Dear staff and parents,

Right now, there are more than 4,500 kids across BC who need temporary foster families while they cannot live at home. Approximately 750 children and youth of those children come from Vancouver Island. Right now, Parksville and surrounding areas have a growing list of children and teens waiting to be cared for in a safe and loving home. Some can’t be at home because the actions of the parents put them at risk, some because they need some help with their behaviour, and some because their support needs mean their parents need a break. Right now, there is a child in YOUR community who needs you.

Therefore, the Ministry of Children and Family Development is currently recruiting new foster families to care for these children in the Parksville, Nanoose, Errington and Qualicum areas.

***“Being a foster caregiver makes your life worthwhile. You aren’t just achieving for yourself,***

***you are helping the most vulnerable in our community.”
- Foster caregiver of 40 years.***

Our foster families come from a variety of backgrounds, each with different life experiences, skills, and qualities. To be a foster caregiver you must;

* Be a resident of BC who is (at least) 19 years of age.
* Have a safe and nurturing home environment.
* Be comfortable in providing guidance and supervision that meets a child’s needs and cultural heritage.
* Be an active member of the child’s care team.

If you cannot be a full-time foster caregiver, consider becoming a respite/relief caregiver who supports families by caring for children a few days throughout the month.

***“I really enjoy what I do as a respite/relief caregiver because it means I get to support***

***the children and the family as a whole.”
- Foster caregiver of 30 years.***

Participating in either a group information session or meeting with a social worker is a helpful way to learn more about foster caregiving. This will help you make an informed decision about whether fostering is a fit for you and your family. To learn about the application process and to find details about a Foster Caregiver Information Session in your community, here are three options:

* Reach out to your local MCFD office Resources Team;
	+ Helen Wagg; Team Leader: (250) 947-2703
	+ Alison Bandi; Resource Social Worker; (236) 936-2026
	+ Noël Matchett, Resource Social Worker; (250) 947-2666
* Visit [www.fosterhope.ca](http://www.fosterhope.ca) : online Zoom sessions with the Foster Parent Support Services Society.
* Visit the Indigenous Caregivers of BC (ICOBC) website *www.fostercaregiversbc.ca*

***“If you are a person who is drawn to or simply curious about fostering, I encourage you to lean into exploring that urge. You could be setting yourself on the path toward the most fulfilling calling of your life.”
- Foster caregiver of 8 years.***

Our best source of new foster parents is word of mouth. It is one person who cares about children and youth encouraging another caring person to open their home and heart to a child in need. We encourage you to either consider becoming a foster parent or spread the word to someone you know who may be interested.

**Myths about becoming a foster parent:**

You don’t have to be perfect
You don’t have to own your own home
You don’t have to be rich
You don’t have to be married
You don’t have to have a college degree
You don’t have to already be a parent

**You do have to have:**

A big heart
An open mind
A sense of humor
A stable home
A desire to help

