

Advisor



Spring 2024

50 years
1974-2024

Families Helping Families

AGM Announcement

Care Needs Assessment

Maintenance Payment Dates

Foster Children's Relationships
with Birth Parents

Learning Disabilities & Disorders

Caregiver Conduct

Upcoming SFFA Conference

Tips for Virtual Family Time

Foster Parent College Course
Schedule

Planning a vacation

Raindrop sun catcher craft



www.saskfosterfamilies.ca

Advisor

The Advisor is published by Saskatchewan Foster Families Association Inc.



231 Robin Crescent
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7L 6M8
Phone: (306) 975-1580
Fax: (306) 975-1581
Toll Free: 1-888-276-2880
E-mail: sffa@sffa.sk.ca
Website: www.saskfosterfamilies.ca

OUR MISSION

The Saskatchewan Foster Families Association exists to support and encourage Foster families through education and advocacy, helping create healthy homes, positive environments, and brighter futures for children and youth across the province.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

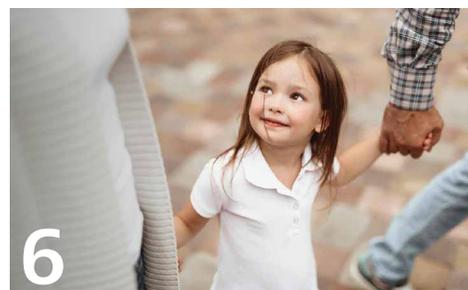
Kevin Harris, Board Chair, Regina
Tim Adams, Director, Moose Jaw
John Quong, Director, Regina
Kallie Wood, Director, Moose Jaw
Jim Madill, Director, Regina
Janet Michaylow, Director, Regina
Nate Polsfut, Director, Regina

The content in the Advisor publication is intended to be used for general information, educational or awareness purposes only. Guidelines, tips and strategies provided are to be used at the sole discretion and assessment of the reader. The health and safety of a child should always take priority. Any suggestions or opinions expressed in the editorial are not necessarily those of the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association Inc.

Canada Post Publications No. 41271051



Contents



SPRING 2024 | Volume 19, Issue 2

- 3** FOSTER CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH BIRTH PARENTS
- 4** MONTHLY MAINTENANCE PAYMENT DATES
- 5** FOSTER PARENT COLLEGE COURSE SCHEDULE
- 5** UPCOMING AGM VIRTUAL MEETING
- 6** CAREGIVER CONDUCT
- 8** TIPS FOR VIRTUAL FAMILY TIME
- 9** BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE CONFERENCE
- 10** CARE NEEDS ASSESSMENT
- 12** LEARNING DISABILITIES AND DISORDERS
- 18** IF YOU'RE PLANNING A VACATION
- 18** POST-SECONDARY FUNDING FOR CHILDREN IN CARE
- 19** RAINDROP SUN CATCHER CRAFT
- 20** GOOD READS

The Importance of Foster Children's Relationships with Birth Families



As a foster parent, it's important to recognize the crucial role that birth families have in a foster child's life. By supporting and encouraging a positive relationship between the child and their birth family, and by putting in the extra effort to build a relationship yourself, you can make a significant impact on their emotional and mental well-being.

Understanding the Importance of Birth-Family Connections

Many children in foster care have experienced trauma and separation from their birth families. Relationships with biological parents and siblings may have been disrupted or even severed altogether. It's essential for foster children to maintain connections with their birth family members, as these connections help them understand their identity and where they come from.

The Benefits of Maintaining Birth Family Connections

Studies show that children in foster care who maintain connections with their birth families have better long-term outcomes than those who don't. Children who maintain connections have a better sense of identity, stability, and belonging. They're also more likely to experience positive emotional and behavioural development and are at a lower risk of developing mental health issues.

The Role of Foster Parents in Maintaining Connections

Foster parents play a significant role in helping foster children maintain relationships with their birth families. By supporting open communication and opportunities for visitation, foster parents can provide a supportive environment for the child and their family members. Offering support and showing respect toward the child's birth family will create a positive environment for the child.

Challenges and How to Overcome Them

Maintaining a positive relationship with birth families can be challenging and may require extra effort on the part of foster parents. One of the most significant challenges is when there's a contentious or difficult relationship with the birth family. Foster parents must stay positive and be mindful of the child's needs, even when dealing with frustrating or complicated situations. It's also important to remember that in many situations, a child's birth parents may likely have had their own traumatic experiences.

Tips for Supporting Birth Family Connections

There are several things that foster parents can do to support birth family connections. One is to always speak positively about the birth family to the child. When access plans are in place, you can also encourage phone calls, letters and video chats. It's also helpful when the foster parent can be available to transport the child to visitations so you can offer support before and after. Wherever it is possible, get in touch yourself with the birth family. Offer to share updates, send pictures, and invite them to extra-curricular or school activities. This may require approval with the child's guardian agency, so check in with a worker first.

Foster parenting is a rewarding opportunity to make an impact on a child's life. By supporting the child's relationship with their birth family, you can help them achieve a greater sense of stability, belonging, and identity. While it may offer challenges, connecting a foster child to their family of origin can be one of the most important things that you will do as a foster parent. Remember, keeping a positive attitude and being open to communication and collaboration will create a healthy and supportive environment for both the child and their birth family members.

