

Kinship and foster caregiver roundtable action plan

Quarterly update

October 2025 update

Introduction

In 2024, the Minister of Children and Family Services met with kinship and foster caregivers through provincial roundtables to hear directly from them about their experiences. Caregivers shared both successes and challenges, identifying what is working well and where changes are needed. This valuable feedback became the foundation for the Kinship and Foster Caregiver Roundtable Action Plan.

About the action plan

The Caregiver Roundtable Action Plan is a living roadmap which responds directly to kinship and foster caregiver concerns, outlining concrete actions, timelines and progress updates. This plan will continue to evolve as new initiatives are introduced and as feedback from caregivers continues to guide the system. The goal is to ensure that kinship and foster caregivers have a voice in shaping Alberta's child and family services system.

Regular caregiver updates

To keep caregivers informed and connected, quarterly updates will be provided in April, July, October and January. These updates will provide a clear snapshot of progress on the Caregiver Roundtable Action Plan, highlighting completed actions, items in progress, and upcoming initiatives. By providing clear and consistent communication, caregivers can see how their feedback is driving change and remain connected to the evolving supports, training, and resources that strengthen Alberta's kinship and foster care system.

The plan is grouped into four categories: modernization, operational enhancements, training and supports.



Modernization

Modernization focuses on updating tools, technology and administrative processes. Caregivers told us they need less paperwork and clearer, more centralized access to resources. Actions will reduce red tape and make systems more user-friendly.



Operational enhancements

Operational improvements strengthen the policies, supports and recruitment strategies that directly affect caregivers. Caregivers told us they need consistent support and resources. Actions will ensure supports to provide care for children and youth are considered and consistent, policies are practical and recruitment efforts ensure caregivers are available across Alberta.



Training

Relevant, flexible and specialized training is foundational to ensuring caregivers have the skills and competencies needed to provide care for children and youth. Caregivers told us they need training that meets their needs. Actions will expand access to learning opportunities covering trauma-informed care, cultural awareness and managing complex needs, while offering multiple formats to fit caregivers' busy lives.






Supports




Beyond systems and training, caregivers told us they need additional supports. Actions will enhance engagement, and provide opportunities for feedback, with the goal of reducing caregiver stress and strengthening stability for children and youth.

Updates on the sixteen actions underway:



OPERATIONAL ENHANCEMENT ACTIONS

Theme and shared challenges	Action	Update	Anticipated completion
<p>Caregiver involvement and respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports to provide care for children and youth are considered and consistent.• Caregivers want to feel their time and energy is valued.	<p>ACTION 1: Implement annual caregiver rate increases.</p> <p>Implementing annual caregiver rate increases ensures financial support keeps pace with rising costs. This not only helps caregivers meet the day-to-day needs of children and youth, but also shows that their time, energy and commitment are valued.</p>	<div><p>COMPLETE</p><p><i>Rates increased by 4.2% in June 2024 and by 2% in April 2025; annual increase now in effect.</i></p></div>	COMPLETED
<p>Caregiver involvement and respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Caregivers want to be treated like professionals.• Caregiver expertise should be recognized.• Collaboration should be consistent.	<p>ACTION 2: Implement mandatory staff training on caregiver collaboration. Develop role specific training for caregiver practitioners.</p> <p>Mandatory staff training on caregiver collaboration is essential to build respectful, consistent partnerships between caregivers and staff. It helps ensure caregivers are treated as professionals, their expertise is recognized and their voices are included in decision-making.</p>	<div><p>COMPLETE</p><p><i>'Working Collaboratively with Caregivers' Training module development is complete.</i></p><p><i>Mandatory training has been launched.</i></p></div>	COMPLETED
<p>Administrative and systemic challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More resources for recruitment and retention.• Increased support from contracted agencies.	<p>ACTION 3: Support the recruitment of new foster caregivers and enhance the supports agencies provide to their foster caregivers through a provincial procurement of agency foster care services.</p> <p>A provincial procurement of foster care services expands recruitment efforts by tapping into agencies' strong community connections and trusted relationships. Agencies can tailor recruitment strategies to reflect local and cultural contexts, including partnerships with Indigenous and community organizations.</p>	<div><p>COMPLETE</p><p><i>Provincial procurement of foster care services completed May 2025.</i></p></div>	COMPLETED


