

SEPTEMBER 2019

FSC NATIONAL NEWS

Newsletter for members of Family Service Canada



Message from the Board

The Community Of Learning (COL) is quickly approaching. The annual gathering is an opportunity not only for leaders to learn but also to build a powerful national network. Our focus is to connect leaders across Canada. We know trends tend to sweep across the country and changes that appear in one province often indicate what's coming for others. The COL is an opportunity to prepare, showcase success stories, and get people thinking creatively. We hope you'll join us.

As a reminder, our Annual General Meeting (AGM) will also be held during our time together in Sydney. You should have received the draft financial statements to review via email. We continue to be in good financial condition and the membership continues to be strong.

Pauline Smale
Board Chair

2019 Community of Learning

Thank you to everyone who has registered for the 2019 Community of Learning in Sydney, Nova Scotia, on October 9 to 10!

There are just a few weeks to go before we gather to discuss the Brain Story, collaboration, Families and Schools Together, and fund development. We're excited to learn from each other about these tools and opportunities, especially as many of us respond to changes in government funding amounts and priorities.

Last Call

If you haven't registered yet, now is the time. Claim your tickets at www.familyservicecanada.org/conference.

Our conversations are richer when there are more involved. If you know a family service leader (member or not) who's doing great work or looking for new ideas, invite them to the conference!

CEO Spotlight: Sue Mallon

Sue was raised in Southern Ontario and attended McMaster University for her BA and BSW degrees. Longing to ski and hike more she applied to one grad school in Calgary and in 1976 earned her MSW at the University of Calgary.

Following graduation, Sue worked at the Calgary General Hospital as a counsellor followed by a couple of years as a counsellor at Catholic Family Services.

At this point she was feeling that perhaps counselling was not her forte and moved to the City of Calgary where she remained for more than 20 years. During this time she held positions such as Social Planner; Director of Human resources; Commissioner of Community Services and finally Executive Officer for the Community portfolio. During this time as well she earned her MBA and her CCEBs designation (Certified Employee Benefits specialist).



In 2003 Sue moved to Calgary Family Services (Carya) as the CEO and has remained there since. During her time there, Carya has undergone significant transformation from losing half of itself when the province privatized homecare necessitating the layoff of 200 people, to a name and brand renewal in 2014 at which time the agency renamed itself Carya Society of Calgary.

Sue has two grown children and still enjoys the hiking she came to Alberta for in 1975. Still connected to the community she just completed a term as Chair of the Mount Royal University Board of Governors during which time she was honored to participate in the process of choosing the next President for the University.

Sue has been a regular participant in the Family Service Canada organization serving as chair, treasurer, and vice chair at intervals.

Parent-Teen Mediation

Parent-Teen Conflict is something that many families face. Sometimes, however, these conflicts can be extreme and result in high risk behaviours and a critical breakdown in relationships. Families often suggest the issues arise from the 'troubled teen' but they are more likely a symptom of a greater systemic issue within the family system.

Family Services of Greater Vancouver's Parent-Teen Mediation is a free and 100% confidential program offered with the goal of reuniting families experiencing parent-teen conflict. The program goals are to reduce conflict, preserve and reunify families, improve relationships by working on effective communication, decrease risky behaviour, and improve knowledge of issues and resources.

Families reach us through a referral from BC's Ministry of Children and Family Development; from there, we contact the family and meet for a pre-mediation session where we discuss confidentiality, guidelines, and our role as an impartial third person that supports and assists the participants through their issues. The participant can discuss their understanding of the existing conflict in the home. We then begin mediations that include the participants together; usually for a length of 12 sessions. We can work with the entire family in their home, in the community, or our office. Participants often include the involved youth, siblings, parents (step, foster, adoptive, grandparents), other relatives, and care providers.

We want to know what is happening in your agency. Let us know about your successes, new initiatives, important changes in staffing, anniversaries, etc. We will include them in future issues of our newsletter.



Conflict is normal; it's how the family resolves conflict that matters. By remaining neutral, a mediator assists families to settle differences in a positive way. Mediation allows everyone to have the opportunity to be heard, and develop a realistic, agreed upon, solution. Some strategies that we use include: caucusing, reframing, and using purposeful listening skills so that each member's point of view is acknowledged, validated, and accepted. Further, we encourage the participants to spend purposeful time together to (re) establish connection. Go for a walk, watch a TV show, play a game together.

After "peeling back the onion layers", we work on the issues and encourage the participants to brainstorm ideas, so that they are empowered by the solution that is transcribed on the agreement. We don't give advice, nor take sides. While most counseling focuses on the past, mediation focuses on the present and the future. We also work with youth and their families to ensure they can access additional supports they might require concurrently.

Over the years, the issues have changed in importance from skipping school, and cell phone usage to now concerns of extreme anxiety, screen time, running away, cyber bullying and family violence.

Families are successful when they understand that all family members play a role in the breakdown of parent-teen relationships and that it takes change in approach and behaviour from everyone.

"This mediation was a "life-saver". It was helping our family understand each other and learning to accept each other and compromise. Thank you for coming to our home". – Client

Family Services of Greater Vancouver is proud of its PTM team and the work it does in reuniting families. Clients learn how to problem solve, communicate positively; and rebuild understanding, trust and honesty.



PTM Team