

Mackenzie Family Resource Network Family Handbook



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Welcome to the Mackenzie Family Resource Network

We are so glad to have you join us and enjoy your time here. This handbook has been created to introduce you to our organization and the resources available; to provide a guideline for expectations and to create a shared understanding of our governing principles.

We hope your time here is as enriching as possible. Our goals are to provide you and your family with opportunities to learn, grow and connect.

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The Mackenzie Family Resource Network (MFRN) is currently run by the High Level Toy Lending Library Society (HLTLLS). The HLTLLS was founded in 1994 to serve the needs of families in our community. Over the years the HLTLLS has gone through many iterations of service delivery, but all have had service to families at their core. The newest initiative, Family Resource Networks (FRN), is based on a “Hub and Spoke” model. This approach to programming allows a central “Hub” to coordinate information and referrals and ensure the service delivery covers all grant deliverables available in the Network area. “Spokes” deliver the services.

The MFRN is an all inclusive FRN, meaning we cover both Hub and Spoke deliverables of the FRN Grants. The **framework\*** that guides the Networks is based on three main domains of service. They include caregiver capacity (Learn), child and youth development (Grow) and social connections and support (Connect), for families prenatal to 18.

Please review this handbook carefully and if you have any questions, suggestions, or feedback, there are several ways to contact us:

Mail: Box 3147, High Level, AB, T0H 1Z0

Fax: (780) 926-4602

Email: [info@villagefrn.ca](mailto:info@villagefrn.ca)

Website: [www.thevillagefrn.ca](http://www.thevillagefrn.ca)

In person: 10905 100 Ave. High Level

or

Fill out a comment card in either location and drop it in the suggestion box provided.

\***Framework available here** <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/9781460141939>

# Our Services

The MFRN works with families to decrease risk factors and increase resiliency. We offer a variety of programming opportunities including in-home support for families who need more individualized programming to support healthy outcomes, or when a barrier makes it difficult to access the MFRN or community based programs.

The MFRN offers a comprehensive level of service delivery to all families. Using evidence-based and informed models, the MFRN employs a continuum of prevention and early intervention services to ensure that parents, caregivers, and children receive the care and tools they need to create strong family units, foster a sense of belonging to a larger community, and thrive.

## **Learn**

### *Caregiver Capacity Building*

The MFRN spoke team supports families to learn new skills, celebrate milestones, tackle challenges and build resilience.

## **Grow**

### *Child/Youth Development and Wellness*

The MFRN spoke team provides resources and opportunities for families to engage with and support their children in all stages of development.

## **Connect**

### *Information and Referrals*

The Hub's role is to help families connect to resources and support referrals to service providers to meet the unique needs they have. The Hub team helps families create support networks, access resources, and connect with other families.

# Hours of Operation

The Village building is open to the public Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. It is also open some evenings and weekends according to the monthly schedule, found on the website.\*\*

The Toy Lending Library and Family Resource Library are located in the building and are open to members during regular office hours. You must have a valid Toy Lending Library Membership to borrow toys from the Toy Lending Library. The Family Resource Library may be accessed without a membership and includes resource materials and books that are available for families to sign out and take home. Please ask a staff member for more details on how to get set up with these services.

An online catalog of toys and resources is available at the following web address:

<https://www.thevillagefrn.ca/toy-lending-library>

Programming takes place at varying times throughout the week. Program calendars are available on social media at @thevillagefrn, at The Village locations and on our website at [www.thevillagefrn.ca](http://www.thevillagefrn.ca). They include updated program descriptions, dates/times, and locations. Program details/hours of operation are subject to change due to holidays, team training, etc. Please ask for a copy of the current program newsletter. If you are not able to locate program times you can phone The Village at (780) 926-4668 for details.

**\*\* All hours are subject to change. Consult the monthly calendar for specifics.**

# Your First Visit?

When joining us for the first time please let our team know. We have a number of team members who run a variety of programs and may not realize it is your first time joining us. Staff are eager to show you around and help get you settled in.

During your first visit we will ask you to fill out a Family Information form\*. This is an information gathering form for our funders and a waiver/registration form for our facility & resources. We only require the form to be filled out once. If you have any additions to your family (a new baby or visiting relative) please let us know, so we can update your form.

