



# **STEPPING STONES at the BC Centre for Ability**

**Parent/Caregiver Handbook**

BC CENTRE FOR ABILITY  
2805 Kingsway, Vancouver, BC V5R 5H9  
[www.bc-cfa.org](http://www.bc-cfa.org)

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# How to Reach Us

## Different Ways to Contact Us at the BC Centre for Ability (BCCFA)

- ❑ **Mail or Visit:** 2805 Kingsway, Vancouver, V5R 5H9 (Moss & Kingsway, next to Purdy's Chocolate Factory). BCCFA regular office hours are from Monday – Friday, 8:30 am – 5:00 pm.
- ❑ **Telephone:** 604.451.5511. You may reach any staff member through Reception or through their direct line. Please refer to Stepping Stones contacts below. All staff members have personal confidential voice mail that you can reach 24 hours a day. Staff members try to return messages within 1 business day wherever possible.
- ❑ **Fax:** 604.451.5651.
- ❑ **E-mail:** Each staff member has an individualized e-mail address (see below). For your security please do not send us identifying information about your child or family by e-mail.
- ❑ **BCCFA website:** [www.bc-cfa.org](http://www.bc-cfa.org).

## Stepping Stones Contact Information

### Program Staff

Margot Merinsky (Social Worker)  
Telephone: 604.451.5511, Ext. 1272  
E-mail: [margot.merinsky@bc-cfa.org](mailto:margot.merinsky@bc-cfa.org)  
Days of Work: Monday - Friday

### Program Director

Valerie Upton  
Telephone: 604.630.3010 or 604.451.5511, Ext. 1230  
E-mail: [val.upton@bc-cfa.org](mailto:val.upton@bc-cfa.org)  
Days of Work: Monday - Friday

# BCCFA Ethical Guidelines

- ❑ We respect the dignity of all persons.
- ❑ We uphold the rights of individuals and families to be treated with care and respect.
- ❑ We respect the uniqueness of each individual and his/her family in their values, culture, and beliefs.
- ❑ We work as partners with individuals and/or their family. Our service delivery is based on person-centred, family-centred and inclusive practice.
- ❑ We propose, facilitate and implement interventions and services that are accepted by experts in our fields of practice.
- ❑ We provide complete information to individuals and/or their families to enable them to make informed decisions about our proposed interventions and services.
- ❑ We respect the rights of individuals and families to confidentiality and privacy.
- ❑ When providing services, we ensure the safety of clients, staff, service providers and volunteers.

\*A more detailed Code of Ethics is available upon request.

# About Stepping Stones

## Who Are We

Staff in the Stepping Stones Program are registered with the BC College of Social Workers. They have experience in individual and group work and a minimum of five years experience working with children and families.

Stepping Stones provides direct services for children and their families. Examples of direct service include:

- Social Emotional Learning groups for children ages 4 - 12
- Support with life or school transitions (e.g. K to Grade 1, or entry to high school)
- Short-term consultation
- Parent networking opportunities
- Community consultation and support
- Community education and workshops

Stepping Stones does not provide behaviour intervention.

## Who We Serve

Children aged birth – 12 (and their families/caregivers) who:

- are current or former BC Centre for Ability clients; and
- live in Burnaby, North Shore, Richmond, or Vancouver.

## Where and When We Provide Services

Families/caregivers receive services in their home community at locations that are most accessible for them. These could include the family home, school, community locations, or at the BC Centre for Ability office.

For the most part, services are provided Monday - Friday during daytime hours, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm. However, family appointments, interagency meetings, group sessions, and special events may be scheduled outside of these hours as required.

## Frequency of Services

In collaboration with the family, the strengths and needs of the child/family are reviewed to determine the type of service required. All eligible families can participate in the core support program. At times, families may benefit from “short-term” blocks of 1:1 intensive support. Individual Support Plans will be written for these situations. Frequency may vary and there may be periods of time when new strategies are being introduced and there will be periods of lesser frequency when the child/family is practicing and consolidating skills.

## **Funding for Stepping Stones**

The Program is funded by the United Way. The BC Centre for Ability also provides funding and other support.

## **Fees**

There are no fees for eligible families.

## **How to Refer to Stepping Stones**

Families can request services directly by contacting the Program. Community partners (e.g. school team, Ministry of Children and Family Development, Children & Youth with Special Needs, Child & Youth Mental Health, etc.) can also request services with the family's knowledge and consent.

