



OKANAGAN FOSTER PARENTS ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT - 2009

*This document is a companion document to Attachment 1.1
Support to Family Care Network- 2009
Quarterly Summary Report of Services Provided- Okanagan Foster Parents Association*

Support Services we provide fall into the following categories:

1. Communication

2. Education and Training

3. Crisis Support

4. Support to Caregivers involved in Protocols

5. Support & Mutual Aid

6. Identification of Common Issues

7. Recruitment and Retention

8. Aboriginal Support

9. Support to Community Living (now CYSN)

The Okanagan Foster Parents Association supports caregivers through a wide range of services. The primary goals are to provide information and education, as well as opportunities to build and strengthen relationships and to develop skills. Foster Parents in our region continue to be committed to meeting the difficult needs of the children in their care. We have been honored to provide support services to Foster Parents in our area. Foster families are committed to improving the lives of children and youth of our community. We commend them for their devotion and commitment!

Background

The Okanagan Foster Parents Association (OFPA) was formed in 2002 in response to the need to restructure support services to Family Care Homes in the Okanagan. OFPA is funded by Ministry of Children and Family Development to provide support services to Foster Parents in the Okanagan, Similkameen and Shuswap. The Okanagan Foster Parents Association is a consumer-driven, community based organization and is cross-cultural. In June 2007, support services in the Shuswap area were added to our contract.

The Okanagan Foster Parents Association

- *Provides support services to caregivers in the Okanagan, Shuswap and Similkameen who have a family care home agreement with MCFD and CLBC.*
- *Develops and facilitates support groups for family caregivers in the Okanagan, Shuswap and Similkameen*
- *Assists MCFD in recruitment and retention of family care home caregivers*
- *Provides education and training for family caregivers in the Okanagan, Shuswap and Similkameen*
- *Provides an avenue for identification and resolution of issues common to caregivers, in partnership with MCFD and CLBC.*

The philosophy of the Okanagan Foster Parents Association is:

Foster Families are a key component of the Family Care Home system in British Columbia. Caregivers need a variety of support services and educational opportunities in order to meet the physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual needs of children and youth in care. As an organization of caregivers the Okanagan Foster Parents Association recognizes the need to be flexible in meeting the ever-changing needs of caregivers, the children/youth who they care for, and their families.

Board of Directors-2009- Okanagan Foster Parents Association:

- President- Bonnie Thompson- Oliver, BC
- Vice President- Jessica Macfarlane- Kelowna, BC
- Treasurer- Gerry Schalm- Penticton, BC
- Secretary- John Musgrave- Oliver, BC
- Melanie Filiatrault- Kelowna, BC
- Pat Monahan, Oliver, BC
- Grant Smith-Salmon Arm, BC
- Pat Hudson- Armstrong, BC

Foster Parent Coordinators-2009:

- North Okanagan -Noelle Typusiak
- Central Okanagan -Joan Kirkbride
- South Okanagan/ Similkameen -Betty Bogyo
- Shuswap area- Judy Flintoff

The Coordinators, with the Team Leaders from the respective Resources offices, develop and coordinate services to suit the needs of each area. This report will provide a brief summary of the activities in each area.



Coordinators: from left, Judy Flintoff, Noelle Typusiak, Betty Bogyo, Joan Kirkbride

1. Communication

Communication is provided to caregivers through regular newsletters and group emails. These newsletters and emails provide information about upcoming educational and social events. Relevant information on community events is also advertised. We liaise with a wide number of community groups to keep updated about what is available in the community. Peer groups, Foster Parent meetings, workshops and social events provide opportunities for caregivers to meet and network amongst themselves.