During each new program/time slot, we ask you to sign-in on our Program Attendance Sheets. The forms are conveniently located for you in each space or distributed for our outdoor programming by a staff member. If you are unsure where it is located, please ask a staff member.

Some of our programs have limited space and require registration – so please ask about this if there is a particular program you are interested in, and we'll get you signed up. These programs are noted on our calendars and program schedules as "registration required".

**All information you provide is confidential. No personal information is shared with funders, it is all compiled into data and reported accordingly.**

\*As a non-profit organization the High Level Toy Lending Library Society has a responsibility to protect the public interest and has a commitment to the highest standards of institutional integrity, transparency and accountability. We protect personal information by making reasonable security arrangements against such risks as unauthorized access, use, disclosure or destruction.

# Village Spaces

Ask a staff member to show you around and they will be happy to take you through the building and describe the physical space for you.

## High Level Village

### **Entrances:**

We have two entrances to our building. The Hub entrance is up the front steps and through the front door. This is the entrance used for Hub business (information and referral, private meeting space, or meeting with the Parent Education Team or Administrative Team).

The side entrance can be accessed via the wheelchair ramp. It is the entrance most often used for programming. There is space to hang coats and place boots. The programming space is straight down the stairs.

### **Washrooms:**

We have two washrooms on each level. Both washrooms on the bottom level are equipped with a change table, as well as one washroom upstairs. The highlight of our building is the "tiny toilet" in the bottom floor's family washroom.

### **Fire Exits:**

We have back exits on each floor as well as the front door and side door.

### **Top Floor:**

The top floor is primarily administrative and meeting space. The front entrance is home to our Hub, as well as the team's office space, and group and private meeting areas.

### **Bottom Floor:**

This is our main programming area. We have a large area divided into play zones. Our gross motor area is set lower from the main space for ride-on toys, ball play, and dancing. All ride-on toys and balls must remain in this lower play area for everyone's safety. Ride On toys are to be kept on this lower area as well as off any play structures. This lower level also houses our teen seating/gathering area. The upper portion of the floor is often divided into 0-6 play areas, or used for craft and games night activities. Be sure to check with staff if you are unsure of any of the areas' intended uses. The Village serves a large range of ages and types of activities, resulting in our space being very versatile.



### **Snack Room:**

Our snack room adjoins the kitchen with a pass thru window. Each program supplies a snack at a predetermined time. The program schedule will be posted in the main area. At this time, staff will prepare a snack and parents are encouraged to serve their child (after hand washing). Snack dishes can be placed in the wash-up tub when finished.

### **Kitchen:**

We have a full kitchen for snack preparation and food programming. Parents are encouraged to help themselves to refreshments. Coffee, tea and water is always available. **Please do not help yourself to the food**, we follow a snack menu and buy groceries accordingly. This space is meant for staff only unless getting a drink.

### **Toys:**

The program space will be set up with toys and resources to meet the objectives of the program. After each program, at clean up time, the team member will cue the families to clean up. If you leave programming early, ask a team member to allow you or your child to clean up a few items. This consistent message of cleaning up the space after a program creates routine and structure for all families.

### **Outdoor Play Area:**

Adjoining our building we have a play space. This space is available for your enjoyment. Weather permitting, programming will be held in the space, so please consult the program calendar for times. Dress for the weather! If you are here using the space, feel free to come in and use the washrooms. You are responsible for supervision of your children and the use of this space is at your own risk. You can access this space via the gate at the front or side of the building. Interior access is from the back of the building near the washrooms.

## La Crete Village

### **Entrance:**

The entrance is through the East set of double doors and up the stairs to your right. When you enter there is space to place your boots. Once up the stairs we have coat hooks for you around the corner on your right to hang your jackets and a table for your belongings. The programming space is to your left.

### **Washroom:**

We have a washroom behind the snack area, the first door on the left. We are also equipped with a change table, it is located by the board table.

### **Fire Exits:**

We have a fire exit on the East wall of the programming space as well as the entrance door.

