



Parent Guide to the Specialized Sitter Program

Thinking of hiring a Specialized Sitter? Great! This document will help answer any questions you may have about the development and goals of the training. We will cover the following:

- Who is BCACDI?
- Process behind the development of the training
- Delivery of the training
- How to provide feedback

Who is BCACDI?

The BC Association for Child Development and Intervention (BCACDI) is a provincial association of agencies that provide child development and therapy services to children and youth with special needs and their families in British Columbia. We have member agencies in each region of the Province, and in both rural and urban settings. BCACDI's mission is to advocate for quality child development and therapy services which are inclusive and accessible to all children and families and to provide member agencies with a forum for communication, information sharing and problem solving.

Many of our member agencies have been delivering services in their communities for more than 40 years, and all are staffed with experts in child development. Accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), an organization that sets stringent standards for facilities, ensures BCACDI member agencies are innovative, effective, and accountable. Some of the more common programs agencies deliver include the Infant Development Program, Supported Child Development Program, and Early Intervention Therapies, all foundational programs developed and supported by BC's Ministry of Child and Family Development.

BCACDI is a provincial non-profit organization, founded in 1996, which provides advocacy and opportunities for collaboration to member agencies throughout British Columbia. Member agencies are non-profit, accredited, and provide diagnostic, developmental, intervention and support services for children and youth with special needs and their families.

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BCACDI would like to acknowledge the support provided by the BC Ministry for Child and Family Development in the creation of the Specialized Sitter training modules.

Development of the training

Respite, which is defined as a short-term and time-limited break from caregiving, is typically delivered by trained staff. Formal respite services exist in BC but have limiting eligibility and due to demand are difficult to access and often have lengthy wait times. The Specialized Sitter Training was developed as a complement to existing formal respite services. The intent is to train many Specialized Sitters across BC to be able to provide short-term breaks for parents, hence increasing the opportunities for parents to refresh and recharge. Specialized Sitters will not have the same level of training and abilities as formal respite workers so will not be appropriate for all families. It is your responsibility as a parent to determine the abilities of your Specialized Sitter, provide training and orientation specific for your child and family, and clarify the responsibilities you feel they should have with your child.

As a first step to designing the Specialized Sitter Training Program, BCACDI executed a survey and literature review to address the following key questions:

- Do the families and/or existing stakeholders agree that Specialized Sitters could address the need for short-term break care providers?
- What needs do the children have?
- What specific skills will the Specialized Sitters need in order to support short-term breaks for the parents?
- What is the optimal format for delivering and maintaining the knowledge of the Specialized Sitter Program

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Data was collected from over 150 respondents from a variety of stakeholders. Findings included information on what parents felt were important topics to be covered in the Specialized Sitters curriculum (Behavioural Support, Health and Safety, Effective Communication, Assisting Daily Living). These topics were also identified by agency administration and service providers. For a more detailed report of the survey findings and literature review please visit the following link:

BCACDI Specialized Sitter Backgrounder Document

With the knowledge provided by the survey and literature review, work shifted to developing the curriculum itself. The project lead, Dawn Grunert, was supported by BCACDI throughout the process. In cases where content was outside the expertise of Dawn, content experts from the community were hired to assist in the development of the curriculum for specific topic areas. Once the modules were completed they were piloted by a small working group of young adults and reviewed by a pool of parents. Further revisions and refinements were made leading to where the modules are at today.

Delivery of the training

The primary goal of the training is to increase the opportunities for short term breaks for parents by creating a pool of keen caregivers with additional knowledge and interest in working with children and youth with special needs. The training provides information on topics identified in the survey as important to parents and makes it clear that parents know their child best and are responsible for ensuring the care is provided according to their direction. Specialized Sitters receive training on the following:

- Roles and Responsibilities
- Common Diagnoses
- Communication

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- Positive Behavioural Support
- Health and Safety
- Activities of Daily Living
- Cultural Safety
- and more!

Information is provided via online modules that include text, graphics, and videos. There are questions embedded throughout the modules to encourage reflective learning, and a moderated online forum for Specialized Sitters to share their thoughts. The end of each module has a quiz that must be passed in order to progress to the next module. There are 7 modules in total, and the average time to complete the training is 10 hours.

How to provide feedback

It is a priority of BCACDI for this training to meet the needs of families choosing to engage with a Specialized Sitter. If you have any questions or concerns about the training or some suggestions on how it can be improved, please don't hesitate to contact our Provincial Advocate via email (jason@bcacdi.org) or phone (250-212-0305).

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