# How We Work With Your Child and Family

The BC Centre for Ability provides services based on the principles of Family-centred practice and services in Natural Environments. In North America this is the best practice when working with children/youth with disabilities and their families.

## Family-Centred Practice

Family Centred Practice means:

- Parents are key members of the intervention team as you know your child/youth best. Parents and BC Centre for Ability team members work together and make decisions together. Services are based on parents' concerns, goals and priorities.
- Parents are given complete and unbiased information in order to help them make decisions about the care of their child.
- Parents receive copies of any documents written about their child. Parents co-sign individualized support plans that describe goals and recommended intervention strategies.
- Parents are asked for input and feedback to ensure that services meet the child's needs, and that the recommended strategies fit the family's lifestyle, priorities and the family's routine.
- Supports and services take into consideration the needs of the whole family, including parents, brothers, sisters and members of the extended family.

## Assessment and Intervention in Natural Environments

The term "Natural Environments" refers to any place where you would expect to encounter children. Such places include not only the home, but schools, daycares, playgrounds, recreation centres, libraries, etc. Working in natural environments refers not just to a place, but also to a process that is based on the belief that children learn through participating in everyday activities and meaningful experiences with their family, peers, and others. The focus is on practical goals that make a difference in your child's daily life.

- We often begin by observing and assessing children in their daily routines (e.g. home, school, daycare, etc.). This will help the staff understand how a child is doing in that particular environment, and what could be done to enhance their ability to participate more effectively with family, peers and others.
- Staff will give tips or teach strategies and techniques on how to address some of the challenges. These can be given to the children, family members, and others involved in the child's daily activities.
- Family's needs, priorities, and interests guide this intervention.



- In this process learning occurs throughout the day, everyday, through repeated useful, relevant practice opportunities.
- Children learn and develop best when it is the family that influences the child and almost all of the intervention happens between the Social Worker's visits.
- Staff will work with your family to develop an individualized service plan specifying the expressed goals of the child and family.

## **Consent**

Parents/legal guardians are asked to sign two consent forms.

- **Consent to Provide Intervention**  
This consent authorizes Stepping Stones to provide intervention services to your child and family. This is signed at the start of services.
- **Consent to Obtain and Share Information**  
In this document, you advise us with whom we can obtain and share information about your child. This consent is signed at the start of services, and is valid for one year from the date of signing. However you can request changes to this consent document at any time.

# Your Rights

## The Right to Information and to Provide Informed Consent

- You will receive information about the BCCFA and the Program at the time of acceptance for services, including information about other BCCFA services that your child is eligible to receive concurrently.
- You will receive copies of any documents written by the Program about your child and family.
- You may see your child's Program file at the BCCFA at any time by contacting the Program Director (Contact details on Page 1). Please note: In keeping with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the BCCFA does not forward copies of reports originating from other agencies but provides help to families who want to get records from other places.
- You have the right to have complete and unbiased information on assessment, treatment and service options including the following:
  - Why we recommend specific tests or assessments
  - How the recommended service or intervention will be helpful to your child
  - Why we think it could be detrimental if your child does not receive a recommended service or intervention
  - What other options are available
  - What are the possible complications of an intervention or service
- You have the right to ask questions and receive answers regarding your child's condition and any aspect of your child's progress.
- You have the right to receive information in a language that you understand. The Program will provide interpretation services to families as required.
- You have the right to information on community resources, self-help support services and advocacy services that may be suitable and available for your child and your family.
- The rationale and details of specific research projects will be fully discussed with any families who are considering involvement with a research project. There will be no negative impact on BCCFA services if families choose not to participate in a research project.

## The Right to Refuse Services

Staff will explain any service or intervention proposed or recommended including any potential risks. You have the right to refuse any service or intervention you believe is not in the best interests of your child or family.

## **The Right to Confidentiality and Privacy**

All staff, volunteers and students at the BCCFA sign a Confidentiality Agreement when they are hired. Breaches of confidentiality are grounds for discipline by the BCCFA as well as by professional colleges or registering bodies.