### **East side:**

This is our main programming area. We have a large area divided into play zones. Ride on toys are to be kept on this lower area as well as off any play structures. Be sure to check with staff if you are unsure of any of the areas' intended uses. The Village serves a large range of ages and types of activities, resulting in our space being very versatile.

### **West side:**

The West side is primarily administrative and meeting space. This side is home to our storage space, as well as the team's office space, and group and private meeting areas.

### **Snack Area:**

Each program supplies a snack at a predetermined time. The program schedule will be posted in the main area. At this time, staff will prepare a snack and parents are encouraged to serve their child (after hand washing). Snack dishes can be placed in the sink when finished.

### **Kitchenette:**

We have a kitchenette for snack preparation and food programming. Parents are encouraged to help themselves to refreshments. Coffee, tea and water is always available. **Please do not help yourself to the food**, we follow a snack menu and buy groceries accordingly. This space is meant for staff only unless getting a drink.

### **Toys:**

The program space will be set up with toys and resources to meet the objectives of the program. After each program, at clean up time, the team member will cue the families to clean up. If you leave programming early, ask a team member to allow your child to clean up a few items. This consistent message of cleaning up the space after a program creates routine and structure for all families.

# Staff Expectations

We want to make sure that you have a clear understanding of our roles as team members and our expectations when you visit us so that the Village can be a more welcoming space for you and your family.

- Early childhood programming, unless otherwise stated, is for families. Staff are not able to care for your children. Families are always in charge. Children always remain under the protection and responsibility of the parent/caregiver. The Village is a large, fun and child friendly space however, there are still opportunities for accidents, mishaps, and incidents. As such, children must be supervised by their parent/caregiver at all times.
- Team members will always intervene to aid a child/youth in distress or in danger. Safety is always first at the MFRN.
- Just as this is a shared space for families, it is also a shared workspace for staff; no single team member is the “face” for the MFRN. We share responsibilities, programming, and often have many different roles. If a single team member is not personally available to answer your questions or meet your needs, feel free to approach another staff member.
- We are not just facilitators of programming but also a resource to our families. If you have questions, need a referral, or just need to vent (which we all need at times), the MFRN team is here for you.
- During family focused events, children must be accompanied by someone 14+ who will act as their guardian. Unattended children are not allowed unless the program is specifically intended as a drop off and complete emergency contact information has been provided
- Youth 14+ may attend, but must abide by the rules of the Village and be active participants of the program. If not, they will be asked to leave.
- The Village MFRN is a family focused organization, as such, we strive to use best practices and to ensure that our programs and services meet the needs of our families. It is our expectation that you will let us know through feedback, suggestions, and input how we can better serve you. All feedback remains confidential. Our programs and services evolve with the families that attend and feedback that we receive.

# Family Experiences

Every family is unique and distinct. The MFRN team understands and respects this diversity. We want you to feel comfortable when you visit and we hope to make your time with us as enjoyable as possible. Our goals are to provide you and your family with opportunities to learn, grow and connect in a welcoming and engaging space.

## Guiding Principles

In order to ensure the safety of all participants, we ask that you follow some simple rules to keep your children safe.

- **Gentle Hands** – No hitting, shoving, or grabbing.
- **Sharing Spirit** – Toys belong to everyone, share to the best of your ability.
- **Walking Feet** – Running is for outdoors (more active play is allowed in the lower level)
- **Kind Voices** – Nice words and tones.

**Although basic, these rules apply to caregivers and family members of all ages.**

# Shared Space = Shared Understanding

When many people share one space, conflict is bound to happen. Our goal is to create and promote a shared understanding of common beliefs and principles for the Village and MFRN. We understand that not everyone will agree with everything you find here. By clearly stating our governing principles and expectations, the risk for misunderstanding between families, or families and team members decreases.

