
Q1: What is the Extended Family Program?

A1: The Extended Family Program (EFP) provides support to children, families and caregivers in situations where it is determined that it best meets the needs of the child to live with a relative or close family friend when their parents are temporarily unable to care for them.

The needs of the child and parents will be assessed by staff from the ministry or Delegated Aboriginal Agency to determine if the Extended Family Program is the best option to support their situation. Parents and staff will work together to determine if other options or supports could assist the child to remain at home.

If it's decided that the child's needs are best met by a plan to live outside the parental home, the potential caregiver will be assessed and screened to determine their suitability.

Financial assistance and other supports will be provided to the caregiver under the Extended Family Program after assessments are completed, a plan for the child has been determined, and the parents agree to transfer the day-to-day care and custody of the child to the caregiver.

Parents are expected to maintain their guardianship responsibilities and work towards the goal to have their child return home as soon as possible.

Q2: When does the new Extended Family Program begin?

A2: April 1, 2010.

Q3: Why has the ministry developed the Extended Family Program?

A3: The Extended Family Program was developed to support strong, stable home environments and ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth who are temporarily unable to live with their parents.

Over the past several years, the ministry has looked at ways to:

- support relatives caring for children
- increase the accountability of programs that support children living outside their parents' home
- and, most importantly, improve outcomes for children and youth

This led to the development of the Extended Family Program, which provides a range of supports and services to address the needs of children, families and caregivers.

Q4: What supports are available to caregivers through the Extended Family Program?

A4: If an assessment determines that the best option to serve a child and family's needs is for the child to be cared for by a relative or other significant person in the child's life, the following benefits may be available to the caregiver:

- Monthly benefits of \$554 for children under 12 and \$625 for children 12 and older (The caregiver may also be eligible to receive the Canada Child Tax Benefit.)
- Supplemental benefits such as support for dental, medical and optical needs
- Additional supports may be available to assist with child care, respite, and the training/education/support needs of the caregiver

The child, parents and caregiver may also be eligible for other voluntary supports such as counseling, and services for children and youth with special needs or mental health conditions.

Q5: I am currently receiving benefits through the Child in the Home of a Relative program (CIHR). Will I need to move to this new program?

A5: No. As long as your CIHR file remains open and you and the child in your care continue to meet the current eligibility criteria for CIHR, you will continue to receive income assistance from this program through the Ministry of Housing and Social Development.

If you want to see if the Extended Family Program may be an option for your family, speak to the parents of the child in your care and have them call the Ministry of Children and Family Development to ask about the program.

You can go through the assessment process without impact on your current status with CIHR. If you and the child in your care are accepted into the Extended Family Program, however, you do need to close your CIHR file.

Q6: How do I request supports through the Extended Family Program?

A6: Parents may request services through any Ministry of Children and Family Development office or Delegated Aboriginal Agency.

After an initial assessment, the social worker and the parents will work together to determine what support services best meet their and their child's needs. That *may or may not* include participation in the Extended Family Program.

The main criteria for this service include:

- Circumstances temporarily prevent parent(s) from caring for the child in the home
- Less disruptive measures have been considered and attempted where available, such as counselling, respite or other supports
- Parent(s) exercise guardianship responsibilities and through an agreement, transfers day-to-day care of the child
- Screening of the proposed caregiver to determine their capacity and ensure the child's safety

Q7: How does the new Extended Family Program affect Aboriginal families?

A7: Aboriginal families who live on-reserve receive assistance under Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) program (effective January 1, 2010), a federal program administered by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) that is comparable to CIHR and will not change as a consequence of our decision. However, discussions with INAC will continue and be informed by the implementation of the Extended Family Program to ensure alignment with federal and provincial programs.

Aboriginal families who live off-reserve will either continue with their arrangements under CIHR or Agreements with a Child's Kin and Others (will migrate to EFP after implementation) and be subject to the same conditions as everyone else for new applications for assistance be it financial or voluntary support services.

Q8: My grandchild already lives with me. Can I apply for the Extended Family Program?

A8: Agreements under the Extended Family Program must be initiated by the parents or legal guardian. If you are a grandparent currently looking after your grandchild talk to the child's parents about how the child's additional support needs could be met and see if they are interested in finding out more about the Extended Family Program. You may also call your local ministry or Delegated Agency office and ask to speak to a social worker about the program.

Q9: Will the Extended Family Program supports continue as long as I care for the child in my home?

A9: The supports will continue as long as there is an assessed need and the parent agrees that an out-of-home placement remains the best option for the child. Agreements will be reviewed every six months but generally are not expected to continue beyond 24 months maximum (depending on the age of the child), unless an assessment of the child's needs support a longer timeline.

Q10: As a caregiver, if I am not able to receive benefits through the Extended Family Program, are there other supports available so that I can continue to care for the child in my home?

A10: You may be eligible for the Child Tax Benefit, B.C. Family Bonus, Universal Child Care Benefit or the Child Disability Benefit.

If you are the legal guardian and require financial assistance, you may qualify for income support through the Ministry of Housing and Social Development.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development also offers many programs and services for families who voluntarily request assistance.

Please phone or go in person to your nearest MCFD office to find out more information or call 250 387-7027 in Victoria or 1 877 387-7027 from anywhere in B.C.