Times per year	N. Okanagan	C. Okanagan	S. Okanagan Similkameen	Shuswap	Totals
Newsletters	9	6	6	6	26 newsletters sent out within our network
Group E-mail news	Avg 20/month	Av 16/month	Av 13/month	Av 12/month	Average 61 group emails (732 for the year)
Social Events	18 (FP Appreciation, potlucks, BBQs, Halloween & Christmas events- several locations)	4 (FP Appreciation, MCFD FP Teas, Kids Klub movie Night)	FP Appreciation and Partnership potlucks	7 (FP Appreciation, BBQ, movie get togethers, Christmas social)	More than 35 social events
FP local meetings	9 FP Assoc meetings including 1 AGM	9 FP Assoc exec meetings	No local FP Assoc at present	10 FP Assoc. meetings	Meetings held in each area
Meetings with MCFD (Resource Team meetings)	3x per month	2x per month	2 x per month	9 - Attended on request	Coordinators meet regularly with Resources teams
Partnership meetings	6 Partnership 7 CIC Committee 3 Aboriginal Partnership 1 SD 22 1 CLBC Transition	2 Partnership 4 System of Care committee 10 Aboriginal Partnership	11 Partnership meetings	2 Partnership meetings	Partnership meetings are being held in all areas
Web site use	3 rd & 4 th quarter average: 589 unique visitors making 1170 visits/month Regular updates to newsletter and upcoming events pages. Several Documenting tools added www.okfosterparents.ca				

Our Coordinators all continue to provide wonderful support services to caregivers in the Okanagan. Our relationship with MCFD staff continues in a spirit of shared vision and teamwork. Together, we provide support services that meet the needs of our Foster Parents and MCFD. Coordinators consult with Team Leaders and develop detailed work plans to guide the direction of services provided.

We assist the local Foster Parent Associations financially as needed and liaise with provincial fostering associations, the BCFFPA and the FAFP.

*Social events occurred in each area. Some were MCFD Appreciation events, some were parties planned and hosted by Foster Parent Associations and some were hosted by OFPA. We advertised and promoted the events and attended most of them.



Web site www.okfosterparents.ca

Our website has a vast amount of information for Foster Parents to access online. It is continually updated and more features have been added. Use of the website continues to grow.

Some information that can be found on the website:

- Coming events, by area
- Current and previous newsletters
- FAQ- on a variety of pertinent fostering topics
- Becoming a Foster Parent
- Library lists
- Important web links



Community liaison

Foster Parent Coordinators work closely with community partners in their areas, especially:

South Okanagan: FASD Family Support Worker; ARC Programs; Child & Youth Mental Health; Youth Probation; Penticton & District Community Resource Society; South Okanagan Boys & Girls Club; CLBC/CYSN; OSNS Child Development Centre; Infant Development Centre; En'owkin Centre; BCFFPA; Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents Association; Adoptive Families Association; Oonakane Friendship Centre; Penticton Public Health

Central Okanagan: Child and Youth Mental Health; Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP); Ki-low-na Friendship Society; Okanagan Metis Children & Family Services; Building Healthy Families; Lake Country Native Association; Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents Association; The Bridge Family Services; Okanagan Boys and Girls Club; Community Living BC and Community Connections; BCFFPA; System of Care committee; Adoptive Families Association, Central Okanagan Child Development Association; Interior Health Authority- Public Health Unit; CATCH Community Network; ARC Programs; Aboriginal Partnership Committee; Kelowna Alcohol and Drug Services; Kelowna Youth in Care Network; Okanagan Nation Alliance; Westbank First Nations; John Howard Society

North Okanagan: FASD Community Team; North Okanagan Child, Youth and Family Committee; Lumby Child Youth and Family Committee; Children in Care Committee; North Okanagan Youth and Family Services Society; CLBC, Adoptive Parents Association; Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents; BCFFPA; Family Resource Centre; Mental Illness Family Support; Interior Health Authority, Public Health; Community Volunteer Coordinators Group; CLBC Community Council, North Okanagan Neurological Association; Social Planning Council

Shuswap: Shuswap Family Resource & Referral Centre; Intensive Family Support Workers; Shuswap Children's Association; CLBC; Public Health Nursing; Drug & Alcohol Services; Mental Health Services; BCFFPA; FAFP

2. Education & Training

The BC Foster Care Education Program was offered 3 times in our region in 2009. Caregivers are very satisfied with the classes and the presenters, according to the evaluations completed after each module. In all areas, the program was divided and offered in two parts, series one in the Fall or Spring and series two offered at the opposite time. This allowed caregivers to have a break between sessions. .