Here are some points we hope will become a shared understanding with all participants of the MFRN:

1. I understand that my child's experience at the Village depends foremost on my participation. Children learn best when interacting with caregivers and peers.
2. I understand discipline is a very personal thing. Every family has a different way of dealing with misbehavior. Respecting different ways of dealing with children will teach my child tolerance and open my eyes to different ways of parenting.
3. I understand that encouraging my child to participate in group activities will help them learn about group participation, sharing time and attention.
4. I understand that I am a role model for not only my children, but all the children in the MFRN. Discussion and activities are for me as well.
5. I understand child's play is inherently dangerous! I should always be thinking safety first.
6. I understand that not all families will look like mine or think and believe the same things as I do. Teaching my child to respect the diversity of others will enrich my family's experiences.
7. I am able to ask questions, seek clarity and receive resources to help me in my understanding of new cultures and family makeups.
8. I understand that coming into a new setting like the MFRN can be intimidating for many people. Being welcoming and inviting to newcomers is everyone's responsibility.
9. I understand that the MFRN is a responsive organization. My thoughts and ideas on programming are always welcome and encouraged.
10. I understand that the team at the MFRN are here to support me on my parenting journey. They are able to offer information, referrals, and an empathetic ear. My inquiries can be general or specific. All conversations are confidential.
11. I understand that parenting can be quite isolating. The MFRN is a place to meet people dealing with the same issues as I am. Connection and social interaction for me is as important as it is for my child.
12. I understand that play is a child's work. Process is more important than product. Play can't be done wrong. Learning happens best when my child is in control and engaged.
13. I understand that the MFRN often has children of differing ages and developmental stages together at one time. It is up to me to monitor my child and their behavior to ensure a cooperative play environment.

14. I understand that each parent is in a different place in their parenting journey. Some will be more or less experienced than me. Tolerance and patience are needed and expected.
15. I understand that the MFN offers a variety of programs for families at different stages, from prenatal to teen. As my child grows, not all programs will work for me. Being open to trying new programs is encouraged.

## General Safety

Please make yourself aware of our general safety guidelines below:

- According to fire code regulations, we cannot close off any exit that is a direct route to an emergency exit. What this means is that we are unable to gate the stairway leading into our downstairs space, either at the bottom or top. Please be aware of this and supervise your children accordingly.
- Please use the handrails for extra safety on the stairs, there is a lower rail for the littles.
- Please keep the doors to the kitchen and toy library closed, and supervise your children when in these spaces.
- In the downstairs space there is a back hallway that leads to the bathrooms, however, it also leads to one of the emergency exits and is out of sight of the main play area. Please be aware of this and ensure that your children do not play in this area or try to exit out this door.

### Emergency Procedures:

For any emergency requiring first aid, please be aware that team members are certified in standard First Aid procedures and that First Aid Kits are located in the kitchen both the downstairs and upstairs areas of the building.

Fire Extinguishers are located in both kitchens as well as in the furnace room.

In the case of an emergency where evacuation is necessary, please walk to one of the emergency exits as posted (copies of our evacuation routes are attached), exit and meet at our muster point located on the west side of the building (the back of our parking lot).

# Health and Nutrition

## To Go or Not? When to keep your children home:

Children are often ill in early childhood. The immune system is new and starting to build its defenses. Unfortunately this can lead to a lot of time when a child is just not well enough to be at our programming.

We promote a healthy play environment with reduced exposure to illnesses through a recommended protocol for program participation. To do this we follow the following procedures:

- Employee(s) shall speak with the parent/caregiver of the particular child upon learning/confirming that the child has an infectious/communicable sickness.
- Provide the parent/caregiver with a pamphlet regarding guidelines for infection control. See Appendix 1 Infection Control.
- Provide parent/caregiver with additional information as necessary.
- Provide follow-up to ensure the illness has cleared.

Please keep your child home if they have a fever, are vomiting or have a contagious illness. Err on the side of caution. You know your child and you know when they are ill. Staying home, while frustrating, might be just what the doctor ordered. (Please see Appendix 1 Infection Control)

## Toy Sanitation:

Following a set schedule, the team will sanitize the toys with either a disinfecting spray or hot water sanitizer and return them to their correct containers. If you believe a toy requires immediate cleaning, please notify a team member.

Toys that are borrowed from our Toy Lending Library (TLL) should be cleaned by the borrower prior to their return to the MFRN. They then go through our sanitization procedure before returning to the Lending Library to maintain consistency in sanitization.

## Our Snacks:

**\*\* We are NOT a peanut free facility. Please make the team aware if your child has any type of food allergy.**

# Housekeeping

Listed below are some general housekeeping items that we would like families to be aware of:

## High Level Village

- We have empty grocery bags located in the bathrooms for families to use when disposing of soiled diapers. If the dispenser is empty, please notify the team so we can provide you with one. Soiled diapers = smelly bathrooms.
- We have a lost and found basket next to the front door. Items are emptied from this basket monthly.
- Shoes and boots should be removed at the door. We do have in-floor heating in the basement, but if you find the floor chilly in the winter months, feel free to bring inside shoes or slippers.
- Please place coats, hats, mitts etc. on the hooks in the side entry. It will help keep the entrances neater, assist in finding things at the end of your stay and provide a safe exit in case of an emergency.
- The snack room has a "dirty dish" bucket on the shelf. Please put your dishes in the bucket when your child is finished snacking. This will reduce the amount of foot traffic in the kitchen.
- Potty training is a common occurrence at the MFRN, and so are accidents! If your child has an accident, please let the team know. We can provide you with a cleaner to sanitize the area. Please note that we do not have extra clothes on hand. Pack changes of clothes for this "fun" developmental stage.

## La Crete Village

- We have empty grocery bags located under the sink in the bathroom for families to use when disposing of soiled diapers. If the dispenser is empty, please notify the team so we can provide you with one. Soiled diapers = smelly bathrooms.
- We have a lost and found basket next to the sign-in table. Items are emptied from this basket monthly.
- Shoes and boots should be removed at the front door, downstairs. If you find the floor chilly in the winter months, feel free to bring inside shoes or slippers.
- Please place coats, hats, mitts etc. on the hooks once upstairs in the program space. It will help keep the entrances neater, assist in finding things at the end of your stay and provide a safe exit in case of an emergency.
- When your child is finished eating their snack, please put the dishes in the sink.



- Potty training is a common occurrence at the MFRN, and so are accidents! If your child has an accident, please let the team know. We can provide you with a cleaner to sanitize the area. Please note that we do not have extra clothes on hand. Pack changes of clothes for this “fun” developmental stage.

## Volunteer Opportunities

We rely on volunteers to follow the guidelines in this book to keep the space clean and tidy, the programs enjoyable and beneficial, and the environment calm and conducive to learning, growing, and connecting. We need people like you to get our word out to other families in the community about our services, so we can continue to grow and provide support to all.

We encourage participants and community members to share special talents, ideas, skills, and other resources as they are able. It is enriching to our programs and the children to see community members share their knowledge with our group. Please, feel free to talk to us. We may put out a call for volunteers to help with our fundraising activities. Notices will be posted in our newsletters.

Board of Directors – if you would like your voice to be heard so you can provide your input on our organizational strategic planning and other areas of overseeing the organization’s activities, this is your opportunity. Join our Board of Directors! Speak to the Executive Director or Hub Manager for details.

## Suggestions & Surveys

We love to hear from you!

At various times in the year we will ask for formal feedback in the form of a survey. Your participation is always appreciated. Your feedback is important to help us plan quality programming. We would like to hear your ideas and suggestions on what we could do to serve you better. We know we can’t be everything to everyone, but we try to meet the needs of as many of our families as possible. Measuring the impact of programming on increasing the capacity of families is a big part of our funding accountability. Please participate in any evaluations or feedback sessions you are asked to. Any comments or concerns are more than welcome.

# Team Information

The MFRN is composed of both Hub and spoke staff members. Currently we have five full time and one part time team members.

- Executive Director
- Hub Manager
- Hub Assistant
- Indigenous Liaison
- Caregiver Capacity Builder Team Lead
- 3 Caregiver Capacity Builders

For the most current information, check out website at <https://www.thevillagefrn.ca/our-team>

# Challenging Behaviours

Please note, the following is an excerpt from our Policy Manual. It describes how team members will help you and your child navigate the challenges of learning to share and grow prosocial skills.

## Biting and Aggressive Behaviour Policy:

As part of our mandate to create and maintain a safe environment this policy was created to provide a framework to resolve disputes and deal with the children's behaviour in a positive and loving manner. Children/youth often have times in their young lives when situations can become overwhelming. Without the ability to self-regulate, children will often react with aggressive behaviour. Although developmentally appropriate, it is socially unacceptable and needs attention.

Aggressive Behaviour is defined as hitting, shoving, kicking, scratching, yelling, biting, and throwing of objects.

Why do children bite and show other aggressive behaviors?

- Feeling frustrated.
- Limited ability to communicate with words.
- Feeling threatened.
- Testing limits.
- Experimenting with senses.
- Wanting power and control
- For older infants, it is part of normal feeding behaviour (*Example: Nursing or breastfeeding*).

## PROCEDURE

### Prevention:

The key to an Aggression Policy is to be proactive and prevent the incident from happening. Parents/Childcare providers are to supervise their children at all times. Good supervision can prevent many incidents. If a child is going through a particular aggressive phase the caregiver should stay within arms reach at all times. The reason for this is two-fold:

1. The caregiver can intervene if the child is having difficulty controlling him/herself.
2. The caregiver can monitor the situation and get clues as to what situation is setting the child off.

If the child is having a difficult day or is overwhelmed the parent/caregiver should take the child to a quiet space with a toy for a minute; or the parent/caregiver will shadow

the child and be prepared to intervene before an incident can occur.

### **Intervention:**

The most importance is placed on immediacy of the consequence - not necessarily the action. The consequence must be immediate and not harsh. Usually holding the child's hand firmly and saying "no hitting". For a child about to bite, intercept immediately and say "no biting"--Biting hurts. A serious voice, but not an angry voice. Avoid threats, they are confusing. Name calling or negative reactions to the child versus the behaviour is to be avoided at all cost. A child who is acting out, needs correction, and help emotionally regulating, not shame.

The child who has been injured must be comforted. It is very confusing to be hurt and attention should be paid to the injured party. Under no circumstance should the aggressor be bit or hit in return. This sends a confusing message that hitting and biting are acceptable actions.

The child who is the aggressor is able to return to play, but with close supervision. Every effort must be made to give the parent/caregiver control of the situation. MFRN team ideally will only be involved to offer support or model appropriate intervention strategies. If the child continues to act out in an aggressive manner, the parent/caregiver in conjunction with the MFRN team must determine whether the child is equipped to deal with being in the MFRN at that time. Although it may be disappointing to the child and his/her siblings to leave the MFRN, the aggressive child will be removed from the stressful situation, allowing them to calm down and have a positive day. They will be welcomed to try again another time.

All children will have good and bad days. It is important to support the caregivers as they deal with a child exhibiting aggressive behaviour. The team should be sure to empathize with them and offer as much support as possible. The MFRN has a well-stocked resource library to offer reference material. If there is a younger sibling, the team should offer to care for that child, so the parent can be with the aggressor. The parent/caregiver should be reassured that this is a common phase that most children will go through and that it will pass.

### **Severe Aggressive Behaviour:**

If a child is exhibiting severely aggressive behaviour, the safety of the other children in the MFRN must be paramount. If the steps outlined in the Intervention policy above have not been successful in curbing the behaviour, the child must be removed from the MFRN. Resources/support should be provided to the parent/caregiver regarding the aggressive behaviour. A referral can be made to the Parent Education Spoke for on-going support for the parent/caregiver and child. When the child has resolved their behaviour issues, they will be welcome back at the MFRN. Every effort must be made during this time to support the family, by home visits, phone call check-ins, etc.

# Critical Incidents and Grievances

It is our responsibility to report all serious incidents to our funders within two working days of the serious incident occurring. Incidents of the following must be reported:

- Emergency evacuation (on premises or off-site)
- Program closure due to emergency
- Intruder on program premises
- A child removed from the program by a person without parental/guardian consent
- Injuries requiring medical attention
- Lost child
- A child left on premises after operating hours

## Policy

If a member wishes to lodge a complaint to the MFRNS involving programs or employees conduct, they must follow the protocol laid out within this policy.

## Procedure

1. Concerns should be first addressed to the Executive Director for resolution.
2. If no resolution can be found then the member should write a letter to the Board of Directors with a copy sent to the Executive Director.
3. The Board's decision in such matters will be final and is not subject to appeal.
4. A member's grievance shall not be discussed with individual Board of Directors members prior to the written grievance being submitted to the Executive Director, or at any time thereafter.