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Revised April 2026



Welcome to Aspire Richmond!

Aspire is a community living organization. We serve and support people with developmental disabilities and their families. We are here to share some of your journey as you grow, learn, struggle, and laugh together with family and friends.

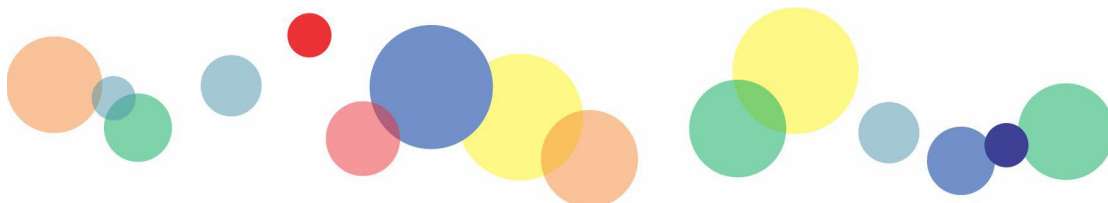
You will meet many others on your journey: friends, staff, volunteers, and other families. We hope you will take part in the community network that is Aspire.

This handbook will help you understand:

- Who we are and how we started
- What we do and what we believe
- Our policies on privacy, rights, advocacy, health and safety, and service quality
- What to expect from our programs (part 2)

We believe that having the right information helps you make good choices.

Please take time to read this handbook and keep it nearby—you might want to refer to it later.



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Who We Are

Aspire is a non-profit organization that follows the rules of the B.C. Societies Act. We offer programs and services in the community for people of all ages with different abilities, and for their families.

The people we support are of all ages and have a wide range of abilities and circumstances. Some people live at home with their families and some live in homes supported or operated by Aspire. Some people have serious health care needs or other challenges as well.

We believe everyone has a right to be part of their community, feel valued, and be accepted for who they are. If families are well supported, then people within those families will be too.

We offer many kinds of help and resources to meet the needs of each person and family.

Aspire is made up of the people we support, their families, and others who believe in building an inclusive community. We follow a Constitution and By-laws that explain how we run things—like choosing our Board of Directors, holding annual meetings, and reporting on our finances.

Most of our funding comes from the provincial government. We also receive money from program fees, donations, and fundraising. Government ministries help decide who qualifies for services and, in some cases, they manage the waitlists. We'll talk with you during the intake process about how long you might need to wait for support.

Our Vision, Mission and Values

Our Mission, Vision and Values guide our programs, activities, and decisions. They remind us, every day, of why we do what we do.

Our Vision: Thriving, connected, happy lives.

Our Mission: From infancy through adulthood, we support people with developmental disabilities to define, discover and advocate for their self-determined goals, passions and happiness.



We do this by:

- Amplifying the voices, needs and desires of the people and families we support.
- Treating all people with kindness, dignity and respect.
- Providing flexible programming and services that respond to the changing needs of individuals and families.
- Building the most inclusive, equitable, safe and diverse organization possible.
- Creating accessible conversations, events and spaces to inspire, educate and bring communities together.

Our Service Values are:



RIGHTS

supporting the rights of people with disabilities to full and equal citizenship



FAMILY-CENTRED

strengthening the importance of the family role



PERSON-CENTRED

recognizing the diversity of each person with unique plans and personal support



INCLUSION

supporting people to belong in all parts of community, including social, financial, spiritual life, and more



CHOICE

learning people's preferences, hopes and dreams, interests and decisions that define their life in small and big ways.



MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

helping to grow the number of family members, friends and others in a person's life



GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

supporting the ongoing development of skills, abilities, and talents of each person



ADVOCACY

protecting the rights and interests of people and families



COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

working with communities to welcome and include all people



LIFE LONG SUPPORTS

assisting people and families through the natural lifecycle

Our Organizational Values are:



MUTUAL TRUST
be sure of the reliability
of people and systems



RESPECT
the value and dignity of all is upheld
by listening to and recognizing each
other's contribution and opinions



OPENNESS
freedom to share opinions and
ideas without fear of punishment



RESPONSIVENESS
planning for different
situations and outcomes



FAIRNESS
people are treated equitably



CONTINUOUS LEARNING
offering ways to improve
one's own work and the
work of the team

We want to support you and your family to live the life you want – to fully take part in our programs and in the Richmond community.

