



Adoption and permanency support guide

Supports and resources for families and caregivers

October, 2024



About the Belonging Network

The Belonging Network is a Canadian non-profit providing support, education, and connection for adoptive and permanency families and youth in and from government care in BC and beyond.

Formerly the Adoptive Families Association of BC, we began more than 45 years ago as a group of adoptive parents who dedicated their time and energy to supporting each other and other families in British Columbia. We've since expanded to serve all types of permanency and adoptive families as well as youth in and from government care.

You can learn more about what we do and our impact [here](#).

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The Belonging Network's main office is located on the ancestral, unceded lands of the sə́lilwətaʔt (Tseil-Waututh), Sḵwəxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations. The Belonging Network is committed to listening, learning, and participating in truth and reconciliation.

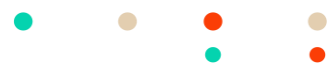


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Understanding and using this guide



This guide outlines the support the Belonging Network offers to families before placement, after placement, and throughout their permanency journey.

- It is organized into categories to help you easily find the support you need. Simply refer to the Table of contents above.
- Click the links in [persimmon](#) to visit our website for more information, join our groups, download our guides, or register for upcoming events.

Normalizing support and connection



There are many ways to receive support.

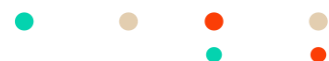
Seeking and embracing support is a vital and empowering aspect of the adoption and permanency journey. It plays a crucial role in ensuring a positive experience for both your family and your children. Reaching out for help is a sign of strength, demonstrating your commitment to creating a nurturing environment.

It's perfectly okay to ask for support.

The Belonging Network fosters connection, helping families feel less isolated and more understood by connecting them with others who share similar experiences. Whether you're looking to exchange advice with those who have walked this path before you or simply seeking a sense of community, there are countless benefits to connecting with others.

Support comes in many forms. You may want to connect with families facing similar challenges, or you might need guidance from those who have successfully navigated the journey ahead. The Belonging Network offers various ways to connect, whether you need referrals to local professionals or information and resources on specific issues. Whatever your needs, the Belonging Network is here to assist you in finding the right support.

The Belonging Network offers support at every stage of your journey—whether you're just starting out or have been on this path for many years. Parenting a child who has experienced trauma and loss can be challenging, and the difficulties you encounter are not uncommon in the adoption and permanency world. The first step to receiving the support you need is knowing where to turn and understanding that it's perfectly okay to ask for help.



Online support groups



Drop-in online support groups

We offer drop-in online support sessions via **Microsoft Teams** that bring together parents and those pursuing parenthood who are facing unique circumstances or challenges, or who simply want to connect with others.

All groups provide the opportunity to share experiences, socialize, and build friendships. They are private, require members to commit to respecting confidentiality, and are facilitated by our Family Support Specialist. This ensures that the group remains focused and that confidentiality is upheld by all.

Weekly Coffee Chat online support group

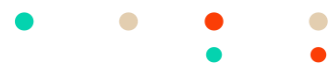
This is a group for those who are navigating the challenges of parenting children or youth through adoption or permanency.

Our weekly drop-in Coffee Chat provides a safe and welcoming space for adoptive and permanency parents or guardians to connect. Share your stories, listen to each other, and build a network of support with people who understand what you're going through.

Join us **every Wednesday morning from 10 to 11 a.m.** (PDT). Come as you are, drop in whenever you can, and let's chat over coffee.

Please note that our Family Support Specialist Christina Kunz will be present to offer support, but there won't be any other professionals in this session.

To participate, please register for each session on our [event calendar](#).



Monthly Waiting Parents online discussion group

This is an online discussion group for waiting parents to get together and explore a variety of adoption- and permanency-related topics.

In this series of group discussions, we'll explore various topics related to adoption and permanency with the company of guest speakers. As a community, attendees will shape the discussions by suggesting topics they want to learn about. This is a unique opportunity for waiting parents to connect, reflect, learn, and create a community of support.

Join us on **the third Wednesday of every month from 5 to 6 p.m.** (PDT).

This is a group for individuals or couples who are actively pursuing or thinking about adoption.

Visit our [event calendar](#) to register for upcoming sessions.

Facebook support groups

The Belonging Network also offers six private Facebook support groups (something for everyone). These groups provide a great way for parents and families to connect online across BC. They are an excellent place to ask questions (openly or anonymously), share resources, and connect with others in the adoption and permanency community. Stay up to date with events and workshops offered by the Belonging Network and other organizations

All groups are private, require members to commit to respecting confidentiality, and are facilitated by our Family Support Specialist. This ensures that the group remains focused, and that confidentiality is upheld by all.