Source: <https://www.childwelfare.gov>

Child & Family Program Dates Monthly Maintenance Payment Released from Linkin

Month Being Paid	Date Maintenance Cheques are released from Linkin- Mailed/ *Direct Deposit	Date Youth Allowance Cheque released from Linkin- Mailed/ *Direct Deposit
**IMPORTANT NOTE: If using direct deposit, <u>it may take up to 3 additional days</u> before the funds are deposited in your bank account depending on your financial situation.		
December 2023	January 3, 2024	November 27, 2023
January 2024	February 2, 2024	December 19, 2023
February 2024	March 4, 2024	January 26, 2024
March 2024	April 2, 2024	February 26, 2024
April 2024	May 2, 2024	March 26, 2024
May 2024	June 4, 2024	April 25, 2024
June 2024	July 3, 2024	May 28, 2024
July 2024	August 2, 2024	June 25, 2024
August 2024	September 4, 2024	July 26, 2024
September 2024	October 2, 2024	August 27, 2024
October 2024	November 4, 2024	September 25, 2024
November 2024	December 3, 2024	October 28, 2024
December 2024	January 3, 2024	November 26, 2024
January 2025	February 4, 2025	December 19, 2024

Monthly Maintenance Schedule applies to Regular Foster Care, Extended Family Care (Person of Sufficient Interest, Place of Safety & Alternative Care) and Assisted Adoption monthly maintenance.



Let's stay connected...

We regularly send out e-mails to our foster parents. To be added to our contact list and receive the latest news, please send your e-mail address to keanna@sffa.sk.ca



Foster Parent College Courses:

Courses are available to all members. Please watch your email each month for the featured course or contact the SFFA Training Coordinator **Tessa Stock** at **306-975-1528** or **Tessa@sffa.sk.ca** for more information.

APRIL

"Working with Birth Parents: Visitation"

This course explores different aspects related to visitation with birth parents:

- Coping with frustration
- Supporting the foster child after the visit
- Cancellations and no-shows
- Working with caseworkers and custodians
- Pre-visit anxiety

MAY

"Supporting Normalcy"

This course explores how providing children in care a normal childhood relates to:

- Supporting normalcy
- Reasonable and prudent parenting standards
- Making decisions about and advocating for their participation in activities

JUNE

"Understanding Sex Trafficking"

This course explores human sex trafficking, including:

- Commercial sexual exploitation of children
- Risk factors and vulnerabilities
- Parenting strategies

A • N • N • O • U • N • C • E • M • E • N • T



The SFFA's upcoming Annual General Meeting is...

AGM

June 15, 2024

10:30 am

Virtual Meeting

Please watch for further details.



PRIDE Competencies:

1. Protecting & nurturing children
2. Meeting children's developmental needs and addressing developmental delays.
3. Supporting relationships between children and their families.
4. Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime; and
5. Working as a member of the professional team.



CAREGIVER CONDUCT

Working as a Member of the Professional Team

One of the PRIDE Competencies highlights being a part of the professional team; the professional team includes the Foster Parent, the Ministry of Social Services, the Child, their Family and the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association (SFFA). Being a part of the professional team includes advocating for children in a professional and respectful manner while maintaining confidentiality; accessing support and conflict resolution when necessary; helping children document their history; and pursuing one's own professional development.



"Remember to respect the privacy of the children in your care and their families by not posting any photos or identifying information."

"Be aware of your surroundings and who could hear your conversations, ensure appropriate surroundings for your conversation topics. This includes children in your care, friends, family and community members."

Social Media Use & Confidentiality

All Caregivers at the time of their home approval agree to the following (Section 12.12); of your Foster Care Agreement;

- Respect confidentiality of all information regarding a child, the child's family/extended family, and their background as required by The Child and Family Services Act, Section 74.
- Foster parent(s) may not post information or photographs of children online, or on social media websites.
- Foster parents must respect the rights and dignity of each child in care and their families.
- Avoid discussing identifiable information concerning a child with those not within their case plan. E.g. teachers, doctors, therapists etc., limiting to the information they need to provide services.
- Responsible sharing of information with close relatives or other foster parents who are in contact with the child may be necessary; this should be done in a considerate manner that will not harm the child or their birth family.

"Any inappropriate information shared; slander, bullying, defamation and other harmful or hurtful comments directed at a child, the child's family or a Ministry Worker is not tolerated."

Digital Footprint

A digital footprint is a trail of data left behind by you when posting on the internet. This includes posting photographs, sending emails, text messages, and even adding comments to posts on social media forums. Anyone can screenshot information you post or share; you could be held accountable should you not follow respectful practices while working with all members of the team.



"If a Foster Parent disagrees with a decision surrounding case planning, expenses, or relationships with their Ministry Worker they should contact the SFFA for guidance and support and accessing conflict resolution when required."

Terms:

Conduct: The manner or standard of one's personal behavior in particular context.

Defamation: An action or intent to damage or ruin the reputation of someone or their character.

Bullying: The use or threat of any aggressive, insulting, intimidating or hurtful behavior towards an individual. This can include physical, emotional, or verbal abuse.

Respect: Showing regard for one's abilities and worth.

Confidentiality: The process and obligation to keep information on a particular subject private.

