

# Group Respite

## Program Handbook



“BELIEVING IN POTENTIAL”

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## *Mission Statement*

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**Reach Child and Youth Development Society** is a non-profit society that provides and facilitates quality services to children and families, enabling children to reach their full potential. Our mission is to provide early and timely intervention for children with special needs in a family-centered manner; provide choices and ongoing support to children and families; facilitate and support the full integration of all children into our community and exist as a quality community resource for the optimal development of children from infancy onwards.

**Reach Child and Youth Development Society** has been providing services to children and their families in Delta since 1959. The Association believes in the potential of every child. We offer a variety of services designed to meet the needs of children to ensure their optimal development. Over 1000 children and their families benefit from our services on an annual basis.



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## *Reach Philosophy*

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Two major premises form the basis upon which Reach delivers its programs and services. The first is that we will operate in a family-centered manner and the second is that we will be responsive to the needs of the children and families in the community.

Reach recognizes that:

- *the family is the major decision maker and the constant in a child's life, while service systems and personnel fluctuate;*
- *families are diverse and that cultural, and racial and economic diversity requires acceptance and respect;*
- *families and children are unique and each has its own structure, roles, beliefs, and coping style which requires flexible and individualized approaches to goal identification and service planning;*
- *families should be in control and that the primary aim of good service planning is to enable and empower families; and,*
- *families should be informed and receive unbiased and complete information about their child's care and development.*

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# Group Respite Program – Family Information

## OVERVIEW

The primary goal of the Reach **Group Respite Program** is to give parents of children with special needs a much needed break. As it is provided in a 'group' format, the program also provides children with opportunities to build friendships, strengthen social skills, become more aware of their community and, best of all, have lots of fun!

The Group Respite Program is provided through two separate groups. One group is for children 4 years to 12 years of age. An older group focuses on children and youth from 12 to 19 years of age. Children and youth involved with the program can attend until their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. Up to 21 children/youth participate in the Group Respite Program each session.

The program runs the first and third Saturday of each month from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The program is staffed by 6 well-trained and experienced caregivers and a program coordinator. All group respite caregivers have training as well as direct experience working with families and with children who have special needs.

## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation for group respite outings are provided by group respite caregiver's using their own personal vehicles, or by a respite caregiver licensed to drive a class 4 special needs van. All Group Respite caregivers are required to obtain a Driving Abstract from the Department of Motor Vehicles and a Claims History report from the Insurance Corporation of BC. These documents are provided to the Group Respite Coordinator prior to transporting a child from the program in a motor vehicle.

All group respite caregivers are provided with a vehicle safety checklist. This checklist is reviewed and signed prior to each trip transporting group respite children in a vehicle.

Appropriate safety restraints are used while transporting children in any vehicle. Where necessary, a booster seat must be provided to the group respite program for your child's use.

Group respite caregivers are required to carry a first aid kit in their vehicle and a copy of each child's Emergency Information Card is in the first aid kit.

## **ELIGIBILITY FOR GROUP RESPITE**

The Ministry for Children and Family Development funds the Group Respite Program and is responsible for determining if a child is eligible for the program and managing the program's referrals waiting list (should there be no room available in the program).

With the permission of the parent / legal guardian, referrals to the program may come from a variety of sources, but must be directed to the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), the entity responsible for determining eligibility for Group Respite.

To be eligible for the Group Respite Program, the family must live in the Delta area and their child must meet the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) criteria for special needs. The child must also be able to manage themselves safely and independently within a group of 3 children with 1 caregiver. Within these criteria, the following guidelines are used to determine if a child is eligible for the group respite program:

1. The child does not exhibit aggressive behaviours, physical, and/or verbal, to the extent to which it threatens the safety or security of the other participants or staff.
2. The child's behaviour is at a manageable level where he/she does not require one to one attention (e.g. does not bolt / run away or display destructive behaviour).
3. The child is able to toilet themselves independently, without physical assistance.
4. The child does not have issues with mobility that would require one to one assistance.

MCFD Social Workers refer eligible children and their families to the Group Respite Program. Please note that families will not be eligible if they receive any other MCFD funded respite care, such as that provided through the At Home Program, through service agreements with foster parents or through individualized funding or Reach's General Respite.