[Waiting Parents Support Group](#)

This support group is for prospective parents who are considering adoption or permanency, at any stage of their application journey, or who are approved waiting parents.

[Connecting and Supporting Families](#)

This is a confidential social networking support group for adoptive and permanency parents in BC who are parenting children of any age. We explore contemporary adoption and permanency issues and support each other through the sharing of personal insights and experiences.

[Parenting Indigenous Children Support Group](#)

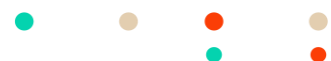
This group is for adoptive and permanency parents of Indigenous children. We support each other through the sharing of personal insights and experiences in an atmosphere of confidentiality and trust.

[Complex Needs Parent Support Group](#)

This support group is for adoptive parents of children with complex needs, including FASD. We explore contemporary adoption issues and support each other through the sharing of personal insights and experiences, in an atmosphere of confidentiality and trust.

[2SLGBTQIA+ Parent Support Group](#)

This support group is for adoptive and permanency families with members (parents and/or children) who are part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Prospective parents are also welcome!



Parenting Teens Support Group

In this group, Adoptive Parents can share stories, experiences, thoughts and feelings in a supportive non-judgmental atmosphere of confidentiality and trust. Parents can ask questions, learn from one another through lived experience and work together to help overcome common issues that their teenage adoptees face. Most importantly, parents will have a support system and know that they are not alone.



Connecting families



Face to Face Connections program

In-person peer support

Our Face to Face Connections program is a peer support initiative led by volunteers who are adoptive and permanency parents themselves. These groups meet monthly or bimonthly across four regions in BC and are designed for adoptive and permanency families who are actively parenting. The events range from family-oriented community gatherings to focused parent support groups. Register to participate in an event in your area and enjoy the opportunity to connect with other parents and caregivers while your children and youth build new friendships.

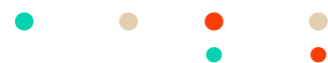
The Face-to-Face Connections program fosters a welcoming community where families can share experiences, support one another, and create lasting memories with their children and youth.

Regions:

- Lower Mainland
- Shuswap
- Kelowna
- South Vancouver Island

Benefits of in-person events for the permanency community:

In-person events offer a unique opportunity for adoptive and permanency families to connect on a deeper level. These gatherings provide a sense of belonging and understanding that is often difficult to find elsewhere. By interacting face-to-face, parents can exchange practical advice, share their challenges, and celebrate their successes in a supportive environment. For children





and youth, these events offer a chance to meet peers who share similar life experiences, helping them feel less isolated and more understood.

Overall, in-person connections strengthen the adoption and permanency community by building a network of mutual support and understanding, which is essential for navigating the complexities of adoption and permanency.

All families are welcome! This event is open to all types of permanency families—adoptive, guardianship, Indigenous customary care, and relatives raising relatives.

Check our [event calendar](#) for upcoming events happening in your region.



One-on-one family support

We're here for you. The Belonging Network's Family Support team supports adoption and permanency families with free, confidential support and connection. We can make referrals and suggest resources to guide you through your situation. Whether you're experiencing a parenting or paperwork challenge, or just want to know you're not alone, we'd love to connect with you.

Meet our Family Support Specialist:



Hello! I'm Christina Kunz, the Family Support Specialist at the Belonging Network. My role is to support families across BC as they navigate their adoption and permanency journey. I offer personalized assistance by:

- Providing one-on-one support tailored to your needs.
- Offering resources to help waiting parents prepare for a child's arrival.
- Sharing information and guidance on managing adoption-related challenges.
- Assisting parents in understanding and addressing trauma and behavioural issues.
- Connecting families with adoption-competent professionals and resources specific to their situation and needs
- Helping families find local support services within their communities.
- Connecting you with support groups that provide ongoing encouragement.
- Informing you about educational opportunities through the Belonging Network and other community organizations.

The support you receive is tailored to your unique situation.

I'm available for meetings via phone or video and can also organize virtual support groups. Whether you're just starting or have been on this journey for years, I'm here to support you. Feel free to reach out and schedule a time to connect—I look forward to working with you!

Christina Kunz (She/Her) | BA Psychology & Developmental Studies
Family Support Specialist
ckunz@belongingnetwork.com | 778-897-1315 Ext. 182
I'm available Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Don't hesitate. Reach out for support.