In our **"FOSTER CORNER"** we would like to highlight anything from foster inspired stories to artwork submitted by foster parents on behalf of children in their homes. If you have a foster story, poem, artwork or some other foster related experience or information to share with our readers, please send it in! All communication or submissions for "Foster Corner" can be sent by email to keanna@sffa.sk.ca





Tips for Virtual Family Time

Family time, usually a parent-child visit, is critical to promoting family bonding and setting the stage for successful reunification. Although in-person contact is optimal, there are occasions when in-person contact is not possible. Virtual family time, during which the family members have contact through video, offers a safe alternative that allows biological parents and children to continue to strengthen their relationship while not living in the same home.

Preparing for Virtual Family Time

Although the goals of virtual family time are similar to in-person family time, it will still take some additional preparation to make sure everything goes smoothly. Before your first virtual family time session, you should have a meeting with your caseworker to discuss your expectations and concerns—and theirs—and how the session will be run. When you talk with your caseworker, find out about the technology you'll need to participate, if there are any changes to when the sessions will occur and how long they will last, who will be present, what the back-up plan is if the virtual platform isn't working correctly, etc. You also may want to discuss activities for the session if you're unsure about what to do.

Having the Right Technology

In order to participate, you'll need three things:

1. A device that allows for video chats, such as a smartphone, computer/laptop, or tablet

2. The app that will be used (e.g., Zoom, Skype)
3. An internet connection

You may want to perform a test to make sure everything is running smoothly.

Scheduling the Sessions

If the existing family time schedule doesn't work for everyone, let your caseworker know. Also, if you have multiple children living in the same foster home, your caseworker may want to consider whether the virtual family time should occur with them separately or together. Depending on the children themselves and their age differences, it may be difficult for them to share a screen or get enough time with you. Younger children may have a shorter attention span for virtual family time, so shorter, more frequent visits may work better. If you have questions or concerns about the schedule speak with your caseworker.

Family Time Supervision

Whether family time is supervised or unsupervised it may follow the same guidelines as in-person sessions, but it's possible that could change, either due to agency policy regarding virtual family time or the circumstances of the visit. For example, young children may not be able to participate in virtual family time on their own, so a foster parent, sibling, or someone else may need to assist.

Source: <https://www.childwelfare.gov>

Building for the Future...

2024 Saskatchewan Foster Families Association Conference
September 26-28, 2024 | Dakota Dunes Resort, Whitecap First Nation

THURS SEPT 26

Deep Dive into Trauma Competent Care

Trauma Free World - Part 1

8:30am - 4:00pm

This two-day training benefits various learners, from parents to educators, empowering them to provide trauma-informed care.

FRI SEPT 27

Deep Dive into Trauma Competent Care

Trauma Free World - Part 2

8:30am - 4:00pm

Risks, Trends and Prevention of Online Child Sexual Violence

Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc.

1:00pm - 4:00pm

Learn trauma impact, child safety, resilience, emotion regulation, and essential connections for effective child protection at our event.

Evening Social

7:00pm - 11:00pm

Get to know the Foster Families around Saskatchewan enjoying a night of appetizers, drinks and live music provided by Branded Honey.

SAT SEPT 28

Sessions to be Announced

8:30am - 4:00pm

Join us for a full day of sessions and workshops.

Gala Dinner

Doors Open at 5:30pm

Dinner & Awards Ceremony.

Visit our website for more details as more sessions and workshops are confirmed.



SFFA Members will be eligible for no-cost* registration.
Registration will be available soon online at SaskFosterFamilies.ca/conference.

*subject to availability



Families Helping Families

saskfosterfamilies.ca/conference

Care Needs Assessment

PRIDE Levels of Pay - Phase Two

Care Needs Assessments must be completed within 30 days of the identified need.

If a child's needs are complex, a panel assessment may help to:

- review special needs supports;
- ensure appropriate matching; and,
- better equip families through mandatory training and case specific support.

The caseworker should be prepared to present specific details of the child's needs, examples for each issue and all available assessments.

Care Needs Assessment Panel Process

1. The caseworker, Child and Caregiver Support Worker and the foster family should work together to ensure the information is fully captured in the Out of Home Care Child Placement and Extended Family Care Request.
2. Seek approval from the service delivery supervisor and manager, then send to SS CFS Provincial Levels of Pay Assessment Team at cfsprovinciallevelsofpaypanel@gov.sk.ca.
3. The foster family should receive a copy of the information being presented to the panel.
4. The caseworker, Child and Caregiver Support Worker and supervisor will attend the panel and present the child's care needs.
5. The panel will complete the assessment by designating the appropriate level of care.
6. The Provincial Levels of Pay Assessment Panel will notify the caseworker of the decision by email within three business days, and send a decision letter to the foster family within five business days.
7. The Child and Caregiver Support Worker will then work with the foster family on next steps and training.

Assessments initiated by a foster parent are a priority.

