

# Advisor

**PRIDE Levels of Pay**

**Struggles every foster parent faces**

**Afraid of getting attached**

**Youth transitioning out of care**

**Nature play**

**Treating & preventing insect bites**

**Defining health & wellness**

**Teen alcohol and drug abuse**

**Staying safe during thunderstorms**

**Backyard kiddie pool safety**

**Foster mom aims to inspire other families**

**Village Wings stories**

# Advisor

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## OUR MISSION

The Saskatchewan Foster Families Association exists to support and encourage Foster families through education and advocacy, helping create healthy homes, positive environments, and brighter futures for children and youth across the province.

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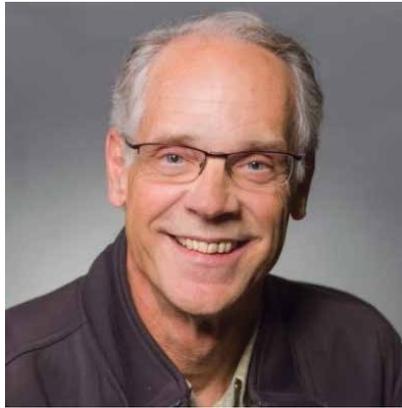
# Message from the Chairman of the Board

This has no doubt been an interesting year for all of us individually, but also as an organization.

Six months ago, at our AGM we were about 6 months into the COVID-19 situation. That brought a number of changes to how we operate as an organization and we held our first virtual AGM. That concept is now almost second nature to organizations now. So here we are now with yet another year of or second virtual AGM.

The good news is that you as foster parents have proven your adaptability, flexibility as you find creative ways to keep children and families connected.

The office staff under Deb Davies direction also have shown their adaptability and flexibility as they learned to work remotely, learned to communicate, and support families in a virtual world. It is never easy, but I and the board of directors are so impressed with the



outcomes we have seen within the SFFA.

Families are being supported and new families are coming on board to care for children, despite the pandemic we are working through.

The board of directors also had to learn how to meet virtually as well. My thanks to them for their flexibility and learning to use video conferencing to meet face to face.

As I look backwards to this past year, I am encouraged by the continued partnership with the

Ministry in recruiting new foster families and training them as well as for our existing homes. We lead the country in our ability to adapt our training so that we could go 100% virtual, so training continues. Our Video Conferencing technology has been critical in accomplishing this task.

I wish I had a crystal ball to know what will happen next, but rest assured our organization has proved to be nimble and flexible. We will continue to advocate for our foster parents as well our in-home support program will continue to assist families wherever we are called to go.

On behalf of myself and the Board of Directors, we wish everyone a safe, happy and healthy summer.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Regards  
Kevin Harris

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## Requisitions available for Goods and Services Vouchers

Foster families may receive requisition forms (vouchers) for immediate purchases children or youth need when coming into or while in their care. Required items may include clothing, diapers, formula, car seats or other special needs requests that are approved by the child's Caseworker.

### Things to remember when using a Requisition (voucher):

- Must have photo identification to match the name on the requisition otherwise it will not be accepted
- The amount purchased (including tax) must not exceed the amount indicated on the requisition
- Purchases are not subject to the Goods and Services Tax (GST)
- The requisition is not valid for payment after six months from date of issue
- Refunds covering the cost of a returned item must be made to the Ministry of Social Services
- No cash back will be given to the purchaser

For a list of Community Retailers accepting requisition vouchers visit the following online link:  
<https://www.saskfosterfamilies.ca/resources-for-foster-parents/goods-and-services-vouchers>



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of  
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Dear Foster Parent,

The Ministry of Social Services and the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association (SFFA) are very pleased to announce that PRIDE Levels of Pay - Phase Two will begin implementation in January 2022. PRIDE Levels of Pay - Phase Two implementation was included in the Government of Saskatchewan's 2021-22 budget announcement on April 6, 2021.

PRIDE Levels of Pay - Phase Two acknowledges enhanced caregiver training and the professionalization of fostering in our province. This includes foster families currently receiving Daily Living Support Assessment (DLSA), Therapeutic Foster Care, Transitional Adolescent Parenting Supports (TAPS), Parent Therapist Homes and Exceptional Fee for Service payments.

The enclosed Question and Answer sheet provides additional information and clarification of these changes for foster families within the scope of Phase Two. Eligible foster families will be invited to attend information sessions on how this impacts your foster home. These sessions will be held in the fall of 2021. Your Child and Caregiver Support Worker and the SFFA will send out dates for these sessions as they are scheduled.

If you have questions, please contact your Child and Caregiver Support Worker or the SFFA.

Sincerely,

Tobie Eberhardt  
Assistant Deputy Minister,  
Child and Family Programs

Deb Davies  
Executive Director  
Saskatchewan Foster Family Association



## PRIDE Levels of Pay - Phase Two

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### **Q: When will the ministry implement additional PRIDE payment levels?**

A: PRIDE Levels of Pay - Phase Two will begin implementation in January 2022.

### **Q: What are the new payment levels?**

A: There are four new payment levels: Levels 3, 4, 5 and 6.