We will offer the full program three times in 2010, once in each of our 3 larger areas. Foster Parents in the Shuswap area will be assisted with mileage to attend the training in Vernon. The training is also available to Foster Parents online through Interior Community Services. We appreciate having this option to offer our caregivers, though we have not had a large number access this training.

Other educational opportunities and workshops were presented in each area on a variety of topics. Attendance at training events continues to be unpredictable. Evaluation of Foster Parent's training and support needs is a continuous process. Training topics reflect the priorities of each area.

B.C. Foster Care Education Program

Contracted trainers 2009:

- South Okanagan- Daniel Pitman
- Central Okanagan- Sue Foisy
- North Okanagan- Alison Dennis

	North OK	Central OK	South OK	Shuswap	Totals
BC Education Program	226 modules	168 modules	148 modules	Offer mileage for FP to attend in Vernon.	542 modules were completed this year in class. We also facilitate foster parents to take modules online through ICS if required
Library materials borrowed	286 resources borrowed	213 resources borrowed	131 resources borrowed	71 resources borrowed	701 borrowed This is a huge increase due mainly to our Foster Parent College training DVDs

All of our libraries are listed on our website: www.okfosterparents.ca

A 20 DVD set of behavior management videos called “Foster Parent College” has been a great hit with Foster parents. This and many other in-home study opportunities have been added to each of our libraries. We have added a huge number of resources to all of our libraries this year.

Workshops and training



Safe Babies training-
South Okanagan

Workshops and training opportunities are offered in each area, according to need and interest. Training needs are assessed on an ongoing basis.

Coordinators present and facilitate events as well as promote and advertise relevant training events in the community. We encouraged all Foster Parents to complete *Period of Purple Crying* online training for Foster Parents, and purchased Foster Parent use of *Art of Advocacy* online training

Most of our workshops were presented free of charge to Foster Parents. When it was necessary to charge a fee, it was often refunded following attendance

North Okanagan

Supported FAFP to provide:

Aboriginal Cultural Awareness

Period of Purple Crying: on-line and in class

Supported BCFFPA to provide:

First Aid twice

"No Such Thing As A Bad Kid" Pt

Mental Health: Recognizing and Intervening with CIC

Bike Safety for Foster Children

Worked with Protocol Committee to provide:

Protocols & Safeguarding

Worked with CIC Committee to provide:

ASQ training twice

Worked with MCFD to provide:

Life Books training twice

Car Seat Clinic

Lumby: Documenting ; Gun Storage; Life Books (included above)

Safe Babies: Speech & hearing, Attachment

Car Seats, Early Literacy

Transition to Adoption Brain Dev., Lift the Lip

Fitness Certificate Training

Sneezes and Diseases

Child Care Resource & Referral

Infant Massage & Community Policing

Mental Health & FASD

Basic Standards:

Support Workers & Safeguarding

Contracts

Life Books

Basic Standards: ICM & CPOCs

Insurance & WCB

Armstrong

Documenting

Advocacy

Culture of Poverty

Responding to Attachment Disorder

Culture of Poverty

Loss & Grief in Foster Families

Understanding Racism

NonViolent Crisis Intervention: Core (offered twice) & Refresher

Encouraged attendance at a large number of community training opportunities especially: Martin Brokenleg; Gabor Mate (Learning Disabilities); Connect Parenting (Attachment) FASD training; ECD conference

Central Okanagan

Training is offered in the Central Okanagan through MCFD Resources office, the Local Foster Parent Association and the Okanagan Foster Parents Association. The Coordinator also advertises workshops available through other community agencies and encourages Foster Parents to attend.

