so **take a chance** to get to know your mentor and others you are introduced to. There are a great number of AMAZING people going through, or have gone through, what you are or may be experiencing!





## Communication and Feedback

Communication with the Provincial Mentorship Program staff is essential to the success of the program. Information gathered from our mentors and mentees provide the AFKA greater insight into the challenges foster and kinship care families face across the province, how we can better support foster and kinship caregivers, in addition to what is working well within the child intervention system.

### Ongoing Monitoring

- Mentors who are matched for long-term support are required to complete and submit communication reports detailing progress and possible issues after every contact and attempted contact with their matched mentee.
- Mentors matched for short-term support will submit an online report detailing the purpose and results of the support provided.
- If necessary, any comments will be followed up by staff.

### Mentee Mid-Point Survey / Mentor Mid-Year Survey

- Mentees will be asked to complete a short survey mid-way into their match online or via phone with program staff.
- Mentors will be asked to complete a mid-year survey. *(For those who have at least 6 months program involvement and who have/are participating in at least 1 match)*
- If necessary, any comments will be followed up by staff.

### Mentee and Mentor Program Exit/End of Match Survey

- Mentors and mentees will be asked to complete an Exit or End of Match Survey at the end of the long-term mentorship match. The surveys will be completed online and submitted directly to our office. If not completed online, program staff may call to complete the survey via phone. If necessary, any comments will be followed up.

The Provincial Mentorship staff will notify you when a survey is due.

From time to time, it may be requested of mentors/mentees to complete additional surveys to gain more program insight.

Throughout participation in the program, individuals may be contacted to ensure program staff have complete understanding of issues reported based on information received from reports and surveys. This will assist the Provincial Mentorship Program staff to act more readily and appropriately to information received.



## Confidentiality

A successful mentor-mentee partnership is based on trust, honesty, and confidentiality.

Secure methods to keep documentation private must be always observed, by all participants involved in the Provincial Mentorship Program (Ensure documents are locked up when not in use and never left unattended.)

Confidentiality forms must be read, signed, and turned over to the Provincial Mentorship Program prior to any matches being set up. The items below are included in the confidentiality agreements:

### Mentor Confidentiality

- All communication records, communication reports, and other materials containing personal information are subject to secure record keeping procedures.
- You will not refer to your mentee by name or share identifying characteristics in the course of discussion with other people or in meetings. You may do so with Provincial Mentorship Program staff and CFS/Agency/DFNA staff, if required.
- I am committed to confidentiality in this matter. Further, I am aware this confidentiality may be exempted by court subpoena or legislative requirements. These exemptions are inclusive of statements made by my mentees of a suicidal nature, intent to harm others, actions that put child(ren) in the client's care at risk of physical or emotional harm, as well as evidence of child/spouse/elder physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. If one or more of these exceptions arise, you are required to report the statement and/or evidence to the Children's Services Crisis Line. If an "Assessment of Care Concern" occurs due to an allegation, mentoring will cease until a final outcome has been released. You are also required to notify Provincial Mentorship Staff of these situations.
- Any involvement beyond the mentor-mentee relationship, as outlined in the handbook, is considered inappropriate during the mentoring term.

### Mentee Confidentiality

- All communication reports and other materials containing personal information are subject to secure record keeping procedures.
- Your mentor will not refer to you by name or share identifying characteristics in the course of discussion with other people or in meetings. They may do so with Provincial Mentorship Program staff and CFS/Agency/DFNA staff, if required.
- I am assured that the mentor is committed to confidentiality in this matter. Further, I am aware this confidentiality may be exempted by court subpoena or legislative requirements. These exemptions are inclusive of statements made by myself of a suicidal nature, intent to harm others, actions that put child(ren) in the client's care at risk of physical or emotional harm, as well as evidence of child/spouse/elder physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. If one or more of these exceptions arise, the mentor is required to report the statement and/or evidence to the Children's Services Crisis Line. If an "Assessment of Care Concern" occurs due to an allegation, mentoring will cease until a final outcome has been released. Knowing this information, I am consenting to being matched to a mentor through this program.
- Any involvement beyond the mentor-mentee relationship, as outlined in the AFKA Mentee handbook, is considered inappropriate during a match I am assigned through this program.