- Level 3 payment will replace Daily Living Support Assessment (DLSA), Therapeutic Foster Care, Transitional Adolescent Parenting Supports (TAPS) and Parent Therapist Homes.
- Level 4 payment will replace Exceptional Fee for Service for complex behavioural needs of children.
- Level 5 payment will replace Exceptional Fee for Service for complex medical needs of children.
- Level 6A will support emergent trauma care for children/sibling groups that would otherwise be placed in Short-term Community-based Homes;
- Level 6B will support an Enhanced Family Reunification process.

### **Q: How do I know if the child(ren) in my care will be included in one of these levels?**

A: An assessment on each child within the scope of Phase Two will be prepared by the childcare worker and presented to a panel for review.

### **Q: What is the required training for each level?**

A: Training requirements are being determined to address the unique needs in each level. There will be mandatory training as well as

child-specific training available to support foster families.

### **Q: Can foster parents care for children who are assessed in different levels?**

A: Yes, foster parents will be encouraged to care for sibling groups or multiple children who may be assessed at various levels, up to the foster parents' approved Level of Pay.

### **Q: Will alternate care providers qualify for higher level payments?**

A: At this time, the PRIDE level payment structure is only available to approved foster families who have completed mandatory training as indicated above. However, alternate caregivers have the opportunity to apply to become fully approved foster parents and take the required training in order to become eligible to receive the PRIDE level payments.

### **Q: Are Person of Sufficient Interest (PSI) caregivers eligible?**

A: PRIDE level payments are only available to approved foster families who have completed required training, as indicated above. Foster families who have been granted custody of children via Person of Sufficient orders will not receive the PRIDE level payment for those children who are PSI.

### **Q: Will this change impact special needs payments or reimbursement of expenses, such as travel expenses or any other payments?**

A: There will be no changes to travel expenses. Some previously reimbursed expenses will be included in the new pay structure.

### **Q: What is the difference between Phase One and Phase Two of Levels of Pay?**

A: PRIDE Levels of Pay - Phase One (Level 1 and Level 2) was successfully implemented and has positively impacted participation in mandatory training, recruitment and retention of foster families. Level 2 replaced the Skill Fee, Fee for Service and DLSA ratings 2.5 and under, providing a payment of basic maintenance plus \$500 per child, per month.

PRIDE Levels of Pay - Phase Two (Level 3, Level 4, Level 5 and Level 6A and 6B) will replace the DLSA ratings 3.0 and higher, Therapeutic Foster Homes, TAPS, Parent Therapist Homes and Exceptional Fee for Service. Phase Two will have mandatory and child specific training attached to all levels. The proposed payment structure is:

- Level 3 basic maintenance and \$1,300 per child per month;
- Level 4 basic maintenance and \$2,100 per child per month;
- Level 5 basic maintenance and \$2,900 per child per month;
- Level 6A basic maintenance and \$1,300 per child per month;
- Level 6B basic maintenance and \$2,100 per child per month.

*Note - assessment tools and a panel of subject matter experts will guide where children/youth are placed within Phase One and Phase Two of PRIDE Levels of Pay.*

### **Q: Where does my foster home fit?**

A: As we move forward in Phase Two, foster families will be given the opportunity to review their interest, training and skillset through a panel of subject matter experts.





## 6 STRUGGLES Every Foster Parent Faces

*By Mike Berry: Author of 5 books, podcaster, parent trainer, husband and father.*

**We spent a decade serving as foster parents. In that time we had the privilege of taking in more than 30 children, 6 of whom never left our care and became a permanent part of our family. Over the course of our career we experienced some major struggles. But we learned a lot from them.**

It became apparent, not long after we received our foster care license, that we were going to have to figure out lots of things on our own. We stood in the middle of a crowded courtroom lobby trying to figure out what we were supposed to do next. We had only been foster parents for a month. This was all new. We felt like babies seeing the world for the first time but having no idea how to walk or even crawl. Little did we know that we would experience this hundreds of times over the next 8 years.

### THE STRUGGLE IS REAL.

Foster parenting is one of the most rewarding but exhausting journeys you can experience in life. There is such a deep and satisfying reward knowing that you're

providing a safe and loving place for a child to live. But, there is also a lot of exhaustion and frustration over a system that is broken.

As I think back over the last decade, I realize how blessed we were in our journey. We grew so much and we also learned a ton. Because of this, our heart is to help future foster parents or people who are currently serving as foster parents, navigate some of the struggles we faced.

Many of those struggles, we didn't see coming. They pounced without warning. That's par for the course in a way. All-in-all, however, we learned a lot...