Information to Include in the Out of Home Care Referral



Health

- formal diagnosis, including prognosis of the condition
- recent hospital visits or hospitalizations
- medical professionals (e.g.: home care, nursing, physicians, etc.)
- medical devices used for vital bodily functions (e.g.: ventilator, dialysis)
- clear information outlining needs, including level of intervention required



Mental Health and Addictions

- formal diagnosis, including prognosis of the condition
- recent hospital visits or hospitalizations
- suicidal ideations or suicide attempts
- treatment recommendations from professionals
- participation in formal programming (e.g.: treatment centre, detox, support groups)



Sexual Behaviour

- risks to self or others (e.g.: police involvement)
- required supervision and monitoring (e.g.: aggression, intrusiveness)



Behavioural Challenges

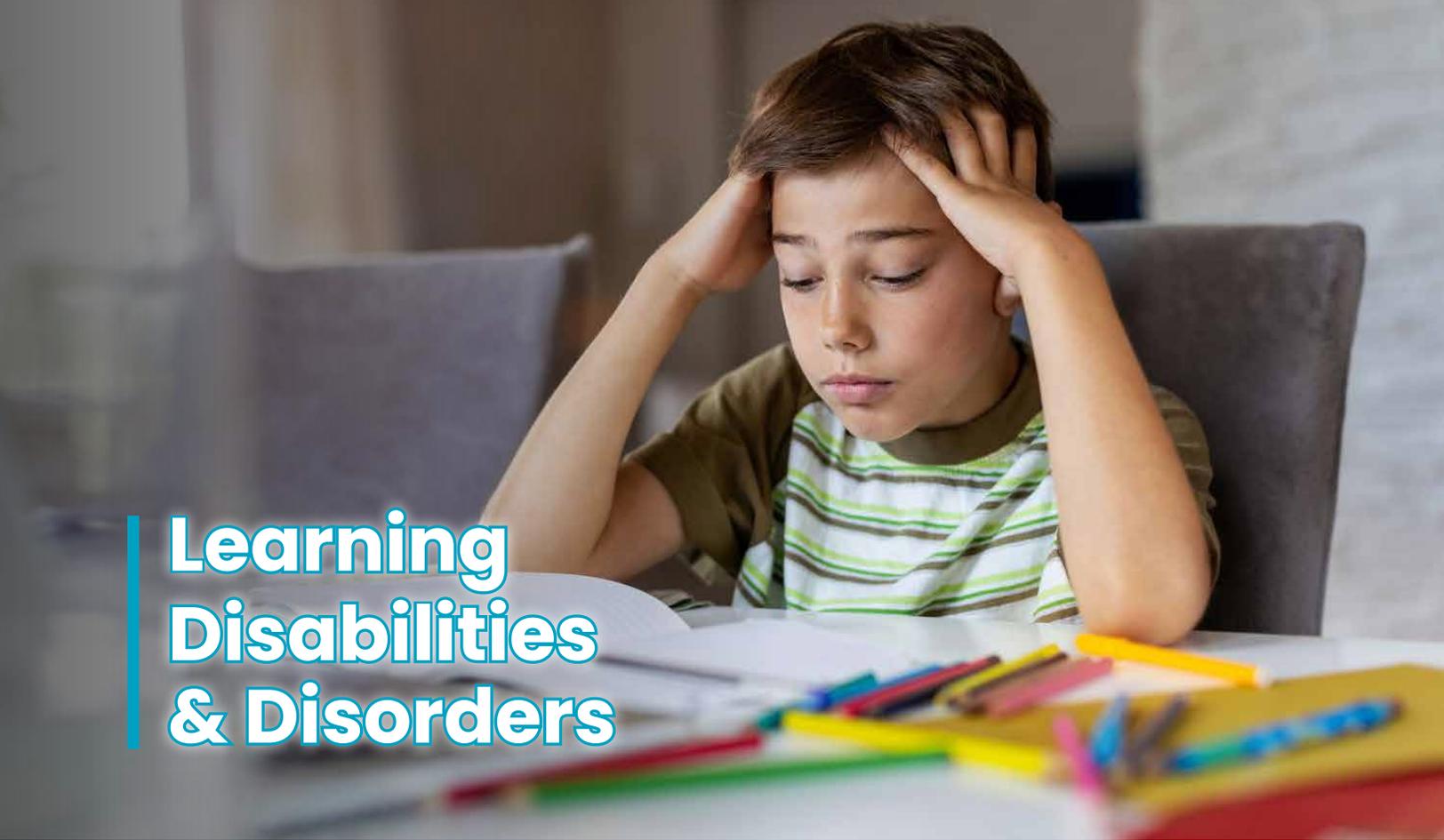
- which environments behaviours are seen (e.g.: home, school, community)
- concerns with school attendance, including the number of suspensions/expulsions
- existing safety plans
- level of aggression (e.g.: SORs or incident reports, including impact level)
- young offender involvement
- absences from approved placements



Other

- sexual orientation and gender identity supports
- intensive supports to recover from trauma
- victim of sexual exploitation or human trafficking

Tip:
Include frequency, duration, severity and impact of behaviour on daily life.



Learning Disabilities & Disorders

Learning disabilities or learning disorders are umbrella terms for a wide variety of learning problems. A learning disability is not a problem with intelligence or motivation and kids with learning disabilities aren't lazy or dumb. In fact, most are just as smart as everyone else. Their brains are simply wired differently—and this difference affects how they receive and process information.

Simply put, children and adults with learning disabilities see, hear, and understand things differently. This can lead to trouble with learning new information and skills, and putting them to use. The most common types of learning disabilities involve problems with reading, writing, math, reasoning, listening, and speaking.

Children with learning disabilities can, and do, succeed

Most kids with learning disabilities are just as smart as everyone else. They just need to be taught in ways that are tailored to their unique learning styles. By learning more about learning disabilities in general, and your child's learning difficulties in particular, you can help pave the way for success at school and beyond.