Resources and education



Learning opportunities

Every adoption and permanency journey is unique. Equip yourself with knowledge, skills, and confidence along the way with our workshops and learning opportunities.

Whoever you are—someone waiting to adopt, a new parent who’s just started a life with a child, an experienced caregiver, a professional, a young person in or from government care—we’ve developed info sessions, workshops, and other learning opportunities to help create a bright future for you and your family.

Workshops:

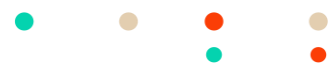
- [Safe Babies](#)
- [Trauma-Informed Parenting](#)
- [Raising Relatives](#)
- [Surviving & Thriving](#)
- [Parenting Teens & Tweens](#)

Information sessions:

- [Adopt BC Kids](#)

We offer various sessions throughout the year, allowing you to enroll whenever it works best for you.

We also host special events, including the Circle of Security parenting program. We invite you to check our calendar regularly to stay connected and not miss out on these valuable opportunities!



Digital resources

If you're not sure where to begin, check out our website, belongingnetwork.com. It's full of helpful information! If you already have a specific topic in mind, you can explore our [Resources by topic](#) page, where you can read stories from real adoptive and permanency families, and access our collection of free digital resource guides, articles, and videos on a variety of topics.

Our resource guides offer valuable insights and support:

- [Trauma-informed parenting: A guide for families](#)
- [All about FASD: A guide for adoptive and permanency families](#)
- [Child sexual abuse: A guide for parents](#)
- [Supporting LGBTQ2S+ youth in adoption and foster care](#)
- [School and adoption: Navigating the education system](#)
- [Adoption & permanency 101](#)

Here are some other resources you can find on our website:

- [New Beginnings: Mini podcast series](#)
- [Toolkits](#). Each toolkit gathers useful resources to help you navigate the complexities of adoption and permanency.
- [Meet the families](#)
- And much more!

Can't find what you are looking for? Ask us for adoption-related videos, books, podcast recommendations as well article suggestions for specific topics that you are interested in learning more about. We can also recommend age specific children's books. You can email us at familysupport@belongingnetwork.com.

If you are a **waiting parent**, gaining firsthand experience with children and teens in and from care is invaluable. Consider seeking out opportunities in your local community, participating in mentorship programs, or providing [respite care](#) to families.



Referrals to professional supports



Adoption-friendly supports

The Belonging Network has established strong connections with adoption-competent professionals across BC, including:

- Family legal advisors
- Therapists and counselors specializing in adoption
- Audiologists
- Speech therapists
- Occupational therapists
- Physiotherapists
- Indigenous intervention programs and support services

The Belonging Network curates a personalized list of recommended professionals and resources, helping you quickly find the best local or online options for your family.

We're committed to following up to ensure you find a provider that meets your needs. Explore our regional resource guide to connect with available supports and services in your area when you need them: [Regional resource guide: Connecting you to your community](#)

It's equally important to know where to turn for support when you, as parents, are struggling. For a tailored list of resources based on your family's needs, please contact our Family Support Specialist at familysupport@belongingnetwork.com.



Financial assistance

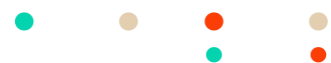


Post-Adoption Assistance (PAA)

In British Columbia, parents who have adopted children **from foster** care may be eligible for **Post-Adoption Assistance (PAA)** funding. This financial assistance is designed to help families meet the needs of their adopted children, especially those **with special needs**. Here is an overview of the types of support available and how to access them:

1. Monthly maintenance payments

- **What it is:** These monthly payments are provided to adoptive families to help with the costs associated with raising a child who has special placement needs. This financial support can help cover ongoing expenses such as medical care, therapy, and other essential services.
- **Who Qualifies:** Specific families may qualify for on-going monthly maintenance. Families may qualify through one of the three conditions:
 - 1) They adopt a sibling group
 - 2) They adopt a child with whom they have a significant pre-existing emotional bond (i.e. foster parent, relative, or community friend of the child)
 - 3) They offer a child a culturally compatible home (i.e. an Aboriginal family adopting an Aboriginal child, or a Japanese family adopting a Japanese child).
 - The amount may be pro-rated based on the family's income level and number of minor children in the home.



- The maintenance amount is **up to** \$849.36 (Age 0-11) / \$1135.81 (12-19th birthday), depending on your income. If income is over 80K, benefits will decrease gradually based on the number of dependent children in the family.
- **How to access:** Families can apply for this assistance through the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). The amount of assistance depends on the child's specific needs and is negotiated as part of the adoption agreement through their social worker.