- 1. The struggle to be heard.** Have you ever had a conversation with someone and it became clear they had tuned out or their attention was now on something else? We felt this way many times over the years. Trying to be heard on everything from, *'This child has some deep wounds and we need direction,'* to *'I am exhausted, and sad, and I need some help.'* In the sometimes un-ending vortex of foster parenting, it's easy to feel like you're standing in the middle of the New York Stock Exchange trying to be heard. The most important thing we did was develop a support system of understanding people who were separate from the system. I'll explain the importance of this in #6.
- 2. The struggle to let go.** As it is with every warm-blooded human being, once a child is placed in your home, it becomes very difficult to let go of them if, or when, they return to their birth parents. You love them so you become attached. It is inevitable. And, that's normal. We faced this a lot. The way we learned to release was to envision the healing that we hoped and prayed would happen if the child returned to their home. We kept our minds focused on the positive and we equated it to how we would feel if we were in the birth parents situation. If we had had our children removed we would commit to doing everything we could to improve our situation and get them back into our care.
- 3. The struggle to keep going.** How many days did we feel like quitting? Many! In fact, they often outnumbered the good days. Sometimes our frustration came from an in-efficient case manager, and other times it was an interaction with a birth parent or the decision a judge made. We know what it's like to want to throw your hands up and quit. But remember why you started this in the first place. Take heart in knowing that you are making an impact in the children lives you've been entrusted with.
- 4. The struggle to speak up.** Early on, mostly because we were in our 20's, we couldn't find our voice. We even wondered if we had one to begin with. We did. And when we found it, we made up a lot of ground. We started making phone calls and speaking directly to our case managers about the issues at hand. We came at it from the perspective of firsthand experience. We were living with the child. We saw their deep emotions spill out. We started speaking up and speaking out! It starts by recognizing that you have been placed

in a position of great care and that your opinion is valuable. I recommend picking up the book *Crucial Conversations* by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler.

- 5. The struggle to stay positive.** There is so much negativity surrounding foster care at times. Between frustrations with the system, birth parents, and even the children at times, it exists. We ran into this many times. As hard as it was to do, we had to stay positive. Especially in front of the children. We had to keep in mind that they came from very difficult places and they were struggling to comprehend what was going on. For their sake, as well as yours, you have to remain positive. Find a close-knit group to dump your truck with, but choose to be positive in every other situation, especially in front of the children.
- 6. The struggle to find community.** This has become one of the greatest blessings in the world for us. It took some time to develop and grow into, but when we finally found a support system and a community to be authentic with, our lives changed and so did our parenting. You need community on this journey. You were never meant to do this alone. You need other people in your life who have the same wounds and struggles. In the beginning of our journey, support groups and one-on-one mentoring for foster and adoptive parents really didn't exist. Fortunately today, there are many. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of developing a solid support system. It is a game-changer in foster parenting, as well as adoption.

## BECOMING STRONGER.

Yes, this journey is difficult, and yes, it may almost take the life out of you...but there are so many opportunities for growth. Often times, it doesn't feel like you're growing, it feels like you're drowning. We get it. We have felt that way to the core of our being in the past.

Heck, we almost quit a few times. But we didn't and we are eternally grateful for that. We've become stronger human beings from this journey. We've made so many wonderful friendships in the course. As we've often said on this blog, and we'll echo here- you can let the struggle make you bitter, or you can let the struggle make you better. The choice is yours!

If you've had experience with the foster care system, what else would you add to this list?

# Why being AFRAID OF GETTING ATTACHED is a lame excuse to not be a foster parent

By Amanda Clark

“I could never do foster care, I'd get too attached.” Oh, if I had a nickel for every time I said that one! For years I was truly convinced that this was a legitimate and caring reason to not do foster care. I wouldn't want to get attached to a child and have my heart broken over and over again. I felt so noble and justified with my big heart and loving personality. What I never stopped to think about was that I don't corner the market on big heartedness, and moreover, that getting attached is exactly what makes a good foster parent.

Of course we get attached; it's human nature. And that's a good thing. It means we care, it means we love, it means we're invested in these children. And that's exactly what these kids need, someone to get attached, to fight for them, to love them, and to cry when they leave. Yes, it hurts, of course it hurts. But it hurts them, too. Can you imagine being in the child's place?

Don't you think they're attached to their birth family? Don't you think they get attached to you and your family, too? That's what really altered my perspective on this: realizing that the children don't get a say in any of this, they have no control over leaving their birth family and coming into my home, and they have no say over leaving my home either. Yet they get attached, too. And if I'm really noble, if I really have a big heart, shouldn't I value what they're feeling over what I'm feeling? I am the adult, after all.

That was a tough pill for me to swallow, but once I did, I was able to better embrace being a foster mom. A foster mom who gets invested. A foster mom who loves every child that walks in that front door. And, yes, a foster mom who gets attached every single time. If you walked into my living room right now you would see a framed photo of every child we've had in care. We will always love them, we will always care about them, and we will always be attached. That's what love does.

And part of loving someone, really, truly, loving them, is wanting the best for them. And oftentimes, what's best for these children who will always hold a piece of our hearts, is their birth family. Understanding that doesn't make it easy, I don't think saying goodbye to someone you love ever gets easy. We need to love them enough to say goodbye—enough to know that even though it hurts, it really is what's best for them.

The wonderful thing about having a big heart is that there's always more love to go around. Yes, you'll get attached, and so will they. They'll take a piece of you, and leave a little piece of themselves. You'll never forget them, and you will always love them. And that's good, because the alternative is keeping your whole heart to yourself, never sharing it, never knowing a child you will come to love, never putting yourself out there to get hurt through selfless love.

And, that is pretty lame.