Our Philosophical Approach

Person and Family Centred Practice

Your Life, Your Choices - At Aspire, our staff, caregivers, and volunteers are here to help and support you—but we know this is your life. Everything we do is respectful of the rights of individuals we serve. We support families to make your own decisions and choices, even when that means taking risks, changing your mind, or making mistakes. We are here to walk beside you, not to take over. Think of us as your partners, helpers, and guides—ready to support you in the way that works best for you.

Planning

We help create personal plans for the people we support. These plans might include:

- A care plan to guide staff or caregivers in how to best support you or your family member
- A person-centered plan that focuses on your goals, dreams, and what's important to you

We believe planning works best when you and your family are involved. Your ideas, choices, and goals are at the heart of the process, and we're here to support you every step of the way.

Supporting Families

We know that when we support someone, we're also supporting their family. Families often know their loved ones best.

Families can include:

- Immediate family
- Extended family
- Close friends and support networks

Families may need different kinds of help at different times in life. We're here to provide support, share helpful information, and connect you with other families.

If we can't offer the support you need, we'll help you find another organization that can.

Celebrating Diversity

Richmond is a diverse community, with people from many different cultures, backgrounds, and life experiences. At Aspire, we celebrate and value this diversity.

We welcome people of all:

- Cultures, races, and religions
- Ethnic backgrounds and places of origin
- Abilities—both physical and intellectual
- Sexual orientations and gender identities
- Economic, social, and personal experiences

Here's how we support diversity and inclusion:

- We listen to many voices when making decisions
- We hire staff who reflect our diverse community
- We train our team to provide respectful, culturally aware services
- We translate some materials into different languages
- We work to keep our organization free from discrimination and harassment

- We make sure everyone has fair access to our services

Everyone deserves to feel welcome, respected, and included—and we’re committed to making that happen.

How We Began

Aspire began like many community living organizations in B.C.—with parents who wanted better services for their children with developmental disabilities, close to home.

In the early 1980s, a group of parents in Richmond came together to form the Richmond Society for Special People. Their first program was after-school care for children and youth with special needs.

Over time, we grew and added more services. In 1988, we joined the BC Association for Community Living (now called Inclusion BC) to connect with other organizations across the province.

Since then, many important changes have shaped who we are:

- Large institutions for people with developmental disabilities were closed in B.C.
- New community-based options were created to support people in their own communities
- Services became more personalized, offering more choice and flexibility

Offering supports for people in their home community is still important to Aspire today. We continue to grow, listen to families, and build high-quality services using the best available knowledge and practices.

Our Board of Directors

Aspire is guided by a volunteer Board of Directors. The Board is elected by our members each year at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and includes family members of those we support, self-advocates and other community members.

The Board’s role is to:

- Protect and promote Aspire’s vision, mission, and values
- Provide leadership and direction for our programs and services
- Make sure Aspire is doing its best for the people and families we support

To help with its work, the Board has special committees, including:

- The Executive Committee
- The Finance Committee
- The Inclusive Education Committee

Our Staff and Volunteers

Aspire’s Board of Directors gives overall direction, but the day-to-day work is managed by our Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

The CEO is responsible for:

- Hiring staff
- Managing the budget
- Running programs
- Building relationships with families, staff, funders, and others
- Creating policies for daily operations
- Reporting to the Board

Our staff report to the CEO and are the people you’ll see most often in our programs. Many of them are part of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). They are supported by our volunteers, and in some programs, by contracted caregivers.

Everyone—staff, volunteers, and caregivers—follows a Code of Ethics. This means you can expect to be treated with respect, dignity, courtesy, and fairness. And you can trust that our policies and expectations are followed.

An Organization Chart of Aspire’s leadership and staff is available at

www.aspirerichmond.com.



[Resources on the
Aspire Richmond
website](http://www.aspirerichmond.com)

What We Do

Community Inclusion

At Aspire, we believe that everyone has the right to be part of their community—to participate, contribute, and feel like they belong. Helping people be included in their community is one of our main goals. We support individuals and their families or support networks to make this happen.

In all our programs, we:

- Focus on community inclusion
- Use person-centered planning to set goals based on each person’s interests
- Create activities that are meaningful and tailored to each individual
- Help people find ways to get involved, make friends, and give back to their community

Our staff and contractors plan activities that meet people’s interests. We want everyone to take part in community life.

Advocacy

Advocacy means standing up for your rights and helping you get the support you need. We believe that everyone deserves a good life and a chance to be fully part of their community—and we’re here to help make that happen.