OPERATIONAL ENHANCEMENT ACTIONS *(cont.)*

Theme and shared challenges	Action	Update	Anticipated completion
Administrative and systemic challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More resources for recruitment, retention and placement stability. • Recruitment should focus more on diverse communities. • Reduce public misconceptions about foster caregiving. 	ACTION 4: Relaunch foster care recruitment campaign and develop additional recruitment strategies. <p>Relaunching a provincial foster care recruitment campaign and developing new strategies will bring more caregivers into the system, reduce pressure on existing homes and improve placement stability for children and youth.</p>	 <p>IN PROGRESS</p> <p><i>Campaign relaunch; additional recruitment strategies under development.</i></p>	FALL 2025
Caregiver involvement and respect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More respite and relief options could be made available. • Respite policy could be more flexible. 	ACTION 5: Restructure respite/relief into a flexible program. <p>Restructuring respite and relief into a flexible program will give caregivers more control and choice, ensuring support is available when it's most needed.</p>	 <p>IN PROGRESS</p> <p><i>Policy is currently under review.</i></p>	WINTER 2025
Caregiver involvement and respect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregivers would like more ability to make everyday decisions for the children and youth in their care. • Caregivers would like their insights and lived experience to be recognized and considered in the decisions child intervention practitioners make. 	ACTION 6: Review caregiver delegation policy and reinforce expectation that child intervention practitioners and caregiver practitioners actively collaborate with caregivers. <p>Recognizing caregivers' insights and lived experience helps reflect the child's real needs and circumstances in decision-making. This not only shows respect for caregivers' role but also strengthens consistency, stability and well-being for children and youth in care.</p>	 <p>IN PROGRESS</p> <p><i>Policy review underway.</i></p>	WINTER 2025



OPERATIONAL ENHANCEMENT ACTIONS *(cont.)*

Theme and shared challenges	Action	Update	Anticipated completion
Administrative and systemic challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual caregiver assessment needs updating so it is more efficient and doesn't duplicate the licensing process. 	ACTION 7: Update assessment with competency-based framework. Updating the annual caregiver assessment with a competency-based framework will remove duplication with licensing and focus on building skills and strengths. This approach better recognizes caregivers as professionals, highlights areas for growth, and ensures assessments are meaningful, supportive and directly connected to the needs of children and youth in care.	 IN PROGRESS <i>New framework under development.</i>	SPRING 2026
Administrative and systemic challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensing should be less complicated. Caregivers should be respected during the care concern process. 	ACTION 8: Update all licensing policy and reduce unnecessary documentation. Consider alternatives to assessments of abuse and neglect in line with administrative law. Updating licensing and care concern policies is critical to reducing unnecessary paperwork and ensuring processes are fair and respectful to caregivers.	 IN PROGRESS <i>Project is in progress with current review of all licensing and care concern policies underway.</i>	2026-27


MODERNIZATION ACTIONS

Theme and shared challenges	Action	Update	Anticipated completion
Administrative and systemic challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for clear, centralized information and timely decisions/ approvals. Navigation challenges. Important to be clear on who my child intervention practitioner / caregiver practitioner is. 	ACTION 1: Develop online caregiver portal The caregiver portal will centralize information and provide tools for submitting requests, forms and invoices online. It will also include features to support decision-making and connect caregivers directly with their child intervention or caregiver practitioner, reducing delays, clarifying responsibilities, and streamlining communication.	 IN PROGRESS <i>Resourcing and development underway. Phased approach to move toward full functionality.</i>	PHASE 1: FALL 2025 COMPLETION: 2026




MODERNIZATION ACTIONS *(cont.)*

Theme and shared challenges	Action	Update	Anticipated completion
Caregiver involvement and respect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregiver handbooks and guides could use a refresh. Impacts how respected caregivers feel and impacts new caregivers. 	ACTION 2: Update and digitize handbooks & compensation guides <p>Updating and digitizing caregiver handbooks and compensation guides will give current caregivers quick access to accurate information, while also making resources easily available to prospective caregivers. This ensures clarity, reduces confusion and keeps guidance up to date.</p>	 <p>IN PROGRESS</p> <p><i>Updated drafts are under development.</i></p>	FALL 2025
Administrative and systemic challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invoicing process could be faster and easier. Reimbursement could also be faster. 	ACTION 3: Simplify and streamline invoicing process <p>Simplifying the child maintenance form and introducing new threshold for approvals to support more efficient invoicing/reimbursement.</p>	 <p>IN PROGRESS</p> <p><i>Review and updates in progress.</i></p>	2026