## Dispute Resolution - Communication Chain & Important Contact Information

This process is used to resolve an issue, report concerns, or acquire information. If the communication chain is used efficiently, issues are typically resolved quickly.



If a mentee has a dispute/conflict which needs to be resolved, they can be directed to follow the process of **Dispute Resolution for Child Intervention as outlined by Children's Services**. This process can be reviewed on their website

<https://www.alberta.ca/dispute-resolution-for-child-intervention.aspx>

If a mentor or a mentee has a question or needs more information about the **AFKA provincial support programs** (CAST, Legal Assistance, Extended Insurance) or general support:

Alberta Foster and Kinship Association: 780-429-9923/1-800-667-2372

If your mentee needs **crisis support** (child abuse, neglect, emergency respite or other concerns to children, youth, and families):

### EMERGENCY CONTACTS

- Child Intervention Crisis Line: 1-800-638-0715
- Mental Health Help Line: 1-877-303-2642
- Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-387-5437
- Family Violence Info Line: 310-1818 (toll-free)
- Income Support Contact Centre: 1-866-644-5135
  - Emergency needs such as food, shelter, and transportation

If you have a question or need more information about mentor-mentee relationships, communication issues, communication reports, referral or application forms, mentorship handbook, surveys, confidentiality issues:

AFKA Provincial Mentorship Program Staff  
AFKA Office 780-429-9923 / 1-800-667-2372

If your mentee requires information specific to their needs or has concerns as a foster or kinship caregiver (e.g., accessing respite, dealing with behavioural issues, communication with other team members):

Mentee's Support Worker (or equivalent)

If your mentee requires more information about **child-specific issues** (i.e., all activities and decisions related to the child):

Child's Caseworker

## AFKA CONTACT INFORMATION

Alberta Foster and Kinship Association	
<p>Alberta Foster and Kinship Association (AFKA) 303, 9488 – 51 Avenue NW Edmonton, AB T6E5A6</p> <p>Phone: (780) 429-9923 Toll Free: 1-800-667-2372 Fax: (780) 426-7151</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:info@afkaonline.ca">info@afkaonline.ca</a></p> <p>Office hours: Monday-Friday, 8:15 am - 4:30 pm</p> <p><u>AFKA Membership:</u></p> <p>Visit <a href="https://www.afkaonline.ca/membership">https://www.afkaonline.ca/membership</a> to apply online. Membership Term January 1 – December 31.</p> <p>All licensed foster and approved kinship caregivers are now eligible for a complimentary AFKA membership</p>	<p>Call the AFKA or visit our website to access the following programs, supports and services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for Kinship and Foster Families</li> <li>• Provincial Mentorship Program</li> <li>• Caregiver Allegation Support Team (CAST)</li> <li>• Resolution Supports</li> <li>• Legal Assistance Program</li> <li>• Extended Insurance Program</li> <li>• AFKA Bursary Program</li> <li>• Training hosted by AFKA</li> </ul>
<p>AFKA Support Line (Monday – Friday, 8:15 am to 4:30 pm)</p>	<p>Toll Free: 1-800-667-2372</p>
<p>Request for AFKA One on One Support:</p>	<p><a href="https://www.afkaonline.ca/general/request-for-one-on-one-support/">https://www.afkaonline.ca/general/request-for-one-on-one-support/</a></p>
<p>Online Links to Foster &amp; Kinship Caregiver Resources</p>	<p><a href="https://www.afkaonline.ca/resources/foster-and-kinship-caregiver-resources/">https://www.afkaonline.ca/resources/foster-and-kinship-caregiver-resources/</a></p>
<p>AFKA Board of Directors</p>	<p>Please visit the AFKA website for a current contact listing for the AFKA Board of Directors: <a href="https://www.afkaonline.ca/contact/board-of-directors/">https://www.afkaonline.ca/contact/board-of-directors/</a></p>