**If you have a fostering story to share with our readers, please send it in!**

- We accept stories/articles about:
- Personal stories and reflections about being a foster parent
  - Great resources for foster parents that you'd like to share
  - Long term connection with past foster children
  - Challenges you've experienced and creative solutions
  - How your extended family or children have responded to your fostering lifestyle
  - Foster-related book reviews
  - Foster-related movie reviews
  - Foster placements resulting in a family growing through adoption
  - Fostering tips and tricks
  - Notable foster related experiences

**Please submit your articles by email to: [kendra@sffa.sk.ca](mailto:kendra@sffa.sk.ca)**



# Supporting Youth

## TRANSITIONING OUT OF CARE

**A**s foster parents you are in a unique position to help youth in your care prepare for a successful future. You can support the development of the youth's transition plan, and you can aid in important skill-building activities that will improve the youth's ability to carry out his or her plan. In addition, you can encourage a young adult's growing independence and guide safe exploration of new experiences, while providing a cushion of support.

As a foster parent of a youth preparing to transition, you have a few vital roles:

**Coach** – listen, advise and provide the youth with many opportunities to learn and practice new skills.

**Advocate** – learn about and fight for the youth's rights as they relate to advanced education, health and mental health care.

**Networker** – help to cultivate connections and supports for the youth such as contacting your local Youth In Care Networks, community groups and community members who may have developed a supportive relationship with the youth.

Some key skills and knowledge that all youth need to learn prior to being on their own are:

- Managing money and paying bills
- Establishing a bank account
- Paying taxes
- Finding and maintaining employment
- Securing housing
- How to maintain a residence
- Maintaining health and wellness
- Accessing health and dental care
- Nutrition and meal planning/preparation
- Arranging transportation
- Pursuing education and vocational training
- Planning for future goals
- Time management

Start early! Preparation for adulthood does not take place over night so don't wait until a new months before the youth ages out. Make a plan well in advance and start working on skills and connections as early as possible.



## Let's stay connected...

We are now sending out e-mails to our foster parents. To be added to our contact list and receive the latest news, please send your e-mail address to [kendra@sffa.sk.ca](mailto:kendra@sffa.sk.ca)

# Nature Play

## BOOSTING YOUR CHILD'S HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT & CREATIVITY

All parents search for ways to support their child's healthy development. Playing in nature is an important part of the mix. Developmentally, the primary value of outdoor, nature spaces is how they support children's unstructured, spontaneous play. Children's lifestyle research indicates a trend towards more home-centered activity, with decreased opportunities for children to participate in unrestricted free play, and less time outdoors. Contrariwise, research shows that being outdoors in nature offers benefits to children:

- Children will be smarter, better able to get along with others, and healthier and happier when they have regular opportunities for free and unstructured play in the out-of-doors.
- Play in nature helps children focus attention and can reduce ADHD symptoms.
- Studies of children in schoolyards found that children engage in more creative play in green areas, and they also play more cooperatively.
- Positive, direct experience in the out-of-doors with a trusted adult - parent, grandparent, or guardian - are the two factors that most contribute to individuals choosing to take action to benefit the environment as adults.

Play in nature has different impacts at each stage of development. As children grow and develop, they need to confront new challenges at the edge of their known world that will constantly exercise newfound skills. This means a truly "developmentally appropriate" environment must be designed to offer a diversity of settings and uses to engage the developing child on a daily basis, constantly supporting the growth of new skills and knowledge at each developmental level.

### *Think of it this way:*

**For Infants** - A comfortable place for parents and young children to be out in nature together. Gardens with colors, textures, sounds, and smells to stimulate the senses.



**For Toddlers** - A space for beginning steps of independent exploration. Encouraging walking and exploring nature using balance logs, sensory gardens, edible and wildlife gardens, and lawns for active play. Developing creativity and imagination, stimulating free play. Observing, naming, and discovering. Moving objects from place to place.

**For Preschoolers** - Places to support cognitive development, gross and fine motor development, and science learning. Social skills and dramatic play. Construction play, building, sifting, sorting, measuring,



digging. Running, jumping, climbing, hopping, skipping, dancing. Weather, habitat and wildlife exploration and observation. Experimenting.

**For School-Age Kids** - Spaces to deepen understanding of plants, animals, and human interactions. Observing changes and effects of weather and seasons and how they relate to changes in the environment and other living forms. Gross motor exploration - climbing, running, balancing. Games with rules in open areas. Designing and building forts and animal habitats. Places to get away.

Let's remember children with disabilities have as much right to connect with nature as other children. Always offer appropriate opportunities for all children to enjoy nature year-round.

Nature-filled yards, as well as balconies and patios, combined with unstructured nature play, serve to nurture a love of the natural world. When children learn early in life about the beauty of nature, they are more likely to retain those values as adults and become active stewards of the environment.

*Continued on next page...*

## Getting Started

The first step to naturalizing your yard, balcony or patio, is to take inventory of what you already have. A stack of unused pots can be turned into a colorful, edible container garden. Large shrubs can be pruned to provide a child-size hiding space. A low, wet spot may provide a place where children would love to dig and explore... all they need is permission.



Assessing what already exists and starting small can help ensure success in the years to come. Incorporating nature play elements into your home landscape is all about planning and making incremental changes over time, so that as your children grow, so does their engagement with the outdoors. The most important goal should be to create outdoor spaces where children and families can enjoy being together.