2. Medical and extended health benefits

- **What it is:** Adoptive children may be eligible for coverage under the Medical Services Plan (MSP) and additional extended health benefits, including dental care, vision care, prescription medications, and therapeutic services that are not covered under your family's plan. You can apply for this through your social worker.

3. Therapeutic and counseling services

- **What it is:** Funding for counseling and therapeutic services, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and psychological counseling, is available to help adopted children address emotional and developmental challenges.
- **How to access:** These services may be covered under the extended health benefits provided through PAA or accessed through referrals from MCFD. Families should discuss their child's specific needs with their adoption worker to ensure they receive the appropriate support.

4. Respite care funding

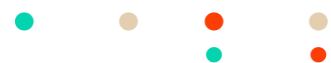
- **What it is:** Respite care offers temporary relief to adoptive parents by providing short-term care for their child. This service is essential for preventing burnout and ensuring the well-being of the entire family.
- **How to access:** Respite care funding may be included in the adoption assistance agreement. Families should work with their social worker to secure funding.

5. Educational support

- **What it is:** Financial assistance for educational needs, including special education services and tutoring, may be available for adopted children with learning challenges or disabilities.
- **How to access:** Families should inquire about education-related assistance through their adoption worker or local school district. Some funding may be available through provincial education programs or specialized grants.

6. Post-Adoption Assistance Services (PAA)

- **What it is:** It's specifically designed to provide ongoing financial support to families who have adopted children with special needs. This can include monthly subsidies, medical coverage, and other forms of assistance tailored to the child's requirements.
- **How to access:** Families should apply through the MCFD. Eligibility and the level of support are determined based on the child's needs, and the agreement is usually made at the time of adoption finalization.



7. Tax benefits and credits

- **What it is:** Adoptive parents in BC may also be eligible for federal and provincial tax benefits, including the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) and the Adoption Expense Tax Credit, which helps offset some of the costs associated with adoption.
- **How to access:** To claim these benefits, parents need to file their taxes accordingly. It's important to keep receipts and documentation of adoption-related expenses. Consulting with a tax professional may also be helpful.

Grants, scholarships, and bursaries

Families may be eligible for grants, bursaries, or scholarships for adopted children, particularly those who were in foster care or have special needs.

[Belonging Network bursary programs](#)

Our bursary programs provide funding to help youth go to college or university, pursue a trade, or attend other training programs. Bursaries can be applied to tuition or to related expenses, including living costs while studying.

We run three annual bursary programs:

- the BC Orca Bursary Program
- the Joy MacPhail Bursary
- the Vancouver Film Studios Indigenous Bursary

[RISE Grants](#)

The RISE Grants support children and youth, both in and out of care, who wish to participate in sports, physical activities, recreational programs, or cultural opportunities.

[SAJE program](#)

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) currently provides financial support through the Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment (SAJE) program for former youth in care between the ages of 19 and 27 in British Columbia.

For a more comprehensive list, visit [Find scholarships and bursaries - Agedout.com](#).

How to apply:

- **Contact your adoption worker or MCFD:** The first step in accessing post-adoption financial assistance is to discuss your child's needs with your adoption worker or MCFD representative. They will guide you through the application process and help you understand what support is available.
- **Review the Adoption Agreement:** Ensure that your adoption agreement includes provisions for financial assistance and that you understand the terms. If you need additional support after the adoption is finalized, MCFD may be able to amend the agreement to meet your child's changing needs.



Prioritizing self-care



Self-care is crucial for parents and caregivers. It helps prevent burnout and fosters a positive family environment. By taking care of yourself, you strengthen your relationship with your child, becoming more present, thoughtful, and better equipped to meet their needs rather than reacting impulsively.

Practical ways to practice self-care include:

- **Mindfulness:** Incorporate mindfulness practices into your routine to stay grounded and reduce stress.
- **Exercise and nutrition:** Prioritize regular physical activity and a balanced diet to maintain your energy levels and well-being.
- **Connect with others:** Maintain strong relationships with friends and family who can offer emotional support and practical help.
- **Support groups:** Join our support groups for adoptive and permanency parents. Sharing experiences with others in similar situations can be validating and empowering.
- **Explore respite care:** If your child qualifies for Post-Adoption Assistance, you may be eligible for up to \$200 per month. Speak to your social worker to apply.
- **Set realistic expectations:** Avoid placing unrealistic expectations on your child, as this can create pressure and stress. Meet your child where they are, allowing them to adjust and thrive at their own pace.
- **Continue to learn:** Ongoing education as an adoptive parent is vital for enhancing your skills, reducing stress, and promoting resilience. Staying informed helps you navigate adoption complexities, benefiting both you and your child.



