

# Easily Accessible Mental Health Supports for Alberta Foster Caregivers Fact Sheet

## Overview

Children and Family Services (CFS) recognizes that foster caregiver well-being is vital to ensuring the safety and care of children and youth and contributes to foster caregiver satisfaction. Caregiver well-being also provides a protective factor and promotes placement stability and foster caregiver retention.

Effective November 30, 2023, foster caregivers (per active foster care licence) will be able to access up to five one-hour counselling sessions (\$220 per session) per fiscal year. This initiative promotes easily accessible and foster caregiver led access to counselling support for agency and ministry foster caregivers. Foster caregivers have the option to access counselling with a professional contracted through CFS or identify their own counselling via a regulated health professional under the [Health Professions Act](#) and be reimbursed.

## Process for Ministry Foster Caregivers Accessing Services Through a CFS Contract

- Each caregiver practitioner is provided with a list of CFS contracted counseling vendors to provide to foster caregivers.
- Each caregiver practitioner will also be provided with a printed copy of the referral and evaluation (R&E) to be shared with foster caregivers.
- The R&E includes:
  - the provider facility number;
  - reason for referral: 'foster caregiver accessing counselling services';
  - up to five one-hour sessions of counselling (\$220 per session);
  - effective date per fiscal year; and
  - the contact person/email/office vendor will send the invoice to.
- The foster caregiver connects directly with the counseling services vendor (clinician) of their choice from the contracted counseling vendor list and completes the R&E document with vendor information.
- Contracted counselling vendors invoice CFS monthly for counselling services provided to foster caregivers (ministry and agency).
- Financial codes include:
  - Under coding in the Child and Youth Financial Suite (CYFS) or Contract Management Administration System (CMAS): Account Code 543450 Therapy Services, Program Code 00043 Foster/Kinship Care Resources.

## Process for Ministry Foster Caregivers Accessing Services Privately

- The foster caregiver informs their caregiver practitioner that they would like to access counselling privately.
- The caregiver practitioner completes a foster care support plan.
  - A maximum of \$220 covered for each one-hour session, up to five sessions per fiscal year. Caregiver practitioner tracks utilization to ensure support does not exceed five sessions per year.

- The foster caregiver accesses counselling service of their choice after confirming they are regulated by the *Health Professions Act*. Clinician must be a regulated health professional under the [Health Professions Act](#).
- The foster caregiver submits an electronic child maintenance invoice with a copy of the clinician's invoice for service to the caregiver practitioner.
- CFS will process the caregiver counselling within five business days.
  - Under coding in CYFS or CMAS: Account Code 543450 Therapy Services, Program Code 00043 Foster/Kinship Care Resources.

### **Process for Agency Foster Caregivers Accessing Services Through a CFS Contract**

- All contracted foster care agencies are provided with a list of CFS contracted counseling vendors to provide to foster caregivers.
- At the beginning of each fiscal year, a printed copy of the list with a completed R&E is provided to foster caregivers.
- The R&E includes:
  - the provider facility number;
  - reason for referral: 'foster caregiver accessing counselling services';
  - up to five one-hour sessions of counselling (\$220 per session);
  - effective date per fiscal year; and
  - the contact person/email/office vendor will send the invoice to.
- Foster caregiver connects directly with counseling services vendor (clinician) of their choice from the contracted counseling vendor list and completes the R&E document with vendor information.
- Contracted counselling vendors invoice CFS monthly for counselling services provided to foster caregivers (ministry and agency).
- Financial codes include:
  - Under coding in CYFS or CMAS: Account Code 543450 Therapy Services, Program Code 00043 Foster/Kinship Care Resources.

### **Process for Agency Foster Caregivers Accessing Services Privately**

- Foster caregiver informs their agency foster care worker that they would like to access counselling privately.
  - The agency foster care worker collaborates with the caregiver to ensure services are delivered by a professional covered under the *Health Professions Act*.
    - A maximum of \$220 covered for each one-hour session, up to five sessions per fiscal year. Agency foster care worker tracks utilization to ensure support does not exceed five sessions per year.
  - Foster caregiver accesses counselling service of their choice after confirming they are regulated by the *Health Professions Act*. Clinician must be a regulated health professional under the *Health Professions Act*.
  - Foster caregiver submits receipts to foster care agency.
  - Foster care agency invoices CFS (specifically to regional contract team).
  - CFS will process the caregiver counselling reimbursement to agency:
    - Under coding in CYFS or CMAS: Account Code 543450 Therapy Services, Program Code 00043 Foster/Kinship Care Resources.
  - The foster care agency will reimburse foster caregiver.

### **Process for Delegated First Nations Agency (DFNA) Foster Caregivers**

- Foster caregiver may access counselling through contracted vendors (region or DFNA contracts) or privately.
- DFNA to determine process for both approaches.
- If accessing through the easily accessible mental health supports initiative:

- A maximum of \$220 will be covered for each one-hour session, up to five sessions per fiscal year.
- The clinician must be a regulated health professional under *the Health Professions Act*.
- Clinician invoices DFNA as per financial processes.

For any additional questions about the easily accessible mental health supports initiative, please contact the Policy, Practice and Program Development Branch's Placement Resources Unit at [cs.ci-placementresources@gov.ab.ca](mailto:cs.ci-placementresources@gov.ab.ca).



## Frequently asked questions: Easily Accessible Mental Health Supports for Alberta Foster Caregivers

Is this available for each foster caregiver who lives in the home?

Easily accessible mental health supports for Alberta foster caregivers is per active foster care licence. A licensed foster home may access up to five one-hour counselling sessions (\$220 per session) per fiscal year.

Can foster caregivers spend more on an individual session, keeping the yearly total under \$1,100?

Easily accessible mental health supports for Alberta foster caregivers is up to \$220 per one-hour session. Caregivers will not be reimbursed for more than the set \$220 per session.

Do unused hours/sessions carry over into the next fiscal year?

Unused sessions are not carried over to the next fiscal year. A new R&E will be required for each caregiver for each fiscal year.

Can this be used for other family members or couples counseling?

Yes, this support is focused on supporting the mental health of foster caregivers and may include other family members as well as couples counselling. Counselling may be accessed to a maximum of \$220 per one-hour session per foster care licence.

What if the caregiver requires babysitting to attend a counselling session?

Babysitting should be approved for the caregiver to attend counselling sessions. This supports easily accessible access to counselling in support of the caregiver's mental health. Babysitting will be reimbursed as per the caregiver rate schedule (FC1263).

What happens when a foster caregiver requires more than five sessions?

Pre-approval by a child intervention manager is required through a foster care support plan if a caregiver is seeking additional counselling sessions.

What if there is a waitlist with the vendors on the contract list?

The foster caregiver may choose to join the waitlist or privately access a clinician who falls under the *Health Professions Act*.

Can caregivers access this after their home closes?

It can only be accessed by caregivers with an active foster care licence, including if there is a placement concerns response or administrative review. It cannot be accessed after the end of a licence.

What if a caregiver does not show up to their counselling session?

If a caregiver does not follow the vendor's cancellation policy, the missed session will count towards the five sessions per fiscal year.

How are the payments coded?

Payments are coded in CYFS or CMAS: Account Code 543450 Therapy Services Program, Code 00043 Foster/Kinship Care Resources.

Can kinship caregivers access easily accessible mental health supports?

Kinship caregivers are not eligible for the easily accessible mental health supports for Alberta foster caregivers; however, they have access to counselling through their kinship care support plan.