



The B.C. Foster Care Education Program

Foster Care in British Columbia

British Columbia has one of the country's leading foster care systems. Our foster families are an integral part of the team of professionals responsible for children and youth in care throughout the province.

Children in care need caring and skilled foster parents to help them face difficult challenges on a daily basis.

That's why it's important our caregivers have the opportunity to increase their knowledge in order to maintain the high quality of foster care in B.C.

In support of foster families throughout the province, the Ministry for Children and Families and the B.C. Federation of Foster Parent Associations are pleased to offer a new education program to advance their professional development.

The B.C. Foster Care Education Program is the first of its kind in Canada developed by the B.C. community college system using the adult education model. The standardized program will be available in 16 community colleges all over B.C. **at no cost** to foster parents and their partners.

The knowledge gained from the program will become a critical element in fulfilling the role of foster parents. All existing foster parents will be required to attend the program sometime over the next five years of implementation. New foster parents will be expected to complete the program during their first two years of service.

Program Description

The B.C. Foster Care Education Program is comprised of 53 hours of class instruction presented in 14 modules.

Introduction (3 hrs) Program overview, emphasis on the Ministry for Children and Families Guardianship Model, teamwork, and the foster family role and responsibilities in providing care to children.

Communication Skills and Self Awareness (3 hrs)

Self-awareness and effective communication skills are fundamental to caregiving relationships with children and youth, families and the child care team.

The Effects of Caregiving (3 hrs)

Exploring the effects of caregiving on foster families and developing sources of support.

The Child's Family (3 hrs) Understanding the importance of the family to the child and the caregivers role in working with and involving the child's family is explored.

Observe, Record & Report (3 hrs) Learning the benefits and purposes of observing, reporting and recording the child's daily progress to ensure quality of care.

Child & Youth Development (3 hrs) Understanding how children and youth develop and grow and potential influences on their development, including the influence a foster parent may have.

Attachment, Separation & Loss (6 hrs) Understanding the impact of loss on children and learning how to promote healthy attachments for children and youth in care.

When Children Experience Abuse & Neglect (6 hrs) Recognizing the symptoms and indicators of abuse and neglect and the effects on children and how to respond.

Guiding Behaviour of Children & Youth (6 hrs) Ways of understanding and guiding behaviours that are child/youth-centred approaches.

Cultural Responsiveness (3hrs) Recognizing the importance of maintaining cultural identity for healthy development, and supportive ways to respond to the racial and cultural experiences of children.

Aboriginal Children In Care (3hrs) Understanding and integrating the child's Aboriginal culture in ways that promote and enhance the well being of Aboriginal children in care.

Substance Misuse (3 hrs) Recognizing the indicators and possible contributing factors of substance misuse in a child or youth and ways to provide support and access resources.

FAS/FAE/NAS (3 hrs) Understanding the implications of caring for children whose development and behaviours may be influenced by these medical conditions and how to respond and support the needs of these children.

Suicide Awareness (5 hrs) This module on suicide intervention is designed for caregivers of children and youth placed in their care.



Who is the Foster Education Program for?

The program is designed for all approved foster parents, who have a family care home agreement with the Director of Child Protection.

When do I have to take the program?

Existing foster parents will be expected to take the program over the next five years. New foster parents will be required to complete the program over the next two years. You can register for all the modules or for specific modules. Taking the modules in the order offered by your local college can maximize your learning experience.

How do I determine if I am a new or existing foster parent?

Existing foster parents are those who have been approved prior to December 1, 1999. New foster parents are those who have been approved after November 30, 1999.

Will the program cost me money?

No. The program is being offered to you **at no cost** under the ministry's agreement with B.C.'s provincial public colleges. Ask your resource worker about funding for relief and transportation **prior** to registering for courses.



Are both my partner and I expected to attend the program?

Yes. Partners or spouses are expected to attend because they are also primary caregivers and essential to support the healthy development of children in care. However, you do not have to take the courses at the same time.

I am a foster parent with a delegated First Nations Child and Family Agency. Can I take the program?

Yes. Foster parents for delegated Aboriginal agencies may take the full 53 hours or choose to enroll in specific courses. Ask your agency resource worker about the program.

Can I attend the program when I live in a remote, rural area of B.C., far from any community colleges?

Yes. Your resource worker can advise you as to what arrangements can be made. In addition, a distance education program is currently being developed.

I am a very experienced foster parent. Do I have to take this program?

Yes. All foster parents, regardless of their years of fostering or prior training, will be expected to participate in the program. Our new foster care education program provides the most current information on fostering in B.C. including Standards for Foster Homes, the Guardianship Model, the Comprehensive Plan of Care, the Looking After Children Model and living with children with diverse special needs.

Registration

Email: Annette.Harding@gov.bc.ca



B.C. Provincial Colleges

Vancouver Community College

Langara College

Douglas College

Capilano College

Kwantlen University College

University College of the Fraser Valley

Camosun College

Malaspina University College

North Island College

College of New Caledonia

Okanagan University College

University College of the Cariboo

College of the Rockies

North West Community College

Selkirk College

Northern Lights College



Information

Contact your local Ministry for Children and Families resource office, the provincial office of the BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations (BCFFPA) at 1-800-663-9999 or at bcffpa@istar.ca, or the Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents at (604) 291-7091 or fapa@direct.ca