- Information on your child and family is held in strictest confidence.
- Information on your child and your family will not be released without your written consent.
- In order to ensure we give information to the appropriate person when parents are separated or divorced, the BCCFA may ask for proof of guardianship (e.g. a legal document such as a custody agreement).
- Only the Program staff will be able to see your child's file.
- Information may be shared between the staff and the Program Director if consultation is required.
- Volunteers or staff in other programs at the BCCFA do not have access to your child's file.
- The provincial law (*Child, Family and Community Service Act*) requires all individuals to report suspected child abuse or neglect. The BCCFA staff abides by this legal and professional obligation.

## **The Right to be Treated with Respect**

- Practice at BCCFA is based on the philosophy of family-centred practice of which the core values are: respect for families and their individual members, respect for family autonomy and choice, and respect for diversity.
- We will work with you in ways that increase parents' confidence and competence in their ability to care for and advocate for their children.

## **The Right to Provide Feedback**

- Families have the right to express their concerns or complain about their services. A complaint will not result in the loss of services.
- Families will receive information on how to complain or express concerns at intake. For details, see the "Expressing Concerns & Providing Feedback" process outlined in this Handbook (Page 11).

# Your Responsibilities

## Family Involvement

Your involvement is extremely important in helping us provide effective services. Please collaborate with us by:

- Helping us learn about your child's interests, strengths and needs
- Participating in appointments, groups, or events that you have committed to attending.
- Asking the staff if you have questions about any recommendations or suggestions
- Following up with ideas/strategies identified in collaboration with Program staff, and letting us know what has worked and not worked
- Informing us of any relevant significant changes in your family situation that could impact the Program's ability to provide effective service to your child and family.

## Appointment Cancellation

Cancellations or missed appointments can be very disruptive to the success of your child and family achieving their desired goals. We do understand that last-minute cancellations are sometimes unavoidable. However, we do appreciate as much notice as possible. When you need to cancel an appointment, please contact the Program staff directly by phone at the Office, or by leaving a message on voice mail. If you are cancelling within 24 hours of an appointment, it is important to advise BCCFA Reception (604.451.5511). They will be able to contact the staff in the community if necessary. Please cancel your appointment if you or your child has a cold, flu, or for some reason is not feeling well enough to meet with the staff. We would also appreciate you letting us know when you or your child is unable to attend a scheduled group session or event. This assists us with planning and making alternate arrangements if needed.

# Expressing Concerns & Providing Feedback

## Ongoing Feedback Opportunities

We are committed to providing you with quality services. Let us know how you are feeling about our services at any time through:

- Open dialogue with your Program team. This is always welcome and encouraged.
- “Compliments and Concerns” forms are available from staff member(s), or at our Main Office Reception if you prefer to give feedback in writing.
- Compliments, concerns or complaints can be made either verbally or in writing by letter or e-mail.
- Feedback surveys are sent to all clients and families annually.

⊗ **IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED** with the services received from the Stepping Stones Program, you have the right to tell us about your concern or complaint. If decisions are made about your family’s services that you do not agree with or cannot accept, you have the right to appeal such decisions.

The services you receive will not be reduced or taken away because you give us feedback. In fact, we appreciate it when you let us know if you are not satisfied with your services. Your feedback helps us continue to improve the way we work with our clients and families.

### a) **First Step ...**

If your concern involves a specific staff member, we encourage you to talk directly to that person. Very often, issues and problems can be resolved quickly at this level. You may also wish to outline your concerns in writing either by sending an email or writing a letter to the staff.

### b) **If There is Still a Concern ...**

If talking to the staff does not resolve the situation to your satisfaction within a week, or if your concern relates more to the overall United Way Program, please contact the Program Director.

Name: Valerie Upton  
Title: Director of Social Work  
Phone: 604.630.3010  
E-mail: val.upton@bc-cfa.org

The Program Director will look into your complaint and work with you to come up with a solution. Activities may include:

- Talking to you on the telephone and/or meeting with you in person
- Talking to the staff member(s) involved
- Reviewing relevant information
- Looking at your child’s record
- Asking for the input of the Centre’s Medical Consultants and/or Executive Director
- Holding a team meeting to come up with a workable solution

**c) If The Problem Still Isn't Solved ...**

If talking to the Program Director does not resolve the situation to your satisfaction within two weeks, please contact the Executive Director.