## Involving the Whole Family

Involving children from the start generates enthusiasm for the whole process, and encourages them to feel comfortable making suggestions about how they want to use the outdoors, and what natural elements excite them the most. Getting children engaged in both the annual cycle of seasonal changes in the landscape, and the year-to-year changes that come as plants mature and the landscape ‘fills in,’ is a learning experience that will stay alive throughout life.

## Managing Nature Play

While major annual physical management tasks (e.g. pruning) will require parental or professional involvement, children can still “help” with daily or weekly care and maintenance routines that can be fun, rewarding activities.

Don't think of weeding as a chore. Encourage children to become “plant detectives.” Support their curiosity about the new plants that pop up in the landscape. Investigate online resources to identify ‘weeds.’ Ask children to count how many types they can find

and remove. By managing their own outdoor space, children gain ownership. Along with other family members, they will become confident shapers of space to fit their needs. From the first tomato plant planted and the first bird feeder hung, children will acquire a special sense of meaning about their surrounding environment as time passes.

## Risk Taking – The Essence of Healthy Development

“Nothing ventured, nothing gained” is a well-worn proverb. Nowhere is this more relevant today than children's daily life, which is often seen as over-protected and overly structured, leaving children little space and time to engage in creative free play outdoors in nature. The value of this traditional aspect of childhood is based on the fact that until yesterday it was the learning process of childhood. Outdoors was where children learned to get along with each other, learned how to read the landscape, how to harvest resources and use them creatively for survival, and how to test and develop their bodies by interacting with their surroundings. Children learned through direct experience, by doing, by collaborating with others in order to survive. If they had enough to eat, they were physically healthy.

Risk taking is still essential in helping children to build problem solving skills and competency to better prepare for life's challenges. Children need to explore and discover at their own pace. To learn, they must constantly push the limits of their own experience – in balance with changing stages of maturity. Particularly in the early years, supervision is essential to ensure that activities do not move beyond healthy risk-taking, which in itself is a positive aspect of outdoor play and yard management. Parents can stimulate curiosity, encourage exploration, and respond to questions but at the same time take care not to disrupt sequences of intense, playful discovery.

Every family has the opportunity to invite nature to their daily life, to “pull” children outdoors where they can exercise bodies and minds and gain lifelong habits of health. Research tells us this is good for building character, reinforcing self-esteem, and learning cooperative skills with those around.

Regardless of the location of your home (urban, suburban, rural) or its size (apartment, condo, detached house), there will always be opportunities for your children to interact with the natural world. It just takes a little imagination. So... open the door, allow your children to breathe the fresh air, listen to the bird song, and be with nature.

*Source: National Wildlife Federation and Natural Learning Initiative*

Summer should be remembered for its endless sunshine and balmy temperatures, not irritating bug bites. Avoid summer's itch with the following preventative strategies and treatment tips.

## Mosquitoes

Summer's most unwelcome guests will feast on birds, animals and you. The Public Health Agency of Canada states that mosquito season can start in mid-April and extend until the first frost in early October.

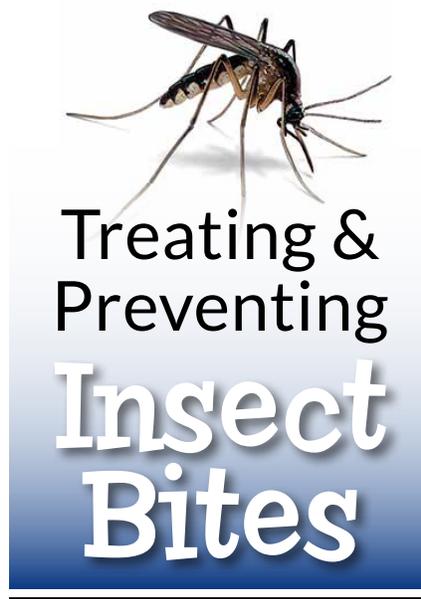
**Prevention:** Don't make yourself available for their next meal – stay indoors during dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are active. If you must go outside, wear long sleeves and pants to shield your skin. You can also use bug repellents. Doctors have advised parents not to use DEET products on small children... “For little kids, just keep them away from bugs and covered up with clothing.”

**Bite Treatment:** Doctors recommend applying an over-the-counter anti-itch creme. And don't scratch – you'll make the bite site red, itchy and could trigger a skin infection. If within two to 15 days of being bitten, you develop flu-like symptoms or experience confusion, muscle weakness or paralysis, seek medical attention immediately to rule out West Nile virus.

## Bees & Wasps

Summer brings on our love-hate relationship with bees and wasps. Bumblebees, famous for their gardening skills, help summer bloom. Wasps, however, have a well-earned reputation as an unwanted pest.

**Prevention:** Insect repellent won't keep wasps and bees away, so avoidance is key. The Ministry of Health recommends staying away from garbage bins where wasps tend to gather. To steer clear of bees, wear light coloured clothing, don't use scented shampoos or



perfume and avoid flowering plants. If a bee or wasp is flying around you, refuse the temptation to swat it away; sudden movements can provoke the insect to sting.

**Sting Treatment:** If stung by a bee, use your fingernail to remove the stinger. Don't use tweezers. They could squeeze venom from the stinger into your wound. Wasp stingers don't remain in your skin after an attack. Clean the area with soap and water and if you feel pain at the site, doctors have recommended taking a pain reliever. Unfortunately, some people can experience an anaphylactic reaction. “If your lips are swelling, it's getting harder to breathe, or your throat is tightening up, get straight to emergency. Don't assume that the symptoms will go away. If it is an allergy, it won't go away without life-saving medication.”

