

HELP SHEET

HELP AT A GLANCE

Support for Parents/Caregivers of children with ASD



When a child or youth is given a diagnosis of ASD, parents/caregivers are set on a journey of understanding what this means for their child and their family, and expectations of how the future might look may change. Along with this, parents are expected to navigate complex systems in order to access funding, interventions, and a range of family, school and community services.

With each of these domains generally operating in silos, the coordination of supports can be daunting. Many parents juggle all these demands, while also working and raising more than one child. Through all of this, parents generally put themselves last. Research shows that given this large burden of care, parents can experience high levels of stress, interpersonal relationship strain, financial challenges and isolation; all impacting their mental and physical wellbeing (e.g., Kakkar & Srivastava, 2017).

Consider Individual, Couples or Family Support:

- Counselling/therapy
 - Some employers provide an Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) which may include individual, couples or family counselling, as well as other health and wellness resources.
 - Many extended health plans include benefit coverage for the services of a Psychologist, Counselor or Social worker.
 - The age 6-18 MCFD ASD funding can cover family counseling/therapy.
- Get on the waitlist for respite care through your local Office of Children with Special Needs (CYSN). Find the contact information for your CYSN office here:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/child-behaviour-development/support-needs>
- Reach out to trusted family or friends who can assist with caregiving.
- Plan a night out with your partner or friends and make time for yourself.

Seek out community support. Never underestimate the power of connections.

- Autism Specific Family Supports:
 - Autism Society of BC (ASBC) is a parent based society, that provides various supports to individuals and families affected by Autism such as community groups, adult groups, sibling groups, education and training: <https://www.autismbc.ca/>
 - Pacific Autism Family Network (PAFN) offers a range of family supports including information, community groups, and special events: <https://pacificautismfamily.com/>
 - Canucks Autism Network (CAN) offers a variety of supported programs for individuals with Autism, training initiatives, special family events and fosters awareness of autism in the larger community: <https://www.canucksautism.ca/>
 - Autism Support Network provides support to families of individuals with Autism, including information, education, neighborhood meetings, and improved access to evidence-based autism treatment. <https://autismsupportbc.ca/>
- Broader Family Supports (not specific to ASD):
 - Family Support Institute (FSI) provides information, training and province-wide networking to assist families who have children with disabilities. FSI has the Resource Parent program across the province, and has also created Support Worker Central, which is an

online database designed to help families find support/respite workers:

<https://familysupportbc.com/>

- Disability Alliance BC (DABC) is an organization that supports individuals with all disabilities, and provides direct supports, community partnerships, advocacy and research: <http://disabilityalliancebc.org/>
- Inclusion BC is a non-profit organization that provides support, education and advocacy for individuals with disabilities and their families: <https://inclusionbc.org/>
- Parent Support Services Society is an organization that partners with those in a parenting role, providing education, workshops, and support circles across the province. It also provides a specific program for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) which includes the **GRG Support Line: 604-558-4740** (Greater Vancouver); **1-855-474-9777** (no charge, outside Greater Vancouver). For details: <https://www.parentsupportbc.ca/>

Acquire more knowledge. The better equipped with information, the better you can make decisions.

- Autism Information Services British Columbia (AIS BC) is part of the Ministry of Children and Family development (MCFD). AIS has Information Officers who support families by providing information on questions such as assessment, diagnosis, best practice treatment options, and hiring professionals to work with your child. They may be able to provide support in multiple languages. AIS manages the Registry of Autism Service Providers (RASP):

<http://autisminfo.gov.bc.ca/>

- Autism Community Training BC (ACT BC) provides information and training based on best practices, to enable parent's and professionals to better support children and adults with Autism. Some examples of ACT's resources include: information and education available in Chinese and Punjabi and a video series of the Online Mental Health and Autism Project

<https://www.actcommunity.ca/>

- POPARD Family School Liaison Service free monthly Parent Workshops (variety of topics including, ASD and mental health, Developing an effective IEP, Challenging Behaviors at home and school, etc.): <https://autismoutreach.ca/upcoming-training-dates/>

- Autism Speaks Canada provides a range of information and resources for families affected by Autism, such as free tool kits on a variety of topics (e.g. challenging behaviors, dental and hair salon visits, transitions, etc.): https://www.autismspeaks.ca/?s=toolkits&asc_post_source=forum
- Up to 20% of the MCFD ASD funding may be used for training, travel costs to access eligible autism intervention and training within B.C. (round trip greater than 80 kms). Refer to the Parents Guide page 11 for details:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/managing-your-health/autism/autism_handbook_parents_guide.pdf

References:

Kakkar, J., & Srivastava, P. (2017). Challenges and Coping among Parents having Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Journal of Psychosocial Research*, 12(2), 363–371. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/openview/a86209e8b59c429e7898ae04875e99e3/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=506336>