



## Deaf Children's Society of B.C.

### Family Handbook

Welcome to Deaf Children's Society ! We are honoured that you have chosen DCS to provide services and support to your child and your family!

#### Deaf Children's Society Values & Beliefs

At Deaf Children's Society, we believe Deaf and Hard of Hearing children have the innate ability to become fully participating, independent, successful members of society. To this end,

- We believe that a deaf child is a child first
- We believe any child will thrive given accessibility to a complete, rich and natural language early in life, and the provision of ASL and English through innovative learning processes are effective options for Deaf children in becoming life long learners.
- We believe in empowering families with knowledge and skills vital to encouraging the development of linguistic, cognitive and social skills of the Deaf child
- We believe in a family and child centered approach whereby the Deaf child is an active family member. By embracing ASL, English and a Deaf identity the child will develop healthy relationships with their family and the world around them
- We recognize the value of families and children from diverse backgrounds and cultures with unique needs, and the importance of building from families strengths to achieve optimal outcomes for the child and the family as a whole
- Given the social nature of learning, we believe that Deaf children will thrive in an environment with opportunities to interact with other Deaf peers

Success looks different for every child. The DCS works to support children individually in developing their full potential for their age and cognitive abilities at the time and the pace that the child can manage. Children will be guided toward the milestones they are expected to achieve based on the learning-oriented behaviours they exhibit at any given time during their participation in the program.

The Deaf Children's Society of BC acknowledges its responsibilities under BC's Human Rights Code and is committed to providing services to all children free of discrimination. DCS recognizes that children may have different needs arising from their multiple exceptionalities and are committed to working with families to provide appropriate accommodation.

The overall view of children at the Deaf Children's Society Preschool is not that individual children may have "special needs" but that all children have "specific" needs. Every child is different.

### ELIGIBILITY

DCS Programs are available for deaf or hard of hearing children from birth to 5 years of age (or Kindergarten entry) and their family. In some situations, DCS may accept non-deaf/hard of hearing children, when it is deemed that ASL is the most accessible language for a child. These circumstances will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and require approval by the Executive Director.

### PROGRAM FEES

There are fees for the preschool program, which are determined at the start of the school year. Some families are eligible for subsidies through the Ministry of Children and Family Development. There are currently no other costs for intervention services with DCS for our registered clients.

### OUR STAFF

Check out our amazing DCS Team on our website ! All staff have completed and passed a criminal record check for working in the vulnerable children sector.

#### Staff Credentials

All Speech-Language Pathologists hold a Master's Degree and are certified members with CAS LPA (Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists) and BCASLPA (British Columbia Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists).

The Teacher of the Deaf holds a Master's Degree in Education and is certified by the Teacher Regulation Branch and is an active member of the Canadian Association of Educators of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

All Preschool Teachers have Early Childhood Education Certification and additional training in working with Deaf/hard of hearing children.

All Sign Language Instructors are native users of American Sign Language and are Deaf or hard of hearing.

### FAMILY SUPPORT PLANS

DCS staff involved with your child will work with your family to develop an individual plan for your child. The purpose of the Family Support Plan is to identify your concerns or priorities regarding your child's development. A plan will be developed within the first three months of being in a program and every six months thereafter. Your family will receive a copy of this plan. At any time through the year you may discuss areas of concern or changes you would like to make. As parents, you know your child better than anyone and we rely on your input and ideas to help us develop a program that meets the needs of your child.

If your primary service provider is another agency, the Family Support Plan is their responsibility and DCS will contribute information where possible.

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### PROGRAM EVALUATION

Your feedback is important to us. Please feel free to contact the Executive Director with any feedback about our programs or services.

*Your response to our program evaluation helps us to develop programming policies and procedures, please be sure to complete any family satisfaction surveys that you receive online or in person. We depend on your feedback to secure funding each year for programs and services!*

### APPOINTMENT CANCELLATION

While we understand that last-minute cancellations are sometimes unavoidable; we do appreciate as much notice as possible. This will allow staff to reschedule the freed-up time slot with another family. Should you need to cancel an appointment, you may advise the staff member directly, by e-mail, by text, or leave a message on their voice mail. Please cancel your appointment if you or your child has a cold, flu, or for some reason is not feeling well enough to meet the Speech-Language Pathologist or Sign Language Instructor. Appointments may be rescheduled for another time that week, if the Speech-Language Pathologist or Sign Language Instructor is available.

If your family is travelling for an extended period of time, please complete a "Change in Service" form and return it to the office at [office@deafchildren.bc.ca](mailto:office@deafchildren.bc.ca)

### SERVICE ELIGIBILITY

Families of Deaf or Hard of Hearing Children are eligible for Sign Language Instruction and Speech & Language Therapy sessions. Please talk to your service provider about what level of individual or group service is best for your child and your family. Your family is eligible to attend any of our group sessions and workshops. You can find information about these on our DCS website, Facebook page or by contacting the DCS Office. [www.deafchildren.bc.ca](http://www.deafchildren.bc.ca)

### PERSONAL INFORMATION UPDATES

Please inform the main office if there is any change to your personal information, such as your child's physician, allergies, home address or contact information. If your child is enrolled in the preschool program, please also inform preschool staff of any change of address or phone number. It is important that our records are kept up-to-date.