Responding to Attachment Disorder
Safe Babies Core training
FASD training
Culture of Poverty workshop
CPR training- St John Ambulance
Understanding Racism
Effects of Vicarious Trauma
Aboriginal Cultural Awareness
Town Hall Meeting- open forum to discuss MCFD policies and Foster Parent issues.
Ages and Stages training

We also advertised and encouraged Foster Parents to attend local and regional workshops:
ADHD workshop Russell Barclay
Connect Parent Group
FASD training- Parent to Parent Program
Period of Purple Crying on-line training
True Colors mentoring
Lake Country Native Association- various training and social events

South Okanagan

Attachment Disorder workshop at Partnership meeting
Aboriginal Pre-Service
Safe Babies Training including CPR
Child Care Subsidy Conference Call
CPI Foster Parent Training
Grief and Loss workshop
Understanding Racism Workshop
Training was also provided as part of the Life Book Working Group,
and Monthly Safe Babies Support Group

We also advertised and encouraged Foster Parents to attend local and regional workshops:
Community For Kids Partners in Parenting Conference
FASD Training in Princeton, Penticton, and Oliver

Shuswap Area

Training is offered in the Shuswap through MCFD Resources office, the Local Foster Parent Association and the Okanagan Foster Parents Association.

First Aid

Child Protection Mediation

Attachment Workshop

Safe Babies Training

Understanding Racism Workshop

Trauma Workshop



Understanding Racism workshop- Kelowna- November 2009

3. Crisis Support

	N OK	C OK	S OK	Shuswap	Total
Crisis training provided	Non Violent Crisis Intervention-offered twice Refresher once		Non Violent Crisis Intervention-offered twice		Non Violent Crisis Intervention training delivered in two areas
Support pamphlets distributed	Support pamphlets distributed to all Foster Parents	Distributed at Preservice and to new Foster Parents	Support pamphlets and networking phone list distributed	Support pamphlets distributed to all Foster Parents	Support pamphlets were distributed
Crisis support provided	ongoing and as needed	ongoing and as needed	ongoing and as needed	Ongoing and as needed	Our Foster Parent Coordinators are available for crisis support after hours, when needed.

4. Support to Caregivers involved in Protocols

	North OK	Central OK	South OK	Shuswap	Total
Number of trained support workers	5	5	3	3	16 trained Support Workers available Training for support workers provided
Number of Investigations of Abuse Allegations where support was provided	1	8	0	0	9 cases where support was provided
Support provided in Conflict Resolution	2	6	3	0	11 cases where support was provided

Coordinators and trained Support workers provide support ONLY if requested by the Foster Parent. While it is strongly recommended by the Ministry to accept support from us, there is no requirement to do so.

5. Support & Mutual Aid

	North OK	Central OK	South OK	Shuswap	Total
Information / support from Coordinator	Average of 38 FP's accessing services per month	Average of 34 FP's accessing services per month	Average of 31 FP's accessing services per month	Average of 28 FP's accessing services per month	Average of 131 Foster parents accessed direct support services per month
Peer groups	5	2	2	2	11 Peer groups meeting
Home Visits	7	14	17+	6	44 home visits

Support is provided in a variety of ways to all caregivers, including newsletters, emails, education etc. We have tracked the number of individual Foster homes receiving direct support or information.

6. Identification of Common Issues

Common issues are identified in a number of ways.

- Partnership meetings are held in all areas
- Local and small group meetings in Vernon, Kelowna, Penticton, Princeton, Salmon Arm, Lumby and Armstrong
- Children in Care Committee (Vernon), System of Care Committee (Kelowna) , Aboriginal Partnership
- Formal and informal discussions with Foster Parents
- Team Meetings- Coordinators in each area attend team meetings with the Resources unit to discuss any issues identified in the network.

Issues, once identified, are worked on with MCFD to find a solution.