## **INITIATING SERVICES**

When a space becomes available in the Group Respite Program, the MCFD Liaison will contact the Group Respite Coordinator with the name of the family to be referred to the program. A copy of the Support Services Agreement will be sent to the Coordinator to confirm the referral.

Within a week of receiving a referral form from MCFD, the Group Respite Coordinator will contact the family to make arrangements for a home visit.

During the home visit, the Coordinator will collect information to complete the child's care plan. Wherever possible, the child will be involved in the development of this plan. The family will also be asked to review and sign:

- a liability release/consent forms;

- a Family Rights and Responsibilities form;
- an emergency information card that will be copied, with one kept in the first aid kit taken offsite during outings;
- a medication administration record (as applicable).

This Information will be compiled in a binder that will be accessible to the Group Respite staff and remain in a locked cabinet on site at Reach Child and Youth Development Society.

During the home visit, the Coordinator will also discuss the family's goals for group respite. If necessary, additional home visits may be scheduled to complete the paperwork and support the family to be familiar / comfortable with the program and organization information.

All forms will be completed and returned to the Coordinator prior to the child attending the Group Respite Program. The family goal information and all forms will be updated annually.

## **WHAT THE PROGRAM DOES**

Having children in a group provides natural opportunities to promote social skill development, facilitate making friends, promote positive self esteem and community awareness and decrease the possibility of isolation. This happens through well planned activities such as sports, games, crafts, baking, field trips and other fun group activities. So we can help your child be successful in these areas, the Group Respite Program:

- Asks families to tell us what their child is learning / what they would like him/her to work on in terms of social skills, making friends, self esteem and community awareness;
- Gets input from all of the children, as part of each group respite session, on the activities they would like to do at the sessions.
- Sends an information sheet home with each child identifying the date of the next session and the activities that will be done at that session.
- Provides families with feedback on how the child has done during the session in general, and in terms of his/her social skills, friendships etc.

## **FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Program Fees**

Parents may be expected to contribute to the cost of their child's respite care, depending on their financial situation. If this is the case, the family will be sent a bill from MCFD for a "Per Diem" rate. The group respite coordinator is responsible for submitting monthly attendance records to MCFD.

### **Sick Policy**

To ensure all our caregivers and other participants remain healthy, please do not send your child to Group Respite if they are exhibiting any of the following symptoms:

- Diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps;
- Unexplained rashes or spots;
- Fever over 100F
- Cold symptoms such as fever, runny nose, coughing, sore throat;
- Body aches;
- Any infectious illness (e.g. pink eye, impetigo, lice).

If your child exhibits these symptoms while at the Group Respite Program we may call home and ask that you pick up your child.

### **Child Absences / Lateness**

We ask you to call and leave a message for the Group Respite Coordinator if your child will not be attending a session or will be late for a session. The Coordinator, Dawn Beazley, can be reached at 604-946-6622, ext. 306.

### **Drop Off and Pick Up**

It is every parent's responsibility to sign in and out their child each Group Respite day. This signature also gives your consent for your child to participate in the day's activities and outings.

Please arrive and pick up your child promptly at the assigned times. If a child is picked up more than 15 minutes late more than 3 times, the program may ask that you be discharged. The Group Respite Program must ensure that a child is released directly into the care of either the child's parents or an authorized person, as listed in the child's pick up form. Under no circumstances will the child be released to anyone not on this form without authorization from the parents/guardians.

In emergency situations, verbal authorization from the child's parent/guardian to release the child to an individual not listed on the form is acceptable. As soon as possible, we will ask you to update the form to reflect additional individuals who are authorized to pick up the child.

Please be advised that:

- If it is after program hours and you have failed to pick up your child or make alternate arrangements, the Respite Coordinator will wait a ½ an hour and then notify a family emergency contact you have identified. If the contact cannot be reached, we are required to notify the Duty Worker for the Ministry for Child and Family Development.
- If a group respite caregiver has reason to believe that the person picking up the child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they must inform the person that they are

not able to release the child, citing the above reasons, and call the emergency contact person.

### **Lunch / Snacks**

Each child is responsible for bringing his/her own lunch and snacks unless other arrangements have been agreed between the parents and the group respite program. Please remember that the Group respite Program is a “nut free zone”.

