

Update

from the
AFKA Executive Director



September 2022

Dear AFKA Members,

I hope you all had some moments of creating wonderful memories over the summer! I can't believe the summer has already come and gone, however am also looking forward to the fall season, one of my favourites.

The summer is always a busy time at the AFKA office in supporting caregivers, planning and prepping for events, and advocating the best we can amidst summer vacations. Our usual monthly meetings with the Caregiver Supports Unit from the PPPD (ie. Policy, Practice, and Program Development) Unit of the Children's Services Ministry did not occur regularly as a result of the various summer vacations. We are back to regular meetings now, with hopes to continue moving forward in discussions being had. The items we are in discussion regularly, through this meeting as well as on other committees, includes:

- Offering input and support into planning policy, practice, and events for caregiver recognition, caregiver retention, caregiver recruitment, and caregiver training
- Current concerns and trends of provincial nature: true due process for caregivers, therapeutic support for caregivers experiencing loss and grief through their roles, impact on children and families facing assessment of care concerns, trauma informed lens in transitioning practice, staff shortages impacting support and communication, decreasing number of foster homes, increase in cost of living, inconsistencies in supports for permanency
- Meeting regularly with ALIGN and DFNA Directors regarding support, practice, and working together to support families and children in care

- The redesign of the Kinship Care model, how caregivers are being assessed and supported through the ASKC tools, support to these families with a designated kinship worker, as well as training provided and required
- Providing feedback on updates to policy and handbooks related to supports for foster and kinship care

Toward the end of August, 2022, the AFKA (ie. myself, Sylvia Thompson – President, and Rene Rajotte – Vice President) were given the opportunity to meet the new Minister of Children’s Services, the Honourable Matt Jones. Within the short time given, we were able to have a good conversation with him regarding many of the items listed above, as well as have a space to open the door for further discussion regarding additional supports for foster and kinship caregivers through the AFKA.

The AFKA has also been involved within Edmonton Region’s Linkages meetings (ie. foster and kinship) where leaders and staff from department and agencies connect regularly to ensure policy, practice, and future movement are done collaboratively in the best interest of families. In Edmonton Region, a Kinship Co-op group exists to organize and deliver events focused on bringing kinship families together in a fun, informative, and celebratory way; the AFKA is also part of this group and are pleased these events have begun again with the first one, since the onset of covid-19, successfully delivered on September 24, 2022. We would love to hear about any other such working groups or connection meetings/events that are happening across other regions, so we can be a part of those discussions and activities. Please reach out to me if you believe the AFKA can be a support to similar meetings in your region!

Our 48th annual “It’s All About Kids” conference registration was released in August and will come to a close on October 10th, 2022. We are so excited for all that has been planned, so please have a look and consider joining us as long as we have room! The planning of this conference takes many months and a great amount of time, in addition to the regular activities and supports through the office. I want to thank our whole team, as well as the AFKA Conference Committee, for the extra time and commitment to focus on making our conference a memorable and meaningful one for those in attendance. With the majority of our team new to the actual planning and development of the conference, we’ve had a lot of learning take place, some moments of feeling overwhelmed, but also some great rewards and outcomes of the work we are doing. We’ve been able to get our conference information out to members earlier this year than any other year, and have been able to create an easier online form for submission with online payment, as well! We look forward to seeing everyone who has registered and anticipate memories we will always hold close and new relationships with all those who are attending the conference for the first time.

Register here: <https://www.afkaonline.ca/its-all-about-kids-conference/>

September then becomes a time for reflecting on what we have done over the last year. These reflections will be compiled and shared with the membership through our annual report, which will also be shared at the AGM taking place on October 30, 2022, in Jasper, AB, following our conference. The annual report will contain information provided by each region’s AFKA Board Member, highlighting the work and events that have taken place in the regions throughout the year.

Please follow us for more information sharing and engagement with members on our Facebook Page at: <https://www.facebook.com/Albertafosterandkinshipassociation>

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

Sign up here:

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

We have a variety of topics we want feedback from you! Please watch for links to surveys and focus groups coming 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/CEO, AFKA