AFKA Website: <https://www.afkaonline.ca>



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



[https://www.instagram.com/afka\\_caregiver\\_support/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/afka_caregiver_support/?hl=en)

## Additional Resources

The following are links you may find useful:

- 1) **AFKA Provincial Mentorship Program online** (<https://www.afkaonline.ca/programs/mentorship/>) Provides online submission links to communication reports, expense forms, as well as up-to-date information on the program and additional resources.
- 2) **AFKA website** (<https://www.afkaonline.ca>) – AFKA provides support to foster and kinship families, advocates for the rights of children and youth in care, educates the community about foster and kinship care, provides and arranges for training and social gatherings, and serves as a liaison between foster and kinship families and Alberta Children & Youth Services. Offers support programs to foster and kinship families including: (CAST) Caregiver Allegation Support Team, Legal Assistance Program, Citation Awards Program, Annual Training Conference, and membership with numerous perks.
- 3) **Government of Alberta Staff Contacts** (<https://www.alberta.ca/staff-directory.cfm>) - You can input any government employee name in the “Find staff or a department” search bar, and it will give you their contact information. When you click on “Organizational Unit”, it will show you their entire unit. This is handy when you get new workers, are away from your contact information, or if you need to contact their team supervisor.
- 4) **Foster and Kinship Care Program - Alberta Children’s Services** (<https://www.alberta.ca/foster-and-kinship-care.aspx>) - Provides updated information on the Foster and Kinship Care program and services.
- 5) **Listing of First Nation Agencies - Alberta Children’s Services** - (<http://child.alberta.ca/home/517.cfm>)
- 6) **Downloadable PDFs:**  
*Foster Care Handbook*  
<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/foster-care-handbook-guide-caregivers-2021>  
*Kinship Care Handbook*  
<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/kinship-care-handbook-a-toolkit-for-kinship-caregivers>  
Compensation Guide for Foster and Kinship Caregivers  
<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/compensation-guide-for-foster-and-kinship-caregivers>
- 7) **Provincial Caregiver Training**  
Details on provincial caregiver training, participant preparations and expectations, resources and module summaries can be found on the AFKA website at: <https://www.afkaonline.ca/childrens-services-provincial-caregiver-training/>

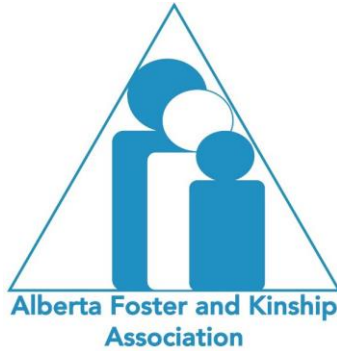


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- Zachary, Lois J. (2012). *The Mentor's Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationship* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
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## **APPENDICES**

- A. AFKA Code of Ethics for Foster and Kinship Caregiver
- B. AFKA Entitlements of Foster and Kinship Caregivers
- C. AFKA Mentorship Program Expectations Agreement
- D. Mentor Confidentiality Agreement
- E. AFKA Data Collection Consent Form
- F. AFKA Provincial Mentorship Program Release of Liability



CODE OF ETHICS  
FOR ALBERTA FOSTER AND KINSHIP CAREGIVERS  
PREPARED BY THE ALBERTA FOSTER AND KINSHIP ASSOCIATION  
APPROVED by the AFKA Board of Directors and the Ministry of Children's Services  
October 1 , 2019

PREAMBLE

Foster and kinship caregivers employ a multi-disciplinary body of knowledge, methods and skills in performing professional services and activities. These activities are aimed at facilitating, maintaining and enhancing the developing child's ability to function as a contributing member of society. Further, foster and kinship caregivers are committed to the Ministry of Children's Services, the foster and kinship caregiving profession and the community.

COMMITMENT TO THE CHILD IN CARE AND HIS/HER FAMILY

In recognition of the public trust that is a result of children placed in their care, foster and kinship caregivers recognize their obligation in providing a safe, nurturing environment conducive to the development of each child in care to his or her full potential. In order to fulfill this obligation, the foster and kinship caregivers will make a commitment to the children and to work with the child's family and other professionals.