### FAMILY-CENTERED PRACTICE

The concept of family-centered practice has emerged as a core principle in the field of early intervention (M. Guralnick, 2001). Deaf Children's Society of B.C. services follows these practices, which include:

- Parents are important members of the intervention team, involved with the decision-making

regarding therapy and goals,

- Parents concerns and priorities determine the development of the family support plan, goals and outcomes.
- Parents are provided with complete and unbiased information to help them make decisions about the development of their child.
- Parents will receive copies of all reports written about their child and their family.
- Parents review all reports and provide input before the reports are finalized and sent to outside agencies.
- Parent/caregivers co-sign the family support plan, which details the goals and desired outcomes for intervention.
- Parents input and feedback are sought during individual sessions and at family support plan meetings to ensure that services meet the needs of the child and family.
- Family support plan meetings are scheduled approximately 2 times a year but can be requested by parents at any time.
- Recommended strategies are designed to fit the family's lifestyle in order to minimize stress.
- Services can be provided at the family's home, DCS Preschool, or a community daycare or Preschool.
- Support programs and services are made available to the whole family, including parents, siblings, and members of the extended family.
- Information and support are made available to assist families to connect with other families, and support systems.

All staff at Deaf Children's Society of B.C. will collaborate with professionals in the community who are providing support and services to your child and family.

## PARENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION

You will receive information about DCS when you join the program. You will receive copies of all written reports by DCS staff about your child and family.

Parents may have access to their child's file by contacting the Executive Director (Please note: in keeping with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Deaf Children's Society of B.C. does not make copies of reports originating from other agencies, but provides assistance to families wishing to obtain such records).

You will receive complete and unbiased information on assessment and treatment, including: Purpose and process of any diagnostic assessment. Potential benefits and/or risks of a service or intervention. Reasonable treatment alternatives. Possible complications.

Parents have the right to ask questions and receive answers regarding their child's assessments and progress.

Parents have a right to receive information in a language that they understand. The Deaf Children's Society of B.C. will provide interpretation services to families as required.

You have the right to information from community resources that may be suitable and available for your child and family.

#### THE RIGHT TO REFUSE SERVICES

You have the right to refuse any services or intervention after you have been informed of any potential risks associated with the services or intervention.

#### THE RIGHT TO CONFIDENTIALITY

Information on your child will not be released without your written consent.

Volunteers do not have access to client files.

In order to ensure that information is released appropriately, when parents are separated or divorced, proof of guardianship or a custody agreement must be shown.

#### THE RIGHT TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

Parents have a right to discuss concerns regarding their services, without jeopardizing their services.

THE RIGHT to freedom from abuse, financial or other exploitation, retaliation, humiliation, and neglect.

#### GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS

Families are encouraged to ask questions and discuss concerns regarding any aspect of the programs with the staff. If an issue arises, the goal is to reach a mutually acceptable resolution. The steps will be followed:

##### Step 1

The Parents and program staff member will meet to define the issues and state their point of view. The parents must put serious complaints in writing, and will be provided with assistance if needed.

##### Step 2

The parents, an advocate (if desired) and the program staff member will work together to come up with a written action plan within 5 working days.

##### Step 3

If all parties cannot agree upon a course of action, a meeting will be scheduled with the parents and the Executive Director, within 5 working days of meeting with the staff member.

##### Step 4

If Step 3 does not produce a satisfactory result, the parents have the right to contact the President of the

Board of Directors within 5 working days of meeting with the Executive Director. The Executive Director will give the parents the President of the Board's contact information. *Please note: If all*

*of the steps leading up to this point of the process have not been followed, the President of the Board will refer the parents back to Step 1.*

### Step 5

If, after the above Steps have been attempted and all parties cannot agree upon a plan, Parents may make complaints directly to the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The Executive Director will give the parents the contact information.

### RESOURCES

Looking for additional resource online, in books or in the community? Please talk to your interventionist so they can direct you to the appropriate services for you and your family.

### SERVICE & SUPPORT AGREEMENT

Speech therapy and American Sign Language instruction are in great demand in our community. Please be respectful of the services you are provided. Supporting the overall development of your child and family is a partnership. To make the most of this partnership, we ask for your cooperation to maximize the benefits of intervention for your child:

- Your Interventionist will provide strategies to help you practice during everyday routines, activities and play. Your job is to carry out these strategies.
- Provide feedback to your Interventionist about what is working and what may be a challenge.
- You are the expert on your child. Our Interventionists are experts in their field. This is a great recipe for a productive partnership and team.
- Sessions may take place in our center, in our preschool, online, or in your home or in your child's local preschool or daycare. Talk to your interventionist about the best time and place to set up your weekly sessions, which may involve a combination of the above.
- If you have to cancel an appointment, please let us know as soon as possible so that we may offer your spot to another waiting client.
- Please cancel if you or your child is or has been recently sick (fever, coughing, runny nose, diarrhea, vomiting, pink eye, skin disorders). We all learn best when we are feeling our best.
- Repeated cancellations may result in a family losing their time slot or a temporary hold on services. The Director will call you to follow up on how to best support your family.
- Please leave your cell phone alone while participating in sessions.
- Ask your interventionist about including siblings in the therapy sessions. DCS promotes a whole family approach to teaching and learning.

### SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

The Child, Family and Community Service Act states that all children in the Province of B.C. "are entitled to be protected from abuse, neglect, and harm or threat of harm". The Act also states that any "person who has reason to believe that a child needs protection must promptly report the matter" to the Ministry of Children and Family Development. All DCS staff must adhere to this Act.