Signs and symptoms of learning disabilities and disorders

Learning disabilities look very different from one child to another. One child may struggle with reading and spelling, while another loves books but can't understand math. Still another child may have difficulty understanding what others are saying or communicating out loud. The problems are very different, but they are all learning disorders.

It's not always easy to identify learning disabilities. Because of the wide variations, there is no single symptom or profile that you can look to as proof of a problem. However, some warning signs are more common than others at different ages. If you're aware of what they are, you'll be able to catch a learning disorder early and quickly take steps to get your child help.

The following checklists offer some common red flags for learning disorders. Remember that children who don't have learning disabilities may still experience some of these difficulties at various times. The time for concern is when there is a consistent unevenness in your child's ability to master certain skills.

Signs and symptoms of learning disabilities:

Preschool age

- Problems pronouncing words.
- Trouble finding the right word.
- Difficulty rhyming.
- Trouble learning the alphabet, numbers, colors, shapes, or days of the week.
- Difficulty following directions or learning routines.
- Difficulty controlling crayons, pencils, and scissors, or coloring within the lines.
- Trouble with buttons, zippers, snaps, or learning to tie shoes.

Ages 5-9

- Trouble learning the connection between letters and sounds.
- Unable to blend sounds to make words.
- Confuses basic words when reading.
- Slow to learn new skills.
- Consistently misspells words and makes frequent errors.
- Trouble learning basic math concepts.
- Difficulty telling time and remembering sequences.

Ages 10-13

- Difficulty with reading comprehension or math skills.
- Trouble with open-ended test questions and word problems.
- Dislikes reading and writing; avoids reading aloud.
- Poor handwriting.
- Poor organizational skills (bedroom, homework, and desk are messy and disorganized).
- Trouble following classroom discussions and expressing thoughts aloud.
- Spells the same word differently in a single document.

Paying attention to developmental milestones can help you identify learning disorders

Paying attention to normal developmental milestones for toddlers and preschoolers is very important. Early detection of developmental differences may be an early signal of a learning disability and problems that are spotted early can be easier to correct. You can ask your doctor for a developmental milestones chart or access one online.

Problems with reading, writing, and math

Learning disabilities are often grouped by school-area skill set. If your child is in school, the types of learning disorders that are most conspicuous usually revolve around reading, writing, or math.

Learning disabilities in reading (dyslexia)

There are two types of learning disabilities in reading. Basic reading problems occur when there is difficulty understanding the relationship between sounds, letters and words. Reading comprehension problems occur when there is an inability to grasp the meaning of words, phrases, and paragraphs.

Signs of reading difficulty include problems with:

- Letter and word recognition.
- Understanding words and ideas.
- Reading speed and fluency.
- General vocabulary skills.

Learning disabilities in math (dyscalculia)

Learning disabilities in math vary greatly depending on the child's other strengths and weaknesses. A child's ability to do math will be affected differently by a language learning disability, a visual disorder, or a difficulty with sequencing, memory, or organization.

A child with a math-based learning disorder may struggle with memorization and organization of numbers, operation signs, and number "facts" (like $5+5=10$ or $5\times 5=25$). Children with math learning disorders might also have trouble with counting principles (such as counting by twos or counting by fives) or have difficulty telling time.

Learning disabilities in writing (dysgraphia)

Learning disabilities in writing can involve the physical act of writing or the mental activity of comprehending information. Basic writing disorder refers to physical difficulty forming words and letters. Expressive writing disability indicates a struggle to organize thoughts on paper.

Symptoms of a written language learning disability revolve around the act of writing. They include problems with:

- Neatness and consistency of writing.
- Accurately copying letters and words.
- Spelling consistency.
- Writing organization and coherence.

Other types of learning disabilities and disorders

Reading, writing, and math aren't the only skills impacted by learning disorders. Other types of learning disabilities involve difficulties with motor skills (movement and coordination), understanding spoken language, distinguishing between sounds, and interpreting visual information.

Learning disabilities in motor skills (dyspraxia)

Motor difficulty refers to problems with movement and coordination whether it is with fine motor skills (cutting, writing) or gross motor skills (running, jumping). A motor disability is sometimes referred to as an "output" activity meaning that it relates to the output of information from the brain. In order to run, jump, write or cut something, the brain must be able to communicate with the necessary limbs to complete the action. Signs that your child might have a motor coordination disability include problems with physical abilities that require hand-eye coordination, like holding a pencil or buttoning a shirt.

Learning disabilities in language (aphasia/dysphasia)

Language and communication learning disabilities involve the ability to understand or produce spoken language. Language is also considered an output activity because it requires organizing thoughts in the brain and calling upon the right words to

verbally explain or communicate something. Signs of a language-based learning disorder involve problems with verbal language skills, such as the ability to retell a story, the fluency of speech, and the ability to understand the meaning of words, directions, and the like.

Auditory and visual processing problems: the importance of the ears and eyes

The eyes and the ears are the primary means of delivering information to the brain, a process sometimes called "input." If either the eyes or the ears aren't working properly, learning can suffer.

Auditory processing disorder – Professionals may refer to the ability to hear well as "auditory processing skills" or "receptive language." The ability to hear things correctly greatly impacts the ability to read, write, and spell. An inability to distinguish subtle differences in sound make it difficult to sound out words and understand the basic concepts of reading and writing.

Visual processing disorder – Problems in visual perception include missing subtle differences in shapes, reversing letters or numbers, skipping words, skipping lines, misperceiving depth or distance, or having problems with eye-hand coordination. Professionals may refer to the work of the eyes as "visual processing." Visual perception can affect motor skills, reading comprehension, and math.

Common types of learning disorders

TYPE OF DISORDER	CREATES PROBLEMS WITH
Dyslexia – Difficulty with reading	Reading, writing, spelling, speaking
Dyscalculia – Difficulty with math	Doing math problems, understanding time, using money
Dysgraphia – Difficulty with writing	Handwriting, spelling, organizing ideas
Dyspraxia (Sensory Integration Disorder) – Difficulty with fine motor skills	Hand-eye coordination, balance, manual dexterity
Dysphasia/Aphasia – Difficulty with language	Understanding spoken language, reading comprehension
Auditory Processing Disorder – Difficulty hearing differences between sounds	Reading, comprehension, language
Visual Processing Disorder – Difficulty interpreting visual information	Reading, math, maps, charts, symbols, pictures

Other disorders that make learning difficult

Difficulty in school doesn't always stem from a learning disability. Anxiety, depression, stressful events, emotional trauma, and other conditions affecting concentration make learning more of a challenge. In addition, ADHD and autism sometimes co-occur or are confused with learning disabilities.

ADHD – Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), while not considered a learning disability, can certainly disrupt learning. Children with ADHD often have problems sitting still, staying focused, following instructions, staying organized, and completing homework.

Autism – Difficulty mastering certain academic skills can stem from pervasive developmental disorders such as autism and Asperger's syndrome. Children with autism spectrum disorders may have trouble communicating, reading body language, learning basic skills, making friends, and making eye contact.



Hope for learning disabilities: The brain can change

Science has made great strides in understanding the inner workings of the brain, and one important discovery that brings new hope for learning disabilities and disorders is called neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity refers to the brain's natural, lifelong ability to change.

Throughout life, the brain is able to form new connections and generate new brain cells in response to experience and learning. This knowledge has led

to groundbreaking new treatments for learning disabilities that take advantage of the brain's ability to change. Innovative programs, such as the Arrowsmith program, use strategic brain exercises to identify and strengthen weak cognitive areas. For example, for children who have difficulty distinguishing between different sounds in a word, there are new computer-based learning programs that slow down the sounds so that children can understand them and gradually increase their speed of comprehension.

These discoveries about neuroplasticity provide hope to all students with learning disorders, and further research may lead to additional new treatments that target the actual causes of learning disabilities, rather than simply offering coping strategies to compensate for weaknesses.

How does understanding the brain help a learning disorder?

Using a telephone analogy, faulty wiring in the brain disrupts normal lines of communication and makes it difficult to process information easily. If service was down in a certain area of the city, the phone company might fix the problem by re-wiring the connections. Similarly, under the right learning conditions, the brain has the ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections. These new connections facilitate skills like reading and writing that were difficult using the old connections.

Diagnosis and testing for learning disabilities and disorders

Since diagnosing a learning disability isn't always easy, don't assume you know what your child's problem is, even if the symptoms seem clear. It's important to have your child tested and evaluated by a qualified professional. That said, you should trust your instincts. If you think something is wrong, listen to your gut. If you feel that a teacher or doctor is minimizing your concerns, seek a second opinion. Don't let anyone tell you to "wait and see" or "don't worry about it" if you see your child struggling. Regardless of whether or not your child's problems are due to a learning disability, intervention is needed. You can't go wrong by looking into the issue and taking action.

Keep in mind that finding someone who can help may take some time and effort. Even experts mix up learning disabilities with ADHD and other behavioral problems sometimes. You may have to look around a bit or try more than one professional. In the meantime, try to be patient, and remember that you won't always get clear answers. Try not to get too caught up in trying to determine the label for your child's disorder. Leave that to the professionals. Focus instead on steps you can take to support your child and address their symptoms in practical ways.



The diagnosis and testing process for learning disabilities

Diagnosing a learning disability is a process. It involves testing, history taking, and observation by a trained specialist. Finding a reputable referral is important. Start with your child's school, and if they are unable to help you, ask your doctor or friends and family who have dealt successfully with learning disabilities.

Types of specialists who may be able to test for and diagnose learning disabilities include:

1. Clinical psychologists
2. School psychologists
3. Child psychiatrists
4. Educational psychologist
5. Developmental psychologist
6. Neuropsychologist
7. Psychometrist
8. Occupational therapist (tests sensory disorders that can lead to learning problems)
9. Speech and language therapist

Sometimes several professionals coordinate services as a team to obtain an accurate diagnosis. They may also ask for input from your child's teachers.

Integration, sequencing, and abstraction: Technical terms for how the brain works

A professional learning disorders specialist might refer to the importance of "integration" to learning. Integration refers to the understanding of information that has been delivered to the brain, and it includes three steps:

- Sequencing, which means putting information in the right order.
- Abstraction, which is making sense of the information.
- Organization, which refers to the brain's ability to use the information to form complete thoughts.

Each of the three steps is important and your child may have a weakness in one area or another that causes learning difficulty. For example, in math, sequencing (the ability to put things in order) is important for learning to count or do multiplication (as well as learn the alphabet or the months of the year). Similarly, abstraction and organization are important parts of numerous educational skills and abilities. If a certain brain activity isn't happening correctly, it will create a roadblock to learning.

Getting help for children with learning disabilities

When it comes to learning disabilities, it's not always easy to know what to do and where to find help. Turning to specialists who can pinpoint and diagnose the problem is, of course, important. You will also want to work with your child's school to make accommodations for your child and get specialized academic help. But don't overlook your own role. You know your child better than anyone else, so take the lead in looking into your options, learning about new treatments and services, and overseeing your child's education.

Learn the specifics about your child's learning disability. Learn about your child's type of learning disability. Find out how the disability affects the learning process and what cognitive skills are involved. It's easier to evaluate learning techniques if you understand how the learning disability affects your child.

Research treatments, services, and new theories. Along with knowing about the type of learning

disability your child has, educate yourself about the most effective treatment options available. This can help you advocate for your child at school and pursue treatment at home.

Pursue treatment and services at home. Even if the school doesn't have the resources to treat your child's learning disability optimally, you can pursue these options on your own at home or with a therapist or tutor.

Nurture your child's strengths. Even though children with learning disabilities struggle in one area of learning, they may excel in another. Pay attention to your child's interests and passions. Helping children with learning disorders develop their passions and strengths will probably help them with the areas of difficulty as well.

Social and emotional skills: How you can help

Learning disabilities can be extremely frustrating for children. Imagine having trouble with a skill all of your friends are tackling with ease, worrying about embarrassing yourself in front of the class, or struggling to express yourself. Things can be doubly frustrating for exceptionally bright children with learning disabilities—a scenario that's not uncommon.

Kids with learning disabilities may have trouble expressing their feelings, calming themselves down, and reading nonverbal cues from others. This can lead to difficulty in the classroom and with their peers. The good news is that, as a parent, you can have a huge impact in these areas. Social and emotional skills are the most consistent indicators of success for all children—and that includes kids with learning disorders. They outweigh everything else, including academic skills, in predicting lifelong achievement and happiness.



Learning disabilities, and their accompanying academic challenges, can lead to low self-esteem, isolation, and behavior problems, but they don't have to. You can counter these things by creating a strong support system for children with learning disabilities and helping them learn to express themselves, deal with frustration, and work through challenges. By focusing on your child's growth as a person, and not just on academic achievements, you'll help them to learn good emotional habits that set the stage for success throughout life.

Finding support while helping a child with learning disabilities

All children can be both exhilarating and exhausting, but it may seem that your child with a learning disability is especially so. You may experience some frustration trying to work with your child, and it can seem like an uphill battle when you don't have the information you need. After you learn what their specific learning disability is and how it is affecting their behavior, you will be able to start addressing the challenges in school and at home. If you can, be sure to reach out to other parents who are addressing similar challenges as they can be great sources of knowledge and emotional support.

Source: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/autism-learning-disabilities/learning-disabilities-and-disorders.htm>



Have you ever considered being a foster parent and don't know how to get started?

SEARCH FOR...

"Six Steps to Fostering In Saskatchewan" on YouTube.

If you're planning a vacation...

Did you know that the Ministry may pay exceptional travel costs up to \$500 to enable a child or youth in care to take a special holiday with their caregiver. Requests for Special Holidays may be considered once per child per calendar year. Upon returning from the trip, the caregiver will submit all receipts to the caseworker within 60 days. Caregivers must provide a written request two months prior to the departure date of the planned special holiday in order to allow sufficient time for the Ministry to complete the approval process.

The request should include:

- Destination
- Mode of transportation
- Length of holiday
- Number of individuals travelling
- Type of lodging
- Planned activities



Accessing Post-Secondary Funding for Children in Care

The ministry may enter into an agreement to extend child in care services to a permanent ward if they are between the age of 18 and 21 years of age; is continuing their education; or requires assistance or training to enable them to continue their education or obtain employment. This would all be discussed with the child and their MSS worker in the year prior to the child turning 18.