Foster and Kinship Caregivers Agree To:

1. Regard the welfare of the child as the primary obligation.
2. Respect the worth of all individuals regardless of ability, religion, sex or natural ancestry in the capacity as a foster and kinship caregivers.
3. Deal with children in care and their family in a just and considerate manner.
4. Be discreet with information of a sensitive or confidential nature, sharing such information with other professions only if it is felt that such information would benefit the child, their family or if sharing is requested by law.
5. Refrain from unprofessional comments about the child in care or their family.
6. Avoid exploiting\* the relationship with any child in care or their family.
7. Work with the child welfare authorities to inform appropriate individuals and agencies of the special needs of a child in care. Assist other individuals and agencies in their endeavors to provide services, treatment and care.
8. Accept any reluctance of the child in care to discuss his/her past circumstances.
9. Hold themselves responsible and advocate for the quality of services preformed for children in care.



#### COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY

Foster and Kinship Care are community social concerns. Foster and kinship caregivers recognize their responsibilities towards the community by sharing responsibility in developing sound social policies and programs.

Foster and Kinship Caregivers Agree To:

10. Share in the responsibility of improving services provided to children by the Ministry of Children's Services.
11. Acknowledge the right and responsibility of the public to participate in the formulation of Children's Services policy, and Foster and Kinship Care policy.
12. Evaluate, through professional procedures, the conditions of services through the Ministry of Children's Services and foster and kinship care. Make known to the proper authorities if serious deficiencies exist.
13. Protect the welfare of children against undesirable infringements by advocating for children's rights and opportunities.

#### COMMITMENT TO THE FOSTERING AND KINSHIP PROFESSION AND FOR THE ASSOCIATION

Foster and kinship caregivers recognize the necessity for continuing education and individual growth within the profession. Foster and kinship caregivers recognize the need for providing a positive and responsive situation to enhance the competency of foster and kinship caregivers. They recognize and encourage the retention of competent and dedicated foster and kinship caregivers.

Foster and Kinship Caregivers Agree To:

14. Distinguish clearly in public between statements and actions that are made by an individual or as a representative of a foster or kinship caregiver association.
15. Recognize that a profession, and a professional association, must accept responsibility for the conduct of its members and understand that its members' conduct may be regarded as representative of all foster and kinship caregivers.
16. Participate and conduct oneself in a responsible manner in the development and implementation of policies affecting children in care.
17. Cooperate in the recruitment and retention of foster and kinship caregivers by providing honest and objective information.
18. Treat with respect the finding, news and actions of fellow foster and kinship caregivers and use appropriate channels such as foster or kinship caregiver organizations to express any opinions.
19. Accord just and equitable treatment to all foster and kinship caregivers in the exercise of their rights and responsibilities and support them when accused or when they perceive they are being unfairly treated.
20. Refrain from exploiting one's relationships within the Profession, the Association and the Community.
21. Maintain the integrity of the fostering and kinship caregiving professions and the Association by basing criticism on careful evaluation of facts.
22. Make appropriate use of the time and privileges accorded by one's position as a foster or kinship caregiver or as an Association official. Accept no gratuities or gifts of significance that may influence one's judgment in the exercise of professional duties.
23. Maintain intellectual honesty and integrity by appropriate interpretation and use of all reference materials, research studies and literature.

24. Accept one's own responsibility towards continuing education and personal development.
25. Accept responsibility to work toward assuring that ethical standards are adhered to by any individual or organization providing foster or kinship care service.

#### COMMITMENT TO PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND PLACEMENT PRACTICES

Foster and kinship caregivers recognize their role and contribution within the Ministry of Children's Services and in doing so acknowledge and support positive professional practices between themselves and other professionals. Sound relationships with government representatives, community agencies and other professionals are built upon personal integrity, dignity and mutual respect.