TRAINING ACTIONS

Theme and shared challenges	Action	Update	Anticipated completion
Networking and connection building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregivers need more training opportunities and time to collaborate. 	ACTION 1: Funding for the Alberta Foster and Kinship Association's (AFKA) conference. <p>Providing funding to support the AFKA conference creates valuable opportunities for caregivers to come together, share experiences and learn from one another. It builds community, reduces isolation and provides access to training and resources that strengthen caregiving skills.</p>	 <p>COMPLETE</p> <p><i>Children and Family Services has provided funding to support the 2025 AFKA Caregiver Conference.</i></p>	COMPLETED

TRAINING ACTIONS *(cont.)*

Theme and shared challenges	Action	Update	Anticipated completion
Networking and connection building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training should be more flexible and accessible. • In-person training provides better opportunities for networking and peer support. • Training session scheduling should be more flexible and consider caregiver responsibilities. 	<p>ACTION 2: Develop flexible training opportunities with both virtual and in-person options and offer sessions at varied times to better fit caregivers' busy schedules.</p> <p>Offering flexible training with both virtual and in-person options, scheduled at varied times, makes learning more accessible and practical for caregivers. It reduces barriers caused by rigid schedules, supports different learning preferences and creates more opportunities for networking and peer connection.</p>	 <p>IN PROGRESS</p> <p><i>Planning in progress to support enhancements to training.</i></p>	SPRING 2026
Administrative and systemic challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More specialized training content is needed. 	<p>ACTION 3: Create modules on trauma, cultural awareness and complex needs.</p> <p>Developing specialized training content ensures training reflects the real challenges caregivers face, making it practical and relevant to their daily reality.</p>	 <p>IN PROGRESS</p> <p><i>Planning in progress.</i></p>	SPRING 2026
Administrative and systemic challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies should be able to deliver training modules for their foster caregivers. 	<p>ACTION 4: Enable agency-delivered training by expanding the caregiver training framework to allow agencies to co-develop and deliver approved training modules tailored to the needs of their foster caregivers.</p> <p>Enabling agency-delivered training allows foster caregivers to receive learning that is directly tailored to their needs and local context. Agencies can build on their close relationships with caregivers to design and deliver practical, relevant modules, while still aligning with provincial standards.</p>	 <p>PLANNED FOR</p> <p><i>Planning to begin Fall 2025.</i></p>	2026-2027

SUPPORT ACTIONS

Theme and shared challenges	Action	Update	Anticipated completion
Caregiver involvement and respect <ul style="list-style-type: none">Caregivers want consistent opportunities to provide feedback.	ACTION 1: Formalize annual caregiver feedback opportunities. <p>Formalizing annual caregiver feedback opportunities ensures caregivers have a consistent and meaningful way to share their experiences and ideas. It demonstrates respect for their voices, builds trust and helps shape policies and practices that truly reflect caregivers' needs.</p>	 IN PROGRESS <p>Planning and development in progress.</p>	WINTER 2025

What's next

In the coming months, Children and Family Services will be focusing on:

- ☒ Advancing the caregiver portal – completing Phase 1 (information hub) and preparing for future phases, including invoicing and interactive tools.
- ☒ Continuing policy review on caregiver delegation with anticipated completion in winter 2025.
- ☒ Launching updated respite and relief policy with greater flexibility for caregivers in winter 2025.
- ☒ Rolling out the new competency-based caregiver assessment framework in spring 2026.
- ☒ Completing invoicing policy review and launching the revised, streamlined invoicing process in 2026.

Caregiver appreciation

Kinship and foster caregivers are the heart of the child and family services system. Your dedication provides children and youth with safety, stability and belonging. Every action in this plan considers your voices. We are deeply grateful for your commitment and resilience in supporting children and youth in care.