Name: Rebecca Sun  
Title: Interim Executive Director  
Phone: 604.451.5511, ext 1226  
Email: rebecca.sun@bc-cfa.org

The Executive Director will look into your complaint and work with you to come up with a solution. Activities may include:

- Talking to you on the telephone and/or meeting with you in person
- Reviewing the process that has already taken place to try to resolve the issue
- Talking to the staff member(s) involved and the Program Director
- Reviewing relevant information
- Looking at your child's health record
- Holding a team meeting to come up with a workable solution
- Asking for the input of the Centre's Medical Consultants
- Asking for the input of the Centre's Board of Directors

**😊 IF YOU ARE SATISFIED**

Positive feedback is always appreciated and helps us to build on our strengths in meeting the needs of your child and family. For example, we would like to hear if our groups and workshops are meaningful and useful to you, or if you have been provided with outstanding services. (e.g. has our training or services helped to improve your child's quality of life or has it helped strengthen your family relationships.)

## Feedback Surveys and Evaluations

In addition to the ongoing feedback that you provide to us, the Program will also ask for your input at other times during your involvement with us as you use the various services provided. We will do this by asking you to complete a short questionnaire or evaluation following:

- your attendance at a Stepping Stones or BCCFA workshop or event;
- your child's participation in any of the "Group" opportunities offered by Stepping Stones or BCCFA; or,
- other times throughout the year to find out about your satisfaction with Stepping Stones.

We believe it is very important to evaluate our services on a regular basis. Feedback that we have received in the past has enabled us to make changes that have improved the quality of the Program. Therefore, we hope that you will provide us with open and honest feedback when we contact you. Your assistance with this is most appreciated.

BCCFA conducts annual Coaching and Development Performance reviews of its entire staff. Feedback is gathered from a variety of sources in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of each staff's overall job performance. Families are one of these sources, and they may be asked to provide feedback about a certain staff member. Families are contacted to provide feedback because a particular staff person has indicated them to be a source of feedback. The Program does not randomly call families to obtain information about staff performance.

# Who Might Be On Your Team

## Service Providers from Community Agencies

With your consent, Stepping Stones team members can work in partnership with other professionals in the community who are providing support and services to your child and your family. Very often, your child may receive services from a team consisting members from several different agencies to make sure that all his/her needs are being addressed. These could include:

School Teams (e.g. principal, teacher(s), educational assistants, and district resource staff)

Ministry of Children and Family Development

Children & Youth with Special Needs

Child & Youth Mental Health

Supported Child Development

Early Intervention Therapy Program\*

Key Worker Support Services\*

Supported Child Development (Burnaby & Vancouver)\*

\*There are many separate and distinct programs at the BCCFA. They all have their own referral and consent processes. We do not share information between programs without your consent.



# Resources for Your Child and Family

## Newsletter

Stepping Stones produces a newsletter four times per year (Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer). It contains Program-specific stories and helpful information along with details about upcoming groups and workshops. Families are welcome to submit content for the newsletter – we especially appreciate stories, tips and questions that can be answered and shared with other families.

## Parent Education Opportunities at the BCCFA

The BC Centre for Ability provides a variety of workshops and training opportunities throughout the year. We organize them to help meet the needs that families have identified. For example, advocating for your child, talking to others about your child, school planning, etc.

## Interpretation Services

We can bring in interpreters from many cultures when needed. They can attend appointments and meetings with your team or help you understand our written documents. This service is provided at no cost to families.

## Our BCCFA Website

Our website contains great information, updates, articles, etc. We encourage you to check it out at [www.bc-cfa.org](http://www.bc-cfa.org). To find Stepping Stones, click on *What We Do/Social Emotional Services/Stepping Stones*.

## Annual Events

The BCCFA sponsors an annual Family Picnic for its families. This gives families an opportunity to come out and participate in fun activities, and socialize with others. In addition, the BCCFA hosts its annual major fundraiser, “Dining for Dreams”, every Spring. For more information, please see our website or speak to the staff.

## Family Networking

It can sometimes be helpful to talk to another family who has experienced a similar situation. We can help connect you with other families.

# About the BC Centre for Ability (BCCFA)

## Our History

The BC Centre for Ability (BCCFA), has been providing a wide range of services to children, youth and adults with disabilities in British Columbia since it was established in 1969 by a group of parents who wanted community and home-based services for their children rather than receiving rehabilitation services in hospital settings.

## Our Mandate

### **Mission Statement:**

To provide community-based services that enhance the quality of life for children, youth and adults with disabilities and for their families in ways that facilitate and build competencies, and foster inclusion in all aspects of life.