Foster and Kinship Caregivers Agree To:

26. Accept child placements only when the terms, policies and practices lead you to believe that your professional skills are adequate to meet needs of the children.
27. Negotiate and execute the terms of all working agreements fairly and honestly.
28. Adhere to the conditions of a working agreement or to the terms of the placement until either has been terminated legally or by mutual consent.
29. Accept no commitment that will impair the effectiveness of one's professional service and permit no exploitation of their professional position.
30. Maintain an attitude of mutual respect when working with other professionals involved in child care.
31. Follow appropriate channels of resolution when dealing with specific concerns or difficulties.

#### ACCEPTABLE CONDUCT

Should a foster or kinship caregiver fail to abide by the Code of Ethics as set forth, disciplinary action may be taken which can result in censure, suspension or expulsion from the Association or may require corrective action within defined time limits.

**\*DEFINITION:**

Exploit: to make use of selfishly or unethically.



# ENTITLEMENTS OF FOSTER AND KINSHIP CAREGIVERS

July 1, 2017

## INTENT STATEMENT

The Ministry of Children's Services, in partnership with the foster and kinship caregivers of Alberta, is committed to the belief that "all children have an inherent right to a loving and nurturing home environment and a right to belong to a family and know where they came from".

The intent of this document is to honor the role foster and kinship caregivers play in providing a temporary place a child in care can call home. Foster and kinship caregivers are critical partners in supporting and implementing case planning outcomes for children in care and, although the rights of the child placed in a foster or kinship home is paramount, respect must also be given to the entitlements of the foster and kinship caregivers who care for these children. Critical to the success of the permanency planning process is mutual respect and appreciation for each member of the service planning team and the value they bring to the permanency planning process.

## PREAMBLE

- WHEREAS Foster and kinship caregivers provide loving homes enabling children to endure the hardship associated with separation and loss of family; and
- WHEREAS Foster and kinship caregivers provide safe and loving homes to these children, ensuring their mental, emotional and physical needs are met; and
- WHEREAS Foster and kinship caregivers demonstrate extraordinary patience and provide support to help these children and their families overcome hardships; and
- WHEREAS By offering the services of one's family, foster and kinship caregivers commit to tremendous sacrifice and selflessness; and
- WHEREAS Foster and kinship caregiving can be a lifetime commitment to a child or a meaningful commitment to a child during his or her lifetime; and
- WHEREAS Foster and kinship caregivers' commitment to providing care to Alberta's children is a valuable contribution that is recognized and appreciated by the Province of Alberta; and
- WHEREAS Foster and kinship caregivers, by assuming responsibility for the care of a child, endeavor to make the child aware of his or her familial, cultural, social and religious heritage; and
- WHEREAS Foster and kinship caregivers, when caring for an Indigenous child, do consider and respect the child's unique Indigenous culture, heritage, spirituality and traditions and endeavor to preserve the child's cultural identity.
- WHEREAS the ENTITLEMENTS OF FOSTER AND KINSHIP CAREGIVERS are included in the policy of the Ministry of Children's Services in order to recognize the unique nature of the foster or kinship caregiving relationship, as well as the foster and kinship caregiver communities.
- WHEREAS the inclusion of the ENTITLEMENTS OF FOSTER AND KINSHIP CAREGIVERS in the policy of the Ministry of Children's Services will encourage province-wide uniformity in foster and kinship care in Alberta.

## INTERPRETATION

In this document:

"At risk behaviours" means...	"behaviours that might reasonably be expected to present an imminent danger to the child and others"
"Authority" means...	"the authority as established under the Child and Family Services Act"
"Child" means...	"a person under the age of 18 years"
"Child in care" means...	"a person who is in need of protective services for the purposes, described under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act"
"Compensation" means...	"payment for goods, services, or loss"
"Court" means...	"the Provincial Court of Alberta, or in the case of an appeal from that Court, the Court of Queen's Bench or the Court of Appeal of Alberta"
"Director" means...	"a person designated by the Minister as Director under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act"
"Documentation" means...	"any record of information in any form, inclusive of books, documents, maps, drawings, photographs, letters, vouchers and papers and any other information that is written, photographed, recorded or stored in any manner"
"File" means...	"paper or electronic record"
"Foster caregiver(s)" means...	"a person approved and licensed as a foster caregiver in the Province of Alberta by a director, under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, or through an agency that has been delegated by a Child and Family Services Authority or Delegated First Nation Agency"

"Kinship Caregiver(s)" means...	"an extended family member of a child, or a person who has a significant relationship with the child or is a member of the child's cultural community."
"Placement" means...	"the temporary home that a child with legal status under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act is placed"
"Policy" means...	"a preferred course or method of action selected from among alternatives in light of given conditions, whether orally or in writing, to guide and determine present and future decisions as determined by the Minister of Children's Services from time to time, in order to protect the safety and best interests of children"
"Respite" means...	"the temporary placement of a child outside of the foster or kinship home or the provision of a person in the foster or kinship home for the purpose of providing short term rest or relief to the foster or kinship caregivers or foster or kinship family"
"Case Plan for the care of the child" means...	"a document that specifies the placement objectives and goals to be accomplished by completion of all tasks in order to meet the needs of the child"
"Supports for Permanency" means	"services to eligible families who adopt or take private guardianship of children under the permanent guardianship of the director"
"Support services" means...	"support services defined in policy to assist the foster or kinship family to maintain a stable placement for the child"

## 1. INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING

(Subject to the laws of the Province of Alberta such as the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act)

- (1) Foster and kinship caregivers are entitled to representation and involvement as:
  - (a) members through their Provincial Association, being the Alberta Foster Parent Association (AFPA); and
  - (b) members through their local Associations.
- (2) Foster and kinship caregivers are entitled to involvement as members of the multi-disciplinary decision making team, for the children in their care, and are entitled to actively participate in the decisions affecting the children in their care such as case planning, conferences, reviews, and education planning.
- (3) Foster and kinship caregivers are entitled to communicate directly with the professionals who work with the children in their care such as teachers, counselors and therapists.

## 2. SUPPORT

- (1) Foster and kinship caregivers are entitled to be treated with dignity, respect and consideration in the following matters:
  - (a) acceptance or refusal of a placement;
  - (b) a request for the removal of a child from their home when all other efforts to sustain the placement have been unsuccessful;
  - (c) the maintenance of the day-to-day management, structure and rules of their home subject to the policy of the Ministry of Children's Services;
  - (d) the continuation of their own family values and beliefs, while the Foster and kinship caregiver also honor the rights, values and beliefs of the child(ren) in their care;
  - (e) if the return of the child to his or her parents or guardians is not possible and no extended family placements are available or appropriate, consideration for permanent placement should be given to the current caregivers prior to any general adoption or private guardianship placement options;



- (f) consideration as the first choice for placement when a former child in care returns into care;
- (g) to support continuity and stability of relationships, foster and kinship caregivers should be considered as a first choice for placement if a sibling of a child already in their home, comes into care;
- (h) adequate supports to ensure their safety and their family's safety, when dealing with a child who is exhibiting at risk behaviors, including the provision of respite care in accordance with policy;
- (i) foster and kinship caregivers are entitled to support to manage loss and separation issues associated with termination of a placement or the death of a child in their care that honors their privacy and if it is in accordance with policy.

### 3. INFORMATION

- (1) Foster and kinship caregivers are entitled to disclosure of information pertaining to their foster or kinship home and the children in their care, as permitted by present legislation such as the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act:
  - (a) a plan, for children placed in their home within timelines set out in policy;
  - (b) access to written and/or oral recorded information regarding a potential placement (including but not limited to the child's birth family, cultural heritage, health history and behavioural needs). In the case of an emergency placement, the foster or kinship caregiver shall receive the information when it becomes available;
  - (c) timely notification of all meetings and case conferences that foster or kinship caregivers are permitted by policy to attend affecting a child in their home;
  - (d) notification of all decisions pertaining to a child in their care;
  - (e) notification of any court hearings, including the time and location of the hearing in accordance with the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. The Foster and kinship caregivers acknowledge that the Court may not permit them to attend court hearings;

- (f) timely notice of changes made in the case plan for the care of a child in their care;
- (g) timely updates on all significant information relevant to a child in their care;
- (h) earliest possible notification of the termination of a placement;
- (i) a clear explanation of the expectations for involvement with the child's birth family;
- (j) upon request, access to legislation, policy, procedures, protocols and documents pertaining to fostering or kinship care.

#### 4. COMPENSATION

- (1) Foster and kinship caregivers are entitled to receive compensation to provide for the needs of the children in their care.
- (2) Foster and kinship caregivers are entitled to reimbursement for the following expenses, incurred as a direct result of fostering or kinship care if in accordance with policy and in such amounts as permitted by policy:
  - (a) all core training related expenses inclusive of meals, mileage, parking, accommodations, and childcare;
  - (b) the consideration of requests for compensation for willful damage by a child in care;
  - (c) pre-approved reimbursement of expenses incurred as a result of the death of a child in care; as outlined in policy;
  - (d) approval to bring the child's clothing up to a reasonable standard, graduation costs, driver training and pre-approved funding for recreation costs.

#### 5. FOSTER HOME ASSESSMENT OF CARE CONCERNS

- (1) Foster caregivers are entitled to fair and equitable treatment in the event of conflicts, allegations and investigations, including closure, or suspension of the operation or licensing of their foster home, including;
  - (a) to insist that the recommended investigation process as set out in policy shall be adhered to and;

- (b) to be advised in writing, within 30 days of the completion of the investigation, of any decision or recommendation together with any reasons, including decisions relating to foster home closures, suspensions or licensing;
- (c) to be informed of resources and processes that are available for conflict resolution such as Mediation, Administrative Review or Appeal as set out in legislation, when faced with an investigation, closure, suspension or other proceeding as set out in the preceding paragraph;
- (d) to be informed of and have access to the Foster Allegation Support Team (FAST) when under or following completion of investigation;
- (e) to be accompanied by a FAST advocate at any and all meetings and proceedings during or following an investigation.

#### 6. KINSHIP HOME ASSESSMENT OF CARE CONCERNS

- (1) Kinship caregivers are entitled to fair and equitable treatment in the event of conflicts, allegations and investigations, including closure, or suspension of the operation or licensing of their kinship home, including;
  - (a) to insist that the recommended investigation process as set out in policy shall be adhered to and;
  - (b) to be advised in writing, within 30 days of the completion of the investigation, of any decision or recommendation together with any reasons, including decisions relating to kinship home closures;
  - (c) to be informed of resources and processes that are available for conflict resolution, such as Mediation, Administrative Review or Appeal as set out in legislation, when faced with an investigation, closure, or other proceeding as set out in the preceding paragraph;
  - (d) to be informed of and have access to the Foster Allegation Support Team (FAST) when under or following completion of investigation;
  - (e) to be accompanied by a FAST advocate at any and all meetings and proceedings during or following an investigation.

**Alberta Foster and Kinship Association (AFKA)**  
**Mentee Program Expectation Agreement**

By choosing to participate in the Alberta Foster and Kinship Association's Provincial Mentorship Program, I agree to follow all rules, guidelines, and program policies outlined within this agreement.

I understand that I must...

- follow the roles and responsibilities as outlined in the AFKA Mentee Handbook
- report any communication issues to Provincial Mentorship Program staff
- commit to the Provincial Mentorship Program for one year (if long-term match)
- respect the mentor and the program by giving at least one month's notice if you must end the relationship before the one-year term (if long-term match), during which time you would participate in a transition process with the mentor
- notify Provincial Mentorship Program staff if you have any changes in address, phone number or significant change in your life that hinders the continuation of the mentorship relationship
- notify Provincial Mentorship Program staff if you become subject to an assessment of care concern; you are not required to share details of the assessment however if you would like further support, you will be provided with a CAST representative from the AFKA until the assessment is complete
- participate in a closure process

I agree to follow all of the above stipulations of this program expectation agreement. My mentoring relationship may be terminated, at the discretion of Provincial Mentorship Program staff and AFKA Executive Director, if the above conditions are not met.

Name of Mentee: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Mentee: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Alberta Foster and Kinship Association (AFKA)**  
**Mentee Confidentiality Agreement**

A successful mentor-mentee partnership is based on trust, honesty, and confidentiality. This agreement requires both mentor and mentee to engage in open and honest communication while respecting each other's confidential information.

My Agreement:

- All communication reports and other materials containing personal information are subject to secure record keeping procedures.
- Your mentor will not refer to you by name or share identifying characteristics in the course of discussion with other people or in meetings. They may do so with Provincial Mentorship Program staff and CFS/Agency/DFNA staff, if required.
- I am assured that the mentor is committed to confidentiality in this matter. Further, I am aware this confidentiality may be exempted by court subpoena or legislative requirements. These exemptions are inclusive of statements made by myself of a suicidal nature, intent to harm others, actions that put child(ren) in the client's care at risk of physical or emotional harm, as well as evidence of child/spouse/elder physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. If one or more of these exceptions arise, the mentor is required to report the statement and/or evidence to the Children's Services Crisis Line. If an "Assessment of Care Concern" occurs due to an allegation, mentoring will cease until a final outcome has been released. Knowing this information, I am consenting to being matched to a mentor through this program.
- Any involvement beyond the mentor-mentee relationship, as outlined in the AFKA Mentee handbook, is considered inappropriate during a match I am assigned through this program.

I have read and understand the confidentiality agreement. I will honour it in the mentoring relationship, as well as after my role has ended.

Name of Mentee: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Mentee: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Alberta Foster and Kinship Association (AFKA)**

**Provincial Mentorship Program**

**Release of Liability Agreement**

Release of Liability (For Mentee)

The undersigned hereby applies for the inclusion in the AFKA's Provincial Mentorship Program.

I acknowledge AFKA'S PROVINCIAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM IN NO WAY WARRANT THAT THE MENTOR HAS ANY DEGREE OF SKILL, EXPERIENCE OR EXPERTISE, and I hereby RELEASE AFKA'S PROVINCIAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM, their directors, employees, agents, servants, volunteers or representatives FROM ANY LIABILITY FOR ANY ADVICE, ACT OR OMISSION INCLUDING NEGLIGENCE OR GROSS NEGLIGENCE OR ANY DAMAGE OF ANY NATURE SUFFERED OR SUSTAINED BY THE MENTEE, HIS/HER EMPLOYEES OR AGENTS AS A RESULT OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS AGREEMENT.

I further acknowledge that the Mentor may offer me advice, recommendations, suggestions or other guidance which I am free to accept or reject, and I agree that I alone am responsible for the consequences of such decisions. Unless otherwise subsequently agreed in writing between myself and the Mentor I hereby RELEASE the Mentor from liability for advice recommendations, suggestions or other guidance made by him/her to me in good faith, WHETHER WITH OR WITHOUT NEGLIGENCE OR GROSS NEGLIGENCE. The Mentor will not be held liable for any damage or any nature that may be suffered or sustained by me or my employees or agents as a result of the performance of this agreement.

**I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE READ THE ABOVE**

Date at (date, location)\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Mentee Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Mentee Applicant (Please Print)

**Alberta Foster and Kinship Association (AFKA)**  
**Data Collection Consent Form for Mentees**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to be a participant in the collection process of the AFKA Provincial Mentorship Program. Participating in this collection process will require the completion of surveys, as required. The below outlines some of the surveys, though not limited to, which may be requested of AFKA mentees. From time to time the AFKA may request additional surveys to assist with program evaluation, promotional materials etc.

- Mid Match Mentee Survey
- Mentorship Program Exit Survey

I understand that:

- All information gathered will be treated confidentially and I will not be identified in any Way
- Data will be validated by participants and kept on file in a locked and secure place for a period of five years
- Any interpretations that I do not want included will be removed at my request
- Anonymity will be respected

I understand that the results of the surveys will be used for the following:

- Documentation involving the AFKA Provincial Mentorship Program (e.g. presentations, written articles, promotional material)

In case of questions or concerns, the following person may be contacted:

Melissa Jones, AFKA Executive Director  
Alberta Foster and Kinship Association  
1-800-667-2372

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

*This project has been reviewed and approved by Melissa Jones, Executive Director of the Alberta Foster and Kinship Association.*