Advocacy can include:

- Going with you to meetings (like at schools or other agencies)
- Helping you understand and access community services (like health care)
- Supporting you in finding resources or talking to decision-makers
- Working with you to improve services and create positive change

We also help you and your family build your own advocacy skills, so you can speak up for yourself and support others.



Aspire promotes public education and awareness, including events during Community Living Month in October. These activities help families and the community learn more and become stronger, more confident advocates.

On a larger scale, Inclusion BC supports individuals, families, and organizations like Aspire. They help with:

- Advocacy and networking
- Conferences and training
- Sharing information and resources
- Public awareness and lobbying for change

Advocacy is one of the most important things we do—and we're proud to stand with you.

Supporting Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy means standing up for yourself and your rights. The self-advocacy movement is happening around the world – people with developmental disabilities are speaking up. People are taking leadership as self-advocates on issues that matter to them. Leaders in the movement talk about self-determination. This is the right to control your own life and make your own decisions.

Self-advocates have helped bring big changes in B.C., like:

- Moving from institutions to community living
- Changing how we talk about and describe people with disabilities
- Creating easy-to-understand information
- Helping shape the kinds of supports and services available

There are self-advocacy groups across B.C., including one here at Aspire! These groups:

- Share ideas and support
- Organize training and speaking events
- Work together to create change
- Have fun and make new friends

We encourage youth and adults with developmental disabilities to join our self-advocacy group and be part of the movement.

Aspire also supports families in helping their loved ones build self-advocacy skills.

We promote public education and awareness, including events during Community Living Month in October. These activities help everyone learn more and become stronger advocates.

At the provincial level, Inclusion BC supports advocacy for individuals, families, and organizations like Aspire. They offer:

- Conferences and training
- Information and resources
- Support for self-advocacy groups
- Public awareness and lobbying efforts

Planning

Everyone is unique. We all grow and learn at our own pace, with different strengths, needs, and dreams. Families are unique too—with their own cultures, values, and experiences.

At Aspire, we use Person-Centred Planning to support individuals and families. This means:

- We focus on your strengths, interests, and goals
- We work with you and your support team to create a plan that fits your life
- We celebrate who you are and help build a vision for your future

Depending on your needs, you may have more than one type of plan. Together, these make up your service plan—and no two plans are exactly the same.

Some plan types include:

Person-Centred Plan

A Person-Centred Plan is a personalized document created with your input—and, when possible, with help from your family and support network. It's designed to reflect your needs, preferences, and dreams, and guide the services and supports we provide.

Your plan helps you:

- Set goals for your future
- Explore your interests
- Create a clear path to reach those goals

Before we create your plan, we take time to get to know you—this is called the discovery process. We encourage families, friends, and professionals to be part of the planning. We'll help make sure everyone can participate in a way that works for you.

A Person-Centred Plan is created within 3 to 6 months of starting services at Aspire and it is reviewed and updated at least once a year. We keep a copy of your Person-Centred Plan and, with your permission, share it with others who helped create it.

Person-Centred Plans follow a variety of formats, depending on what Aspire services you participate in:

- The F-Words Framework is used in Children Services
- PATH is used in Adult Services and for youth transitioning to Adult Services
- Lifestyle/Gateway Planning is used in Adult Services
- Vocational Plan is used in Employment Services

All of these plans lead to an action plan, or what we call measurable goals to help you live the life you want. These goals may be related to:

- Reaching developmental milestones
- Recreation and hobbies
- Education and learning
- Relationships and social life
- Work or volunteering
- Home and living arrangements

Care Plan

A Care Plan is a document that explains the help and support a person needs in their daily life. It's made just for you and includes important details like:

- Emergency contact information
- Your daily routines and personal preferences
- Support for daily activities (like eating, bathing, dressing)
- Help with getting around in the community
- Any behavioral supports you may need

The Care Plan helps our staff understand how to support you in the best way, every day. It is made before you start receiving services at Aspire and it is reviewed and updated at least once a year, or sooner if your needs change.

Health Care Plan(s)

Some individuals may need extra help with their health. A Health Care Plan is created for each serious or complex medical need. Medical Professionals are involved in creating Health Care Plans and they may include:

- Medical procedures
- Training for staff or caregivers
- Emergency instructions
- Details about the person's health needs and supports

Examples of Health Care Plans are:

- Nutrition Plans
- Guidelines for Medications
- Seizure Plan
- Allergy Plan
- Asthma Plan
- Bowel/Bladder Plan
- Or other Plans related to acute or chronic conditions

Health Care Plans must be ready before services begin at Aspire. They are reviewed and updated every year, or sooner if the person's health changes. They help keep individuals safe and ensures they get the care they need every day.