### **Medication Administration**

If your child requires medication to be administered while he/she is at the Group Respite Program, you will need to complete the Medication Administration form. Any medications brought to the group respite program will be kept in a locked cupboard/and or container. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child’s medication list, found in the care plan, is current and available to the group respite program. Parents must review, update and sign the back of this form at the beginning of each respite session. Non-prescription medications will not be administered without prior written consent from the parents.

### **Safety**

The safety of the children and caregivers is of utmost importance. To help ensure safety and be prepared in the event of an emergency, the Group Respite Program conducts bi-monthly fire and earthquake drills.

### **Leaving the Program**

If your family or child for any reason decides they are no longer wanting to participate in the group respite program you will need to inform the program Coordinator, Dawn Beazley ; she will then contact the MCFD Respite Liaison Worker, who is responsible for completing a Termination of Support Services Agreement and sending it to the respite program. Once the program is notified in writing that the child’s file will be closing, the Respite Coordinator will contact the family within a week to complete a Respite Closing Form. The Closing Form will include the child’s intake date, the closing date, the outcomes achieved through the provision of group respite and the status of the child leaving the program. The Closing Form will be sent to the family and the Liaison Worker within two weeks of receiving the file closure notice.

If your child has not attend the Group Respite Program for more than 6 consecutive sessions, other than in special circumstances, the program coordinator will inform the MCFD Social Worker. A decision to terminate the family’s services may be made by MCFD in conjunction with the Group Respite Coordinator. Once the decision is made, you will be informed in writing that your file will be closed. Special circumstances must be discussed with the Coordinator in advance, whenever possible.

## FEEDBACK

The Group Respite Program appreciates and relies on your feedback. If at any time you want or need to provide feedback on the program, please speak to one of your child's caregivers or the program coordinator, Dawn Beazley. Dawn can be reached by phone at 604-946-6622, ext. 306 or by email at [dawnb@reachdevelopment.org](mailto:dawnb@reachdevelopment.org).

Should a concern regarding a staff, one of your child's caregivers, or other issue arise, families are asked to communicate these concerns to the program coordinator, Dawn Beazley.

If you feel that the concern is not resolved to your satisfaction, you can contact the executive director, Renie D'Aquila, or complete a "Family Grievance" form. "Family Grievance" forms can be obtained from the REACH front desk and will be forwarded to the executive director. The executive director will:

- a) Speak with the family filing the complaint;
- b) Conduct an investigation into the complaint;
- c) Follow through with any actions required arising from the investigation;
- d) Contact the family filing the complaint to follow up with a proposed solution or to update the family within seven business days.

The executive director shall notify Reach's board of directors of any complaints which have not been resolved to the family's satisfaction through the above grievance procedures.

Reach is committed to ensuring that no barriers to service or any negative consequences result from families bringing their concerns forward.

# Reach Resources for Parents

## ***Book and Resource Library***

Reach maintains a growing book library on a variety of topics including autism spectrum disorders. Books can be signed out by families who are receiving REACH services and are due for return or renewal after 2 weeks.

## ***Parent Support Network E Newsletter***

The Parent Support Network offers a weekly newsletter that shares up-to-date information that is relevant to parents of children with special needs. It focuses on sharing pertinent information and connecting parents with other parents. Topics covered include: changes at CLBC and MCFD, policy changes that parents should be aware of, education issues, and upcoming courses and workshops. Parents can also make or reply to postings and arrange to connect with other parents. The newsletter and subscription is available on the Reach website [www.reachdevelopment.org](http://www.reachdevelopment.org).

## ***Counselling Services***

Reach offers counselling services for families who have a child with special needs. The program is open to families living in Delta or to families who are already accessing other Reach services. Counselling for couples or individuals may address a variety of issues ranging from marital stress to depression to social anxiety. Reach also provides play therapy and parent/child interaction guidance for children with special needs up to age 12. Reach counselling is neither a long term nor emergency service. If the situation is an emergency, the crisis line should be called at 604-951-8855. If it is anticipated that more than 10 counselling sessions will be needed, an alternative counselling service will likely be recommended. In order to access Reach counselling services, families can speak with their behaviour consultant for a referral.

The Group Respite Coordinator is Dawn Beazley, 604-946-6622 ext. 306, email at [dawnb@reachdevelopment.org](mailto:dawnb@reachdevelopment.org)

The Executive Director is Renie D'Aquila, 604-946-6622 ext 301.

**Please check out Reach's website at  
[www.reachdevelopment.org](http://www.reachdevelopment.org)**