## Black Flies

You're not the only one who loves being outdoors. Black flies do too. Their bites cause painful and itchy red welts. Depending on where you live, black fly season can begin as early as May and last into late August. According to some agricultural studies, black flies are more likely to attack during morning, late afternoon, and early evening. They're also more prevalent when

a storm is on the horizon, and in wooded areas.

**Prevention:** Wear long sleeved tops and long pants to guard against bites – black flies cannot bite through fabric. They're also attracted to dark colours, so avoid wearing black, blue, purple or brown clothes. Bug repellents with DEET can dissuade black fly attacks.

**Bite Treatment:** Clean the area with warm water and soap, followed by an application of an anti-itch product. If the itching and pain is interfering with your sleep or work, doctors suggests taking an over-the-counter antihistamine such as Claritin or Benadryl to reduce itching and swelling. Consult your physician if the bites aren't healing or seem more painful than usual.

## Ticks

When ticks bite, they hold on, they bury their head into your skin and suck your blood. They're like little vampires. Ticks can transmit Lyme disease, a rare neurological condition.

**Prevention:** Health Canada recommends that you wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and closed shoes if you're frequenting tall grassy trails and wooded areas – places where ticks lurk. Tucking your shirt into your pants and rolling your socks over the bottom of your pant legs will provide extra skin protection. After time outdoors, check your body, clothing – even your pets – for ticks.

**Bite Treatment:** First remove the tick with tweezers. Gently pull it out. You don't want to rip off the body and leave the head in you. Within 48 to 72 hours of being bitten, see a doctor as soon as possible and bring the tick with you. It can be sent to Public Health, and they can test the tick to see if it carries Lyme disease. While you wait a few days for the results, the doctor may start you on treatment as a preventative measure.

# Defining HEALTH & WELLNESS

In Old English, the word health means whole and the word wellness means wealth —together these words tell us that we are our best when we are whole.

We, as people, are at our best when all dimensions of our wellness are healthy. It is what allows us all to work, play, create, and love. By doing all of the things your family already does, through creativity, connecting virtually, learning new skills, getting outside, and laughing together, you are maintaining your families' health and wellness.

WELLNESS CAN ALSO BE SECTIONED INTO FIVE DIMENSIONS:



In the words of a great tennis player:

*“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”*

– Arthur Ashe

## Social Wellness

Social wellness is the quality of the relationships you have with the people around you such as your family, friends, co-workers, classmates or neighbours. The support you and your family get from your social connections can add to meaning and purpose in life. While we can't visit our supports in person right now, there are lots of ways to connect with our supports that don't reside at home with us.

## Physical Wellness

Physical activity and exercise can help you feel better, have more energy, improve your sleep, keep your mind sharp and even improve your ability to handle stress. If you or your family haven't been active recently, start slow and increase your activity each day. Any movement and activity you do is better than nothing. For recommended physical activity guidelines, check out the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology.

## Emotional Wellness

Emotional wellness is our positive feelings about ourselves, our ability to express our feelings and our sense of optimism. When we are stressed, it is important to have ways to express our thoughts and feelings. Practicing engaging in your favourite activities can help you relax, find relief and cope in a healthy way.

## Intellectual Wellness

Engaging in activities that help our brain learn new skills, practice problem solving, and requires attention and focus, helps us to boost our intellectual wellness. By engaging in interesting activities that allow you to grow your knowledge, you may feel more accomplished and productive.

## Spiritual Wellness

Spirituality is about connecting with what's meaningful to you in a way that lightens or enriches your spirit. Spiritual wellness can bring comfort and healing when handling times of stress. For some people, taking time in nature, to mediate, to pray or to sit in quiet may be spiritual. For others, practicing kindness, gratitude or faith in a higher being. What brings each person spiritual wellness is unique and individual.

By trying or engaging in meaningful activities in each of these areas, you are practicing balancing your areas of wellness.

Source: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-coping-at-home-for-families.pdf>

# 10 facts about teen alcohol & drug abuse



Some teens are at higher risk due to genetics, the age when they start using, and socioeconomic circumstances (and other factors).

Casual drug use can lead to abuse and addiction, causing health issues, financial problems and legal trouble.

Today's marijuana is much stronger than it was in the past, making it more dangerous. And yes, marijuana is addictive.

Many teens with addiction also have a co-occurring mental health disorder.

A teenager's brain is much more susceptible to addiction because it is still developing.

Addiction, whether in a teenager or adult, is a disease. It is not a moral failing. Focus on the behavior, not the person.

As a caregiver or parent, remind yourself: you did not cause it, you cannot control it and it cannot be cured. Addiction can, however, be managed over the course of a lifetime just like any other chronic disease, like diabetes or hypertension.

The best prevention is to talk with your kids. Spend time with them, and let them know what your expectations are, what the rules are and what the consequences are if they break the rules. Check in regularly.

Vaping rates, whether nicotine or THC, have increased tremendously in the last few years among teens. Vaping is not harmless.

Addiction treatment works; lives can be restored.