7. Recruitment

OFPA works with MCFD to promote fostering in a positive manner and help with public awareness. We provide newspaper articles, distribute posters, put banners up, maintain our web site, and distribute pamphlets. We attend and man booths at Volunteer Fairs and even marched in a parade!

Fostering inquiries are received, responded to and forwarded to MCFD. Information Sessions are handled differently in each area. Many inquiries are generated from our website.

We present the Pre-Service Orientation Program in the North, Central and South Okanagan and speak at the Shuswap training.

	North OK	Central OK	South OK	Shuswap-Judy	TOTAL
Number of Pre-services offered	2	2	2	1	7
Number of participants	63	39	52	10	164
Number of completions	44	16	28	1	89
Number of Info sessions	10	11	MCFD	MCFD	21

Note: The Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents also provided Pre-service sessions (their own curriculum) in Kelowna and Penticton.

A number of recruitment projects were completed, including:



Distribution of pens, posters, pamphlets.

Letters to the Editor and Thanks to Foster Parents ads placed in newspapers in each community

Information Session Power Point for Fostering and Adoption developed in North Okanagan

“Becoming a Foster Parent” section on the OFPA web site

Contact made with other agencies who also recruit foster/respice homes

Retention

Retention has been a priority this year.

- We were very pleased to present beautiful glass starfish along with the motivational story about the Child and the Starfish to all of our homes who had fostered 10 years or more.

- We also presented our Long Term Foster Parents with a gift certificate to have dinner out as a small token of our appreciation for their years of dedication.
- All of our Fostert Families were given a small token of appreciation in the form of a crystal-like snowflake and a Christmas card.
- Letters were sent to local newspapers to commend the work Foster Parents do. This was also a recruitment tool.
- *Three Cheers for Foster Parents* block ads were placed in all local newspapers in our area to thank them and to let the community recognise their great efforts
- Foster Parent volunteers were also honored and appreciated for the work they do and the contributions they have made



Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner- Don Thompson, SW Moe Shroeder, OFPA President Bonnie Thompson and CSM, James MacNamara (MCFD)

8. Aboriginal

We provide support services to all Foster Homes including those who care for Aboriginal children and youth. We work with MCFD Aboriginal Teams and Aboriginal Support Agencies and promote cultural training for caregivers.

This year we promoted, advertised and attended the ROOTS Celebration in Armstrong in June. Many Foster Parents brought their families and enjoyed the weekend.

We also promote activities that are of benefit to aboriginal children, including cultural children and youth groups, National Aboriginal Day celebrations and Pow Wows, Open Houses and Aboriginal Potluck lunches.

We continue to monitor the services we provide to assure they meet the needs of caregivers as we move toward a division of services between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homes.

9. Community Living British Columbia (now CYSN)

We continue to support CLBC/CYSN contracted Foster Homes. They receive full support services from the OFPA. Several workshops were provided on topics related to developmental disabilities. Many of the materials in our libraries are of interest to caregivers of children with disabilities.

10. Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey

Attached to this report are the results of the Satisfaction Survey we sent out in November. We were very pleased with the responses we received, both in the level of satisfaction with our services and with the number of replies we received. We had over 90% satisfaction rate and nearly 25% return rate. The survey was available online for the period of one month.

A Note of Thanks

Volunteers are a crucial part of our organization. The Board of Directors of the Okanagan Foster Parents Association volunteer many hours to ensure the smooth delivery of services. The local Foster Parent Associations, to whom we provide support, are all volunteers. Our Foster Parent Support Workers, who provide services to other Foster Parents during Protocols, are volunteers. Volunteers have also delivered training to other caregivers and assisting in others ways too numerous to mention. Thank you to all of these wonderful dedicated volunteers!

Respectfully Submitted

Joan Kirkbride

on behalf of the
Okanagan Foster Parents Association
February, 2010

Questions or comments may be addressed to:
Board of Directors Board@okfosterparents.ca 250-498-4109 or
Administrator COKsupport@okfosterparents.ca 250-868-9285