Other Reports or Plans from Professionals

Depending on an individual's needs, they may have other plans developed by professionals. These may include Communication Plans, Behaviour Support Plans and Safety Plans.

Programs, Supports and Services

We support individuals with developmental disabilities of all ages and at many life stages. Here's a quick overview.

Services for Children, Youth and Families

- **Infant Development (IDP)** provides consultants who work with families. Giving resources, referrals, and support for children up to age three who have developmental delays or risk factors for later diagnosis.
- **Supported Child Development (SCDP)** is a community based early intervention program for families and child care centres. Giving practical information, resources, and strategies for the inclusion of children with disabilities in child care settings. SCDP consultants assist families to access child care in their community.
- **Child Care Programs (Seedlings and Treehouse)** are for children from birth to grade 7. Staff support developmental and personal growth in children to increase skills and independence. Staff support children needing additional support and typically developing children with age-appropriate activities.
- **Youth Connections** is an after-school program for youth with disabilities to attend recreational and social activities.
- **Family Respite** is support for parents with the daily responsibilities of caring for children or adults who have a developmental disability.

Services for Adults

- **LIFE - Learn, Involve, Focus, Employ -** are supports and services for people to achieve their individual goals. Supports are provided in the community and at Aspire program locations. LIFE services include an Employment program for people who wish to seek employment.
- **Housing Options** include 3 different models of support
 - **Supported Living** is 24-hour staffed support for people who live in their own home with others.
 - **Independent Living** supports individuals to live independently with identified needed supports to ensure life-long success.
 - **Home Share** is community caregivers sharing their home and life with an individual who has a developmental disability. Matches are based on people feeling as they are valued member of a family.
- **Family Resources** provides information, resources, or support to family members who face the needs that come with having a family member with a disability.

Rights, Risks, and Responsibilities

Rights

People using our services enjoy the same rights as all Canadian citizens. These rights are set out in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and the *BC Human Rights Code*.

In 2010, Canada ratified the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Ratifying the Convention means we agreed to follow what it says. It is about human rights and changing attitudes towards persons with disabilities. Everyone has the right to make decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent. Everyone has the right to be an active member of society.

The basic ideas of the convention are that:

- People are free to make their own choices.
- No one will be discriminated against.
- Disabled people have the same rights to be included in society as anybody else.
- Disabled people are to be respected for who they are.
- Everyone should have equal opportunities.
- Everyone should have equal access.
- Men and women should have equal opportunities.
- Disabled children should be respected for who they are as they grow up.

At Aspire, we believe in these rights and work hard to make sure they are respected. Together with our Self-Advocacy group, Aspire created our own Rights Statements. These are reviewed every year with you and/or your family to make sure you understand your rights and feel supported.

These statements below are available at www.aspirerichmond.com.

Children Rights Statement:

I have the right ...



TO BE SAFE

to be healthy
to kindness and peace
to be helped and informed
to feel safe and be protected from harm and danger



TO BE ME

to have choice
to learn and make mistakes
to understand and be accepted
to say what I think and feel



TO BE IMPORTANT

to love and be loved
to be heard and understood
to be valued and honoured
to be cared for with dignity and respect
to be as independent as I can



TO PLAY

to have friends
to use my imagination
to learn new skills
to belong and be included in community



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Adult Right Statement:

RIGHTS ARE RULES THAT MAKE PEOPLE EQUAL.

I have the right to be viewed as a person first.
I have the right to feel safe wherever I go.
I have the right to be heard and understood in my own way.
I have the right to be asked about the help I need or want.
I have the right to share how I feel and think.
I have the right to receive information in plain language.
I have the right to be spoken to directly in a way that shows respect.
I have the right to make decisions about my life.
I have the right to decide what information is public or private.
I have the right to make mistakes and learn from them.
I have the right to good healthcare.
I have the right to have relationships.
I have the right to access skilled supports in the community.
I have the right to vote.
I have the right to receive legal support if I need it.
I have the right to have my ideas supported and valued.
I have the right to give feedback about Aspire Services.

A RESPONSIBILITY IS SOMETHING I AM EXPECTED TO DO.

I have a responsibility to care for myself.
I have a responsibility to care for others.
I have a responsibility to ask for help when I need it.
I have a responsibility to follow the law.