Source: <https://www.hazeldenbettyford.org/articles/warningsigns-teen-substance-use>

# KEEPING KIDS SAFE during severe Thunderstorms



**K**ids often get afraid when a thunderstorm rolls in. Thunder and lightning are often on the top of the list of fears for younger children. Because of the damage that severe thunderstorms and tornadoes can cause, many adults have a healthy fear of them too.

## Thunderstorm Risks

Although many people simply worry about hail damage during thunderstorms, it is important to realize that other, often more deadly risks from thunderstorms, can come from:

- Driving during blinding rain.
- Lightning, which can strike as far as 10 miles from an area of rainfall.
- Flash flooding, which is most common during slow-moving thunderstorms, and can cause fast-moving water to flow down what used to be dry creek beds or slow-moving creeks or rivers, catching kids in the fast-moving water.
- Strong straight-line winds, which can knock over trees and damage some buildings.

- Tornadoes, which can damage or destroy all but the most secure buildings.

Continue to watch for updates before and during a severe thunderstorm warning or severe thunderstorm watch in your area.

## Lightning Risks

Lightning causes thunder, so if you hear thunder, there is lightning nearby. And since lightning can strike as far as 10 miles from a thunderstorm, it is important to try and figure out how far lightning is from you and your family, instead of simply waiting for it to start raining until you seek shelter.

How do you figure out how far the lightning is? A general rule of thumb is that you can figure out the distance between you and a lightning strike if you count the seconds in between seeing a lightning strike, hearing thunder, and then divide the time by 5. So if you count 10 seconds in between a lightning strike and a thunderclap, then the lightning is only about 2 miles away and you should seek shelter in a car or building.

In general, you should make sure that you can count to at least 30 in between seeing lightning strikes and hearing thunder, which means that the lightning is about 6 miles away. And to be safe, stay indoors for at least 30 minutes after hearing thunder for the last time, which should give the thunderstorm plenty of time to move out of your area.

Other tips to keep safe when lightning is nearby include:

- Seek shelter inside a fully enclosed building that has wiring or plumbing, which would usually not include a shed, open garage, or pavilion.
- Seek shelter in a hard-topped car, truck, or van, etc., if a safe building is not available
- If you can't get inside a safe building or vehicle, seek shelter in a low-lying area that is not prone to flash flooding, squatting low to the ground, and stay away from tall trees or metal poles.
- Avoid riding on anything metal during a severe thunderstorm with close lightning, such as a bicycle or golf cart.

- Stay off corded phones and avoid taking a bath or shower, as telephone lines and metal pipes can conduct electricity if your home is struck by lightning.
- Seek emergency medical attention if you see someone hit by lightning and start first aid, including CPR if necessary.

Although there are now apps on smartphones that can warn you when lightning is near, just remember the old safety slogan, “When thunder roars, go indoors!”

### Thunderstorm Safety Tips

Other tips to keep safe during a severe thunderstorm, in addition to the advice on avoiding getting hurt by lightning, include that you:

- Don't watch the thunderstorm. Instead, go inside and stay away from windows, open doors, and your porch. If possible, shutter windows or at least close the window blinds or curtains, in case flying debris hits the window.
- Have a safe place to go if a tornado is headed toward your home (tornado warning), such as a tornado shelter, basement, center hallway, bathroom, closet, or other room on the lowest room of your home that is near the center of your home and doesn't have any windows.
- Be prepared to go to your safe room during a tornado watch or severe thunderstorm warning, during which a tornado could strike.
- Have a supply kit ready in your safe room that you will go to in severe weather, including a battery-powered weather radio, flashlight, extra batteries, and any medications your kids might need, such as an asthma inhaler.

And be sure to check for downed power lines or other damage after the thunderstorm and before your kids go outside.

Source: <https://www.verywellfamily.com/severe-thunderstorm-safety-2634210>



# Backyard Kiddie Pool Safety

**O**n a hot summer day most kids would love the opportunity to splash around in a kiddie pool. But just remember these simple tips to keep them safe:

- Protect babies from the sun with age-appropriate, high SPF sunscreen, a hat, and a swim shirt. You could also place the pool in the shade to further protect them from the sun and prevent overheating.
- Use fresh, clean water every time you use the pool. Remember, kiddie pools aren't equipped with filters or chemical treatments that kill bacteria.
- Rinse the pool after each use and wipe it down with disinfectant.
- Do not let kids drink the water. If your child is old enough to drink water, provide a bottle or sippy cup to help them stay hydrated. Don't let the mouthpiece get in the pool water.
- Carry your kids or have them wear slip-on shoes to and from the pool to keep their feet clean. This also protects them from stepping on something sharp in your yard.
- Give children a bath before they get in the kiddie pool. It seems counterintuitive, but good hygiene prevents bacteria from spreading in untreated water.
- Make sure they use the potty before play time. Encourage bathroom breaks. If your child is in diapers, make sure they are wearing watertight swim diapers.
- Remember children (and adults, for that matter) can drown in shallow water. Supervise children around water at all times.
- Store the pool and pool toys in a safe place to prevent damage to the pool. You don't want brittle plastic, or for the pool to deflate during play time. Proper storage prevents drowning, too. Leaving toys in the water can lead to children deciding to play in the pool by themselves.
- As with bath water, check the temperature to make sure it's not too hot or cold. Hoses left out in the sun will run hot at first before they start spraying cold water. Babies and young children can't regulate their body temperatures as well as we do, so don't let it get too cold.