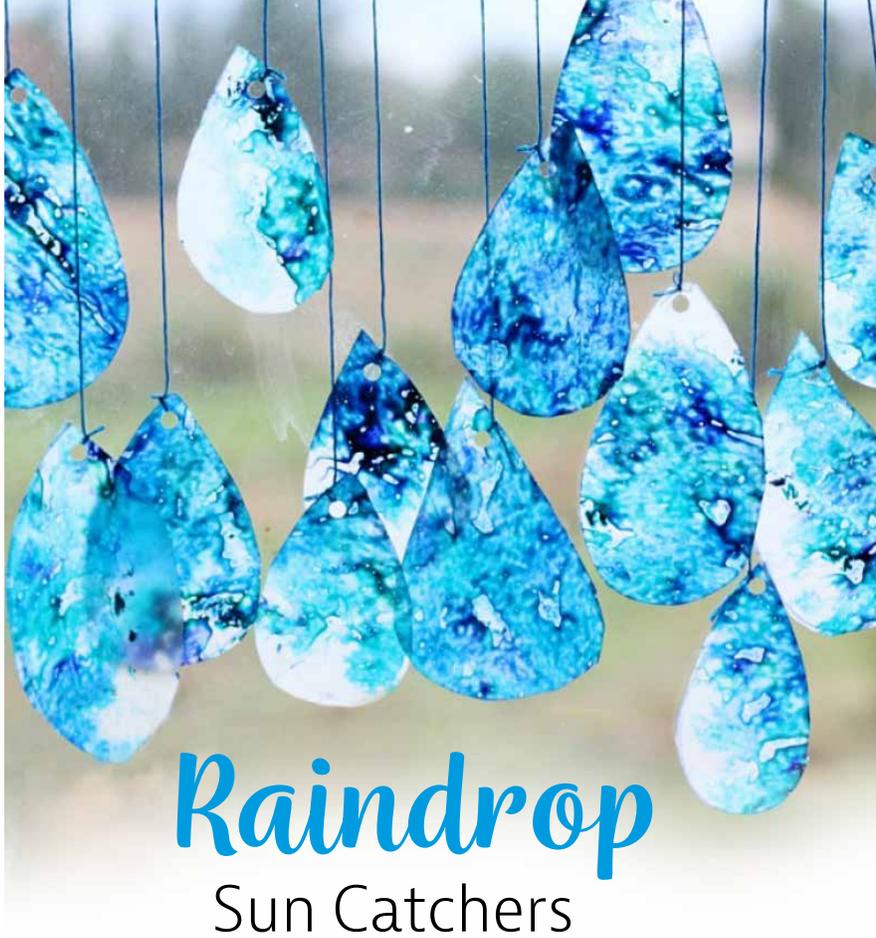


The University of Saskatchewan has a *Saskatchewan Youth from Care Bursary*, and The University of Regina offers a *Former Youth From Care Access Tuition Entrance Bursary*. Please visit the following links for more information on post secondary funding available. <https://students.usask.ca/> and <https://www.uregina.ca/>

*love does
hard things*

foster care is worth it





Raindrop Sun Catchers

When youngsters have to be indoors, most parents are looking for some kind of activity to occupy them. Use this raindrop art activity to build fine motor skills while creating something eye catching at the same time!

Supplies for this raindrop art project:

- Crayons
- Pencil or crayon sharpener
- Waxed paper
- Iron (for adult use only)
- Scissors

These suncatchers make a beautiful window display. Kids enjoy making these raindrops because they get to use a pencil sharpener. Peeling and sharpening crayons is a great way for kids to work their little fingers for excellent fine motor practice. By peeling off crayon

paper and twisting the crayon in the sharpener, younger kids are preparing their finger and hand muscles for strong pencil grip later.

Have your child look through crayon boxes and pick their favorite colour to use (various shades of one colour works best).



Once the crayons have been peeled, they are ready to be sharpened. This is probably the favorite part for most kids. It is quite satisfying for them to see how they can transform a blunt crayon to a point again! You can



even have the kids sharpen the crayons right on top of a large sheet of waxed paper. As they continue sharpening them, you can spread the shavings around to take up space on the waxed paper.

After the shavings have been collected and spread evenly across the paper, cut another sheet of paper equal in size to lay on top of the shavings. Use an iron on the lowest setting to iron directly on top of the waxed paper and melt the crayon shavings. It only takes a quick swipe of the iron to do this. The wax immediately melts and cools rather quickly.



Parent and/or child can then draw raindrop shapes on the paper and cut them out.

Use a hole puncher and embroidery floss to string them up in windows for display! These raindrop suncatchers look like wind chimes made of colored glass. Your kids will love hanging and observing these in the windows.

Source: <https://www.pre-kpages.com/raindrop-suncatchers-fine-motor-art/>

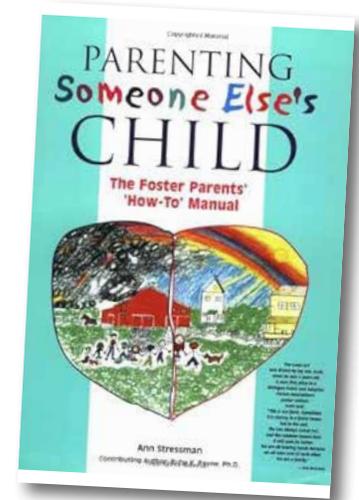
A pair of black headphones is positioned on the left side of the top banner, resting on a stack of books. On the right side, an open book is shown with its pages slightly blurred, suggesting it is being read. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light green and yellow.

goodreads

Parenting Someone Else's Child: The Foster Parents' How-To Manual

by *Anne Stressman*

Ann Stressman wrote this book after hearing Ruby Payne speak about the hidden rules of economic class, combining that perspective into her two decades of personal experience with foster care agencies and the special children needing care. The result is a "nothing can surprise me" compilation of very helpful and enlightening approaches for hundreds of the parenting situations that arise. Dr. Payne has contributed a chapter in the book for how to help children in school, and Stressman includes information for grandparents and adoptive parents as well.



Ann has done a wonderful job on such a sensitive subject. Having foster children or even contact with children that have been abused, abandoned and have lost faith in the world around them, this book can help find ways around an uncaring system and help the children that need it the most.

ISBN: 1929229259

ISBN13: 9781929229253

Format: Paperback

Length: 241 Pages

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 41271051

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:

SASKATCHEWAN FOSTER FAMILIES ASSOCIATION

231 Robin Crescent

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7L 6M8