- **Seek professional support:** Recognize that you don't have to do everything on your own. Counseling, support groups, and other resources can be invaluable for both you and your child.
- **Explore community resources:** Tap into local resources that can provide additional support and assistance.

Integrating self-care practices into your busy family life may require creativity, but it's crucial for your well-being and your family's overall harmony.

Integrating self-care into a busy family life can be challenging. Try these small, practical steps that fit seamlessly into daily routines.

1. **Micro-moments of self-care:** Instead of waiting for extended periods of time, focus on short, regular breaks throughout the day. A 5-minute breathing exercise or a brief walk around the block can recharge you without disrupting the family's schedule.
2. **Incorporate self-care into family activities:** Engage in activities that benefit everyone, such as cooking a healthy meal together or doing a family yoga session. This not only promotes wellness but also strengthens family bonds.
3. **Set boundaries and delegate:** Make self-care a priority by setting boundaries around your time. Delegate certain tasks to other family members to create a little personal time for yourself, whether it's for reading, exercising, or simply resting.
4. **Involve the kids:** Teach children about self-care by including them in simple practices like gratitude journaling or deep breathing exercises. This not only helps them learn but also allows you to practice alongside them.
5. **Utilize technology:** Apps and online resources can make self-care more accessible. For example, guided meditation apps or short workout videos can be done at home during a break.
6. **Integrate self-care with daily tasks:** Turn everyday chores into moments of mindfulness. For example, practice deep breathing while doing dishes or listen to a podcast during your commute.



FAQs



1. How do I join a support group?

Answer: To join a support group, please head to our website's calendar to register for a specific group, date and time. Our support groups are available online, making it easier to attend from anywhere within BC.

2. What can I expect from one-on-one support?

Answer: One-on-one support usually involves discussing your specific concerns and receiving guidance on available community resources and professional supports, such as counselors, therapists, support groups, and parenting classes or workshops. Following your session, you'll receive a follow-up email with all the relevant information and resources to assist you in addressing the challenges you're facing.

3. Are there any financial supports available for adoptive families?

Answer: Yes, many adoptive families are eligible for financial assistance, such as adoption subsidies, tax credits, or post-adoption support. It's essential to contact your social worker to explore what options are available to you.

4. What types of therapy are available for adoptive and permanency families?

Answer: Common types of therapy for adoptive and permanency families include attachment-based therapy, trauma-informed counseling, and family therapy. These therapies help address the unique emotional and psychological needs of adopted and permanency children and their families.



5. How do I find adoption and permanency-competent professionals?

Answer: Look for professionals who specialize in adoption and permanency related issues such as a trauma, grief, loss and attachment. The Belonging Network can provide referrals to therapists, counselors, and other specialists who have experience working with and understand the complexities of adoption and permanency.

6. What should I expect during the transition period?

Answer: The transition period can be challenging as everyone adjusts to their new roles. You may experience a range of emotions, and it's important to communicate openly and seek support when needed. Joining a support group or working with a counselor can help ease the transition.

7. What resources are available for post-adoption/permanency support?

Answer: Post-adoption/permanency resources can include counseling, support groups, respite care, and financial assistance. Your Social Worker along side with the Belonging Network can provide information on available programs.

8. How can I help my child adjust to their new family?

Answer: Patience and understanding are key. Create a stable, supportive environment and maintain open communication. Trust takes time to build. Engage in activities and spend quality time together. Honor their history and continue to educate yourself in order to respond appropriately to their needs. Connecting with other adoptive families in another way to provide shared experiences and understanding for both you and your child.

9. What if my child is struggling with their adoption and permanency identity?

Answer: It's normal for adopted and permanency children to have questions about their identity. Encourage open conversations, provide age-appropriate information, and consider seeking professional guidance if needed.

10. How can I manage my own emotions as an adoptive/permanency parent?

Answer: Self-care is crucial. Seek support through counseling, peer groups, or respite care. It's okay to ask for help. Finding a community of other adoptive and permanency parents can be incredibly beneficial. Many families will attend the belonging Network's weekly Coffee Chat support group and engage with other families through our Face-to-Face Connections events and Facebook Private Chats when they are struggling and need support from other's who understand.

