

# Kinnections

## A mentoring program for youth in continuing care or on a Youth Agreement

### What is Kinnections?

Kinnections is a mentoring program focused on supporting youth as they transition into adulthood and out of government care by establishing a supportive long-term connection with a mentor. Kinnections is fully funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

### Who is eligible?

Youth are eligible for Kinnections if they meet the following criteria:

1. Aged 15 to 18, or currently 19 and met all the eligibility criteria on their 19th birthday
2. On a Youth Agreement or in the long-term or continuing care of the Province
3. Lives in a community where Kinnections is offered (additional eligibility criteria applies if the youth lives in Vancouver – contact UNYA for more details).

### What communities offer Kinnections?

Effective April 1, 2010 Kinnections will remain available to Aboriginal youth in Vancouver through the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA). Contact the Kinnections Coordinator at 604 254-7732 for more details.

Support services will be extended to youth matched as of March 31, 2010 through the Pacific Community Resources Society (PCRS), which provides service to youth in Surrey, Delta, Langley and White Rock, and PLEA Community Services Society (PLEA), which provides service to youth in Maple Ridge. Contact PCRS at 604 587-8106 or PLEA at 604 476-9153 for more details.

Regional representatives may make the decision to fill new spots made available through attrition, on a case by case basis.

### How do I make a referral? How do youth get matched?

The process includes four steps:

1. The social worker or referring agent meets with the youth, explains the program and confirms interest before referring the youth.
2. The Kinnections Coordinator meets with the youth to discuss their interests, goals and the qualities they are seeking in a mentor.

3. The coordinator helps the youth identify and approach someone they already know who they think would be a good mentor, and if the person agrees to be considered, they are screened. Alternatively, the youth agrees to be matched with a pre-screened volunteer based on personality, interests and life experiences.
4. If the youth agrees, a match is made!

After the match is made, the coordinator keeps in regular contact with the youth and the mentor, offering training opportunities, suggesting events they can participate in or attend together, helping them work through any challenges that may arise and of course, celebrating their many successes!

### Who can refer a youth to Kinnections?

The referral process allows anyone to refer a youth (social worker, foster parent, probation officer, youth, etc.). All referrals are confirmed by the coordinators with the social worker and /or the legal guardian prior to completing the rest of the intake process. Youth who are currently 19 and met all of the eligibility criteria on their 19th birthday can self-refer to Kinnections.

### How are social workers updated?

The Kinnections Coordinator is available to answer questions from social workers upon request. In the event of an emergency involving the youth or a reportable circumstance, social workers are notified immediately.

### What do youth and mentors do together?

The youth and mentor determine how they'll spend their time together. They might go to the gym, meet for coffee, check out a movie, or just hang out and walk a family dog.

The youth may also ask the mentor to help them review school options, employment opportunities, and develop other life skills such as managing their finances.

### How is a safe match for the youth promoted?

Social workers are encouraged to share any information they feel necessary to promote a safe match for the youth. Prior to being approved as a mentor, an applicant (volunteer or someone identified by the youth) must:

- Submit an application including personal and professional references.

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***“I’m very satisfied. The staff are great and are welcoming. I have confidence that they will be able to provide advice with most any situation I might encounter as a mentor.”***

- Participate in an interview with the Kinnections Coordinator that includes a review of expectations and responsibilities of a mentor.
- Complete a criminal records check.
- Attend an orientation training session covering topics such as reportable circumstances, the experience of youth in care, boundary setting, special needs (including FASD, Autism, etc.), cultural sensitivity and traditional Aboriginal practices.

### **How are participants supported?**

**Youth** can choose to have the coordinator check in with them regularly or choose to initiate contact with the coordinator when an issue arises.

Youth are encouraged to share information with social workers, caregivers, and other support services as they feel necessary.

They also have access to any program and/or service offered by the agency providing the Kinnections program.

### **Mentors are supported with:**

- Bi-weekly check-ins during the first month and monthly check-ins thereafter
- Reimbursement for activity expenses — monthly amounts vary by community
- Monthly training support sessions
- Access to agency programs and resources such as drug and alcohol counsellors or employment programs
- Direct service mediation offered by the coordinator
- 24-hour support is available after work hours via the Urban Native Youth Association safehouse, Pacific Community Resources’ Quick Response Program and by calling the Provincial After-Hours line.

The monthly training support sessions offer **mentors** the opportunity to network with their peers and learn new skills.

For **youth**, there are also occasional group events like our summer BBQ and holiday dinners, where they can network with other youth who are already matched and those who are waiting to be matched with a mentor.

### **Where does Kinnections overlap with other ministry programs and services?**

There may be times when possible matches for youth are identified in the Child’s Roots are Forever and Family Finder programs, or the Youth Transition Conferencing process. A determination is made on a case by case basis to see if a potential match would require additional supports to keep the youth safe (because of protection concerns), in which case Kinnections should not be considered.

There may also be occasions where a mentor is invited by the youth to participate in an integrated case management or youth transition conference. Mentors are encouraged to participate if they feel comfortable assisting the youth to communicate his/her needs.

### **What have youth and mentors involved with Kinnections said about the program?**

*“(My mentor) is someone I trust and can confide in. She listens to me and asks me questions. I so like her. She’s a one-to-one worker who’s a friend. . .”*

*“Having someone who has seen your evolution and can bear witness to your existence is important. (My mentor) provided that for me.”*

*“She was already like a mentor. Our relationship just carried on, just like it had been when she was my social worker.”*

*“(The coordinators) try to make it happen. For example, in the fall (my youth) moved to (another community). The Program Coordinators gave me a gas card so I can get to see him.”*

*“I’m very satisfied. The staff are great and are welcoming. I have confidence that they will be able to provide advice with most any situation I might encounter as a mentor.”*

### **Where can I get more information?**

For more information visit our web page at [www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/kinnections.htm](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/kinnections.htm) or contact a regional representative:

- Vancouver: Mike White (Mike.White@gov.bc.ca)
- Maple Ridge: Caroline Wilkin (Caroline.Wilkin@gov.bc.ca)
- Surrey/Delta/Langley/White Rock: Holden Chu (Holden.Chu@gov.bc.ca)