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Risks and Responsibilities

Having rights also means having responsibilities. At Aspire, we ask individuals and families who use our services to:

- Respect the rights of others
- Follow our policies
- Take part in planning
- Make choices and decisions about their own lives

We're always here to offer support and guidance. We know families and support networks play a big role in helping individuals grow and make decisions.

Making choices sometimes involves taking risks—and that's okay. Everyone is different, and each person or family may find their own balance between safety and independence. We believe it's important for people to:

- Think for themselves
- Make their own decisions
- Learn from mistakes
- Ask for help
- Change their minds
- Try new things

Sometimes, individuals may make choices that are different from what their families would choose. When this happens, we listen to everyone's views and work together to find the best solution. We are committed to:

- Keeping individuals safe while they use our services
- Respecting family values and customs as much as possible
- Working with families to plan for and respond to situations that may involve risk

Aspire has processes in place to support individuals and families when facing challenges or behaviours that may involve risk.

Supporting People Who Communicate Using Behaviours

Sometimes, people show behaviours that are hard to understand or respond to. At Aspire, we believe these behaviours are a form of communication, and we respond with respect, care, and understanding.

Our staff and caregivers are trained to use Positive Behaviour Support (PBS). PBS is a proven approach that helps us:

- Understand why a behaviour is happening
- Find ways to prevent challenging behaviours
- Teach new skills to help individuals express themselves
- Support people in a way that respects their rights, safety, dignity, and independence

The PBS Process includes:

- Assessing the need for a Behaviour Support Plan
- Building a Behaviour Support Team: We bring together the people who know the individual best—family, friends, caregivers, therapists, and staff.
- Person-Centred Planning: The team listens to the individual’s goals and dreams to help guide the support plan.
- Functional Behavioural Assessment (FBA): We collect information to understand what triggers the behaviour and why it happens.
- Behaviour Support Plan Development: Based on the FBA, we work with psychologists or behavioural consultants to get a Behaviour Support Plan in place to help everyone stay safe and supported. The plan may include:
 - Strategies to teach new skills
 - Safe and respectful ways to respond
 - Goals for improving the person’s quality of life
 - Safety Plan or De-escalation Plan
- Approval of the Behaviour Support Plan includes the individual, their family or legal representative, the Aspire Program Manager and Director.
- Monitoring Progress: We track changes in behaviour and progress toward goals. Plans are reviewed every year, or sooner if needed.

Service Quality

At Aspire, we're always working to get better at what we do. We call this Continuous Quality Improvement—it means we listen, learn, and make changes to improve our services. Here are some of the ways we monitor our work:



Listening to You

You and your family know best how our services are working. We value your suggestions and take your feedback in many ways:

- We have an open-door policy. This means we welcome you to let us know when something isn't working.
- We send you surveys on a regular basis so we can make our programs better as a result of your feedback. This includes sending a survey to you after leaving Aspire, so we can check in and offer help if needed.
- We interview the people we support about how they feel about our services.

If you have any concerns, please tell us. We promise to listen and do our best to help.

Focusing on Results

We want to know if our programs are making a difference. Each program has goals, and we measure how well we're doing in four areas:

- Effectiveness – Are we achieving the results we planned?
- Efficiency – Are we using our resources wisely?
- Service Accessibility – Is it easy for people to get the help they need?
- Experience of Service – Are people happy with our services?

We share our progress in an Annual Outcomes Management Report, available on our website: www.aspirerichmond.com. We also summarize the results from the perspective of Quality of Life; this is called the Quality-of-Life Report Card.

Meeting Standards and Regulations

Aspire follows rules and guidelines from:

- Government ministries
- Licensing bodies
- WorkSafe BC
- Accrediting organizations

We must follow these rules and guidelines in order to receive funding from the government. Aspire goes through a formal review, called Accreditation, that checks we meet high standards in areas like:

- Health and safety
- Individual planning and support
- Community inclusion
- Accessibility
- Financial responsibility
- Quality of services

Aspire was first accredited by CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) in 2005, receiving the highest level: 3-year accreditation. We've continued to earn this top rating ever since.

We also have a strong internal structure to keep things running smoothly:

- Staff report to Program Managers
- Managers report to Directors and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- The CEO reports to the Board of Directors
- We have a Director of Quality Assurance to oversee service quality
- We follow written policies and respond to feedback and complaints

Privacy and Confidentiality

At Aspire, we take your privacy seriously. We follow provincial laws to keep your personal and family information safe and confidential.

Confidential information is anything personal or sensitive, such as:

- Medical, educational, financial, or psychological details
- Names, meