



Parent Support Services Society of BC

Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2019, Vol 40, # 1

Special Kinship Care Issue

Letter to Grandparents Raising Grandchildren and Other Kinship Care Families

When you share with us, we have a strong collective voice

Dear Grandparents Raising Grandchildren/Kinship Care Families:

The last time we wrote you was around the details of February's budget announcements about increased kinship rates for some families. While these increases were an important first step, we are very aware that the vast majority of Kinship Caregivers have not received any improved supports. Several of you have contacted us to relay your concerns about this announcement, concerns that we shared with the Minister of Children and Family Development, and her staff.

Ways we hear from you

We have been working hard to listen to your concerns through:

- our Kinship Care Support Line: 1-855-474-9777
- our evaluation of the effectiveness of our Circle program
- our workshops delivered in various communities on the intersection of MCFD policy, Kinship Care and the Child, Family & Community Services Act
- our Kinship Care Support Circles via the facilitators
- what you and other Kinship Care providers report to us directly over the phone, at our Nature Camp, at picnics, special events or at parenting workshops
- research we are conducting on the State of Kinship Care Families in BC. **We'll need your help!**
- Our GRG Facebook Group

The information we get from an aggregate of Kinship Care providers allows us to bring your collective concerns to Ministries and advocate for policy and practice changes to ensure that all Kinship Care children can thrive. **Thank you**

Advocacy over the years

In the mid 2000's you told us that government needed

to hear your story, so visits to the legislature were organized.

You told us that government still wasn't listening, so in 2015 we designed and you helped circulate a petition to then Premier Christy Clark, repeating your call for Kinship Families to receive a monthly benefit equivalent to that provided to foster parents, and other supports. This gained over 8500 signatures. (We later



shared copies of the petition with the new MCFD Minister, Katrine Conroy)

You told us that people didn't understand your challenges, so in 2015 we held our first Grandparents Day events on the second Sunday in September where we raised awareness about the issues facing Kinship Care providers. Since 2015 we have held these events in four regions of the province (*Watch for our next Grandparents Day events Sunday September 8, 2019.*)

We have facilitated countless media stories about the challenges you face.

Through it all, you have continued to nurture the children in your care, and when possible have reached out to government and community and let them know your challenges.

Building Momentum, Getting Attention

In December 2017, Parent Support Services Society was invited to meet with the Honourable Minister Katrine Conroy and two high level government employees. PSS's Advocate Social Worker, Advocate Lawyer and I talked about the work of Parent Support



Dec. 2017 From L to R Carol Madsen (ED PSS), Honourable Katrine Conroy (Minister MCFD), Christina Campbell (PSS Advocate Social Worker) Jessie Caryl (PSS Advocate Lawyer)

Services Society of and specifically outlined our concerns regarding the issues facing all Kinship Care Families in the Province.

In June 2018 we were contacted by the Strategic Initiatives team of MCFD. They wanted our (your) input into their work that included reviewing Caregiver Rates. Five PSS staff including staff directly involved with our circle programs, staff involved in policy development and communications, our Advocates and myself spent two full days with three high level Ministry staff.



Jun 2018 PSS Staff & Strategic Initiatives Team

During that meeting, we emphasized your call for **“all children being raised in Kinship Care, regardless of legal status and duration of care, to receive**

services and benefits harmonized with those of children in foster care”

In the Spring of 2019 the Strategic Initiatives team sent us their report on their consultation process, “What we heard”.

2019 Budget Announcement, Questions and Visit to the Legislature

February 19, 2019 Finance Minister, Carol James in her budget speech, announced that almost 2500 families would benefit from increase caregiver payments. We were excited that we had made some headway, but we had

questions. These questions emerged from the feedback that you had provided to us about how this announcement would or would not affect you. **Thank you**

Days later, MCFD Minister Conroy called me to invite PSS to the Legislature for a special announcement on the rate increases. We emailed her staff a compilation of the



Feb. 2019 L to R Deputy Minister Allison Bond, PSS Board Member—Louise Costello, PSS Advocate—Christina Campbell, PSS ED - Carol Madsen

concerns you had raised to us and specific questions that we had based on the feedback you gave us. **Thank you**

Three staff, one board member and two grandparents travelled to the Legislature.

We attended Question Period and heard Shirley Bond, the Official Opposition Finance critic, state that she too, was in agreement with increased Kinship Caregiver rates. **We were pleased.**

The Kinship Care providers who came with us, were not eligible for the announced increases. We introduced those families to the Premier and the Minister.

We placed your written concerns in the hands of the Minister and the Deputy Minister at the announcement.

We relayed your concerns, in person, to both the Minister and the Premier. They told us, they knew these increases were just a first step.



Feb. 2019 Kinship Caregivers Sandi & Lynne Sinclair, talking with Premier John Horgan. They were not

More Meetings with High Level Ministry Staff and What we are Hoping For

In March 2019 three high level government bureaucrats (including an Assistant Deputy Minister) came to our office to address our questions and your concerns.

We continued to let them know that we believe that all Kinship Families regardless of legal status receive the same supports and benefits as those of Foster parents.

In April 2019, we sent the Assistant Deputy Minister

further questions to clarify the information they had relayed to us. The Assistant Deputy Minister has informed us that they will get back to us.

Together We are Creating Change

You told us that you wanted to meet other families just like you.

Today 1/3 of all our Parenting Support Circles are for Kinship Families

You told us that you wanted a support line to help navigate complex legal, social and financial systems.

We created a line that is now managed by two expert Advocates (a Masters in Social Work and a Lawyer)

You told us that you need to be recognized as a family type.

In 2015 we launched a full length film and your voices were shared.

In 2017 First Call included Kinship Care Families in their Child Poverty Report Card. We shared the report card with the Minister of Children and Families and with the Representative for Children and Youth.

You told us that Children in Kinship Care Families should have tuition waivers just like kids aging out of Foster Care.

Kinship Care children are now eligible for tuition waivers .

Upcoming Work

We are working hard to address your needs. We are building momentum. We want to do better.

We are in the process of conducting research on the State of Grand and Kinship Families in the province.

We are working closely with academics from the UNBC and UBC.

It would be very helpful to have your participation in this research. To find out more, or to receive your copy of our survey, call our research line and leave a message 1-877-9777 Ext 111. You can also download a copy at www.parentsupportbc.ca/research.

We may also be requesting to do one-on-one interviews with you and/or you to participate in focus groups. Please leave us a message and let us

know if you can participate. 1-877-9777 Ext 111

We are looking for all kinds of Kinship Care Families who are may or not be Ministry or Delegated Aboriginal Authority involved. Please tell other GRG/ Kinship Care Families, you may know, about our research and how they can get involved.

We are gathering data to build a case as to why **all** children in Kinship Care Families, regardless of legal status & duration of care, should receive services and benefits harmonized with those of children in foster care.

And through it all, you continue to love & nurture the children in your care.

Please tell us your stories. Together we can continue to make change.

If you have any questions or concerns – please call our GRG Support Line

1-855-474-9777

To participate in our research

1-877-9777 Ext 111

Or email research@parentsupportbc.ca

Yours sincerely and with great respect,

Carol Madsen—Executive Director Parent Support Services Society of BC



Above and left, Carol Madsen speaks to a row of reporters & TV cameras about the injustice faced by kinship caregivers.

An Invitation

A major new study of *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren and other Kinship Caregivers* is being launched. This work includes a survey, that we invite you to fill out. We will also be bringing kinship caregivers together in small focus groups where participants can discuss questions.

The goal of this research is to bring about change for kinship caregivers. We hope that by giving you the opportunity to share your experiences, we are also giving you the chance to guide these changes. We also hope you will benefit from the experience of sharing your story.

If you're interested in completing the survey, we will send you a copy, or you can find the link to a copy you can download from our website.

If you find the survey difficult to complete, you can call the research team at the number provided, and they can assist you in filling it out. There are also numbers in the package to call if you find it emotionally difficult.

Participation in the study will have no impact whatsoever on any services you may currently receive or you're entitled to receive. Whether or not you choose to participate in the research, you are still welcome to utilize any PSS services.

To participate in the survey call 1-877-345-9777 Ext 111

Email: research@parentsupportbc.ca

Or download the survey at www.parentsupportbc.ca/research

UNBC UNIVERSITY OF
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PSS Parent Support Services
Society of BC



Are you a kinship caregiver?

Are you someone raising a child or children of a relative because their parents are unable?

(The child lives in your home but the parents do not.)

If you are, we invite you to participate in a voluntary survey being conducted by Parent Support Services Society of BC and the University of Northern BC

The goal of this survey is to better understand your needs so that Parent Support Services Society can better advocate with and for you.

To learn more about this research and how to participate:

- Look us up online at www.parentsupportbc.ca
- Contact research manager Jane Bouey at 1-877-345-9777 extension 111 or research@parentsupportbc.ca
- Or email UNBC researcher Susan Burke at Susan.burke@unbc.ca

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PSS works hard to make sure kinship care voices are heard.
Your input is important – together we can make change happen.