

**HELP THE FUTURE LEADERS OF
TOMORROW**



**BE A FOSTER PARENT
TODAY!**

Become a Foster Parent

Fostering can be an incredibly rewarding experience. It can also be very challenging and frustrating at times. It is important to take the time to consider if it is right for you and your family at this time.

People decide to become foster parents for many reasons, but all share a love for children and the desire to help children in need without an expectation of receiving something in return.

Our foster parents will tell you, it's the small things that make it all worthwhile. A smile. A hug. Knowing you have genuinely made a difference in the life of a child or youth.

Some children in care may be behaviorally challenged or developmentally delayed. Some children may be in care simply because their parents were not able to care for them. But all children need and deserve to have the support of a nurturing and loving family.

If you are interested in getting involved, some questions to ask yourself are:

- Do I have a strong support system of friends/family?
- Am I patient and accepting?
- Am I committed?
- Am I able to not take things personally?
- Can I say goodbye?

You will also find enclosed in this package: Foster 101 – Food for Thought, as well as, 10 Steps to Become a Foster Parent.

Whether you are interested in becoming a full time foster parent, or a relief/respite provider, or a volunteer helper, we hope you will find this information useful.

There is also information on other ways you can get involved. When you are ready to take the next step, or if you would like more information, please call Connie Baker at Ministry of Children and Family Development at 250.638.2311 or call AXIS Family Resources Ltd. at 250.635.6658.

Foster Family Myths

Myth: You have to be a two-parent family.

FACT: Many of our foster families are single parent households.

Myth: You must own your home.

FACT: You may own or rent your home, or apartment.

Myth: You must be a specific age to foster.

FACT: Anyone over the age of 19 could become a foster family.

Myth: You have no say in the age or type of children placed in your home.

FACT: You determine the age, gender, and number of children placed in your home, and decide whether to accept each child referred.

Myth: You have to supervise family visits in your home.

FACT: You have control over who you invite into your home.



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Get Involved

There are lots of ways to help foster children in your community. Donating your time, skills or talent can greatly enrich the life of a foster child, their family and yours.

We are presently looking for volunteers willing to assist our foster parents. By spending time with foster children you will give caregivers a welcome break.

Below you will find some suggestions as to how you can get involved. If you find something that appeals to you, please feel free to contact us so that we can help you get started, put you in touch with the right people, or help clarify your interests.

YOU COULD:

- ✓ Teach a child to knit, garden or cook
- ✓ Read to a child or help with homework
- ✓ Provide lessons in art, music or sports
- ✓ Hire a young person in foster care
- ✓ Donate goods such as toys, books, games, or a computer
- ✓ Enrich a child's life, be a mentor
- ✓ Teach a child or foster parent new skills
- ✓ Assist a child in learning about different heritages



Your commitment could be as short as one day or as long as you like.

Your involvement could also be as simple as bringing this information package to your next PAC meeting, staff meeting, special interest group, or doctor's office and helping us spread the word that foster families are needed in our community.

If you would like to learn more about our volunteer activities, or have another idea about how you would like to get involved, call Connie Baker at Ministry of Children and Family Development at 250.638.2311 or call AXIS Family Resources Ltd. at 250.635.6658.

Frequently Asked Questions



What types of children are in care?

Most children enter foster care because of abuse, neglect, or abandonment. If the problems leading to placement are solved, children may be returned home. If not, children may become free for adoption. Children in care range in age from birth to 18 years of age and have various backgrounds.

How long will a foster child be in my home?

There is no set length for a foster placement. It depends on the circumstances of the child and his/her birth family. When a child is placed in your home, there may be an estimated length of time the child is expected to stay.

Do I have a say in which child is placed in my home?

Foster parents can specify the age, gender, and number of children they wish to care for.

What are the costs of foster care?

There are no fees associated with becoming an approved foster or adoptive parent(s). The home study and training are provided free of charge.

Will I receive financial assistance for the children in my care?

Yes. You will receive a payment designed to cover expenses such as board, food, clothing, recreation, etc. Amounts vary based on the type of care you provide. It is best not to view foster care as employment as the payment generally only covers the expenses of the child.

Do I have to own my own home?

Foster and adoptive parents may own, rent, or be in the process of buying their home or condo. Families who rent must have their landlord's permission to become foster parents.

Do I have to be married?

You do not have to be married. You can be single, divorced, common-law, or legally separated.

Can I work outside of the home?

Foster parents can work outside the home. However, in most cases, having one parent at home, or having a flexible or part-time position often works best for the children. Foster parents may also be asked to attend meetings that are during normal office hours.

What is the biggest need in the Terrace and Kitimat area?

The biggest need is for loving families for children of all ages. There is a greater need for aboriginal families, and families who are willing to support and mentor teenagers with special emotional or physical needs.

FOSTERING CHECKLIST

Ok-you've made it through the information, and we hope we haven't scared you away!

If you are ready to take the next step please have a read through the following points...

- ✓ I am over 19 years of age
- ✓ I am a resident of British Columbia
- ✓ I can provide a safe, nurturing environment for a child
- ✓ I am able to help raise a child without using physical or emotional punishment
- ✓ I have skills and experience raising or taking care of children
- ✓ I am committed to attending on-going training and/or education

If you can answer **yes** to the above, it's time to talk!!



Please call Connie Baker at Ministry of Children and Family Development at 250.638.2311 or call AXIS Family Resources Ltd. at 250.635.6658.

Fostering 101 – Food for Thought

What you'll find below are some questions to ask yourself & your family. Take time to give each point serious thought, and be honest in your answers. Deciding to become a foster family is a very big decision, and it is important everyone is on board when you decide to take the next step.

Do you have a strong support system of friends and/or family?

This is very important, as fostering can become very stressful at times. It is good to have someone who will listen if you need to vent.

Are you an accepting person?

Are you and your family accepting of other backgrounds, cultures, religions, sexual orientations and family values? Are you able to support a child without passing judgment on his/her life, or family?

Do you have realistic expectations?

Many people believe that by becoming a foster parent, they will “rescuing” a child from an abusive parent. They believe children will be grateful and relieved to be out of their home situation. This is rarely the case, as the child is being removed from the only life they knew. Be prepared for the child to be anything but grateful and happy at first. Make sure your expectations for the child, the Ministry and the foster experience itself are realistic.

Are you able to not take things personally?

Children in care often have been neglected, and/or physically, sexually, mentally, or emotionally abused. These children & youth can be angry, resentful, or sad at times, and may take it out on their foster parents (usually the foster mother). Are you able to deal with this and not take it personally?

Are you willing to have a “flood” of people through your home?

Social workers, Resource Social Workers & sometimes other specialists will be a part of your foster child's life. Can you work in a partnership with a team of professionals to help the child get back home, or to another permanent placement even if you do not agree with the plan?

What ages of children can you parent at this time?

If you have your own children, consider their ages, and where another child would fit into your family. Also, consider the sex of the child. You also will be given choices on what sex, age, and behaviour you feel you can and cannot parent at this time. Be aware that many behaviours don't surface until the child feels safe enough to be him/herself. Also be aware that the social worker may not be fully aware of the child's behavior at the time of placement. Be sure your children are on board. They will have to share their toys, their home, and their parents.

Can you say goodbye?

Foster care is not a permanent arrangement. What you are asked to do is bring a child into your home, love them as your own, but still be able to say goodbye when a permanent home is found. You and your family will attach to this child and that is a good thing. If they are able to attach & trust you, they will be able to trust & attach to others.

8 Steps to Become a Foster Parent

1. Make that Call!

Call The Ministry of Children and Family Development and ask for Connie Baker at 250.638.2311 or call Axis Family Resources Ltd. at 250.635.6658 We would be happy to give you information on fostering and help answer any questions.



2. Foster Parent Orientation Course

Foster parent training will be provided in your area to help you prepare yourself and your family for the challenges (and rewards!) of fostering. Topics will include: why children come into care, what makes successful foster parents, the importance of the child's family, the stages of child development, and the team approach to foster.

3. Begin the application process

After the Orientation course is complete a Social Worker will assist you in completing necessary documentation.

3. Criminal record checks and medical assessments

You and anyone 18 and older who lives in your home, who would be supervising children in care, will be required to have a criminal record check. This is to help ensure a safe home for children. Certain criminal records may prevent you from completing an application. You also will be given a medical assessment form for your doctor to complete. This is to verify that you are in good physical and mental health.

4. Reference Checks

You will be asked to provide the names of three references, one of whom is a relative. The other two may be professionals, friends, or relatives who know you and know how you relate to children. The references will be sent a form to complete and may be interviewed in person or by phone; information provided is confidential.

5. Home Study

A Resource Social Worker will visit you in your home to discuss your personal history, family interests, lifestyle, and child care experience, and the type of child you feel you can best care for. The home study process can take from six to 9 months. Many families choose to help other foster families while they complete this step.

6. Sign Foster Home Agreement

Once the approval process is complete, you will be asked to sign an agreement that outlines your obligations and those of the ministry. The length of time you will wait for a child depends on the age and type of child you want to foster and the needs of your community.

7. Complete BC Foster Education Program

During the Home Study process or once you have completed the approval process each foster parent will need to complete a formal training program. This education program is free of charge.

And the final and most important step of all...

8. Help a Future Leader of Tomorrow by changing their life today – including your own.

Congratulations you have reached the end of the Foster Parent Information Package.

Please contact one of office mentioned in the above information so that we may answer any lingering questions or concerns you may have.

Foster Parenting can be a truly rewarding experience, regardless if you choose to become a full time foster parent, a respite and relief caregiver, or a foster parent volunteer.



Please note that even though these steps can take anywhere from six to 9 months to complete, we hope your commitment to helping children in need will stay strong, even when it feels like “nothing is happening” in the process. It is helpful to remember we all have the same goal, to ensure our community’s children have a safe, nurturing place to call home.

Please talk to your Resource Social Worker to see how you can be involved in fostering while your home study is being completed.