Kiddie pools are inexpensive. They provide relief in the hot summer months, and an opportunity for you to practice pool safety with very young children.

# Foster Mom Aims to Inspire Other Families

Watching Jessica Bennie's family interact is seamless. The children play and one helps another.

You can't tell which are Jessica's biological children, and which are foster children.

It's a Nanaimo, BC family which also includes goats, chickens and horses. The horses are a big part of helping the foster kids connect and flourish.

"It's such a healing tool to be able to offer these children that come in," said Bennie.

She has two foster children, a three-year-old boy and two-year-old girl.

Both come with special needs, and the family knew it would be a challenge for the little boy to reach milestones as quickly as other kids. So Bennie got him up on the family horse, Jack.

"I would ride with him on my lap and that's kind of where we started. He was just grinning ear to ear and loves being up there and just walking around and running his fingers through the horse's mane and fur," she said. "It just warms your heart when you see that and you know they are building that connection and that bond."

Building not just a bond, but also core strength, which Bennie credits with getting her foster son moving physically.

"We weren't sure whether or not he would ever walk and now he's running," she said, choking up, "Sorry, it's huge."

With two teens plus two girls already making up a big family, it might sound like a lot to take on



“All you need is room in your home and your heart.”

two foster kids - but Bennie said it's worth it.

"The most amazing thing about fostering is just seeing the children blossom and come into themselves after experiencing some of the things that they go through."

She said people seem so concerned with how the other kids in the family would react to adding a foster child into the mix. Bennie's daughters took time out from teaching their foster siblings how to groom the horse to allay those concerns.

"It's fun to have them be with us and brush the horses," said eight-year-old Selah.

Her sister Halie, 11, said they love helping their foster siblings, and she believes teaching them how to handle the horse is part of that.

"It's important because if they don't have confidence with animals they might not have confidence with anything, really," she explained.

The decision to foster didn't come out of the blue. Bennie knew exactly what kind of a difference it could make in a child's life, first-hand. She was inspired by her mother.

"My mom is an amazing woman, and she, I'm going to cry already, she fostered over 150 children over 25 years," said Bennie.

She was one of those foster children, but her mother then adopted her. "She's a saint, she really is. Just so unconditionally loving, patient, kind," Bennie continued.

One of the most valuable lessons she learned from her mother was that none of the foster kids was ever made to feel different.

She also knew she was meant to foster when she found out later in life that she had an aboriginal background.

At any given time, about two-thirds to three-quarters of the foster children in the B.C. system are indigenous.

Bennie is hopeful more indigenous families will become care-givers and she places high importance on teaching children about their background and traditions, even asking for family songs, so she can do singing, payers and drumming with them.

"It's the children's identity," she said. She said she knows people are scared it would be too emotionally difficult to foster, but insisted it's not as hard as they may think. All you need is room in your home and your heart. "It gives you a sense of helping your community and children in need. It really is life changing."

# Family



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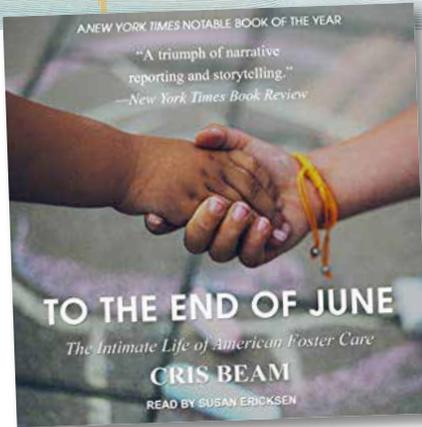
# Stories

Storytelling is an important part of how we have chosen to communicate our message to the community. Fostering looks a bit different to everyone. It can mean caring for young children, sibling groups or children with medical needs. Our stories educate viewers not only on the need for foster parents in the province, but also the impact and role they will play in supporting children and their families when needed.



Our *Village Wings* stories include 4 episodes that aim to tell the story families can be part of when stepping forward to foster. Visit <https://www.saskfosterfamilies.ca/family-stories>

# audiobooks



## TO THE END OF JUNE

The Intimate Life of American Foster Care

Written by: Cris Beam

Narrated by: Susan Ericksen

Length: 12 hrs and 15 mins

Unabridged Audiobook

Categories: Relationships, Parenting & Personal Development, Parenting & Families

Who are the children of foster care? What, as a country, do we owe them? Cris Beam, a foster mother herself, spent five years immersed in the world of foster care looking into these questions and tracing firsthand stories.

The result is *To the End of June*, an unforgettable portrait that takes us deep inside the lives of foster children in their search for a stable, loving family. Beam shows us the intricacies of growing up in the system—the back-and-forth with agencies, the rootless shuffling between homes, the emotionally charged tug between foster and birth parents, the terrifying push out of foster care and into adulthood.

Humanizing and challenging a broken system, *To the End of June* offers a tribute to resiliency and hope for real change. A very interesting book that weaves research and information with personal stories.

Source: <https://www.audible.ca>

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