### **Vision Statement:**

We share a vision of communities where every person is able to participate and contribute in all aspects of life.

### **Goals and Objectives of BCCFA:**

- To provide a wide range of services, including occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, social work intervention, social emotional learning, early childhood consultation services, family support, and vocational services to persons with physical, neurological and/or developmental disabilities and to their families.
- To facilitate individuals with disabilities to maximize their potential for independent living by providing accessible and responsive services based on the principles of person and family centred practice.
- To assist individuals with disabilities and family members to gain competence and confidence in advocating for themselves to address issues and remove barriers to participation in community life.
- To work in partnership with key stakeholders in building community capacity to include individuals in all aspects of community life through the provision of training, consultation and resources on innovative and best practices.
- To provide an enriched environment for staff so that they can continue to develop their professional expertise

## Our Funding Sources

The BC Centre for Ability is a non-profit, charitable organization. The Centre receives most of its funding from Provincial and Federal Government sources including BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, Employment and Social Development Canada, and Service Canada. Other funding sources include United Way of the Lower Mainland, North and West Vancouver School Districts, and contributions from the BCCFA Foundation.

## Our Funded Services

The BC Centre for Ability provides a wide range of services to children, youth and adults with disabilities. Key programs offered by BCCFA include the following:

### Services for Children and Youth:

1. Early Intervention Program: Our Early Intervention team provides children with special needs, from birth to age five, with physiotherapy (PT), occupational therapy (OT), speech language pathology (SLP) and social work (SW) support. We collaborate with parents and other caregivers to offer evidence based assessment, treatment, groups, workshops and family support at home and in the community, to facilitate children's growth. Our aim is to help children achieve their full potential where they live, play and learn.
2. School Occupational Therapy Program: In North and West Vancouver, our occupational therapists support students with neurological, physical and/or developmental challenges, from kindergarten through grade 12. We work in consultation with students' families, teachers and support staff to develop strategies that help students achieve their academic goals. Our aim is to support students' inclusion, participation and independence in school and the community
3. Supported Child Development Program (SCD): Our SCD Consultants help families with children who need extra support to access inclusive childcare and preschool. Team members work with families and childcare staff to design support strategies for children's individual needs, and provide training and consultation to childcare, preschool, and out of school care programs to help them develop inclusive principles and practices that enrich all children's experiences.
4. Community Brain Injury Program for Children and Youth in BC: Our Community Brain Injury Program provides short term, community based rehabilitation services to children and youth with a recently acquired brain injury who live in BC, and do not have third-party funding. We provide individualized acute rehabilitation support, which may include occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech language pathology, counselling and service coordination to help children and youth regain as much functionality as possible to participate in school and in their community.
5. Key Worker Support Services: We offer individual support, group therapy and skill development programs for children and youth up to age 19 who have a brain based

disorder such as fetal alcohol syndrome, neonatal abstinence syndrome or other complex developmental behavioural conditions. We educate families, professionals, and service providers about the behavioural symptoms of these conditions – which can affect development, learning, mental health, and adaptive and social skills. We provide training workshops for parents and community partners, and networking opportunities for families. Our goal is to help children and youth reduce their vulnerability to social and emotional difficulties, minimize challenging behaviours that can hinder participation in everyday life, and develop skills so they learn how to achieve success.

6. Stepping Stones Program: In our United Way Stepping Stones Program, we work with children up to 12 years old with neurodevelopmental conditions, to strengthen their social and emotional skills and ability to manage at home, with friends, and at school. We give children group opportunities to develop social emotional competencies. We educate parents and caregivers on social emotional development and how to promote their child's learning. We also offer training and consultation to schools and community service providers, so they learn how to promote social emotional development in children with disabilities. Our aim is to help children form close, secure relationships with adults and peers, and regulate and express feelings in socially and culturally appropriate ways.

#### **Services for Adults:**

1. Opportunities Fund Program: The OPPS fund program helps adults with disabilities prepare for employment and self-employment, to support diverse and inclusive workplaces. We provide financial support to help participants achieve their employment goals by providing funding for training programs, wage subsidies and purchase of adaptive equipment. We support eligible participants in the Lower Mainland, Sunshine Coast, Sea to Sky corridor up to Pemberton, Fraser Valley up to Boston Bar and out to Hope. Our aim is to enhance employability and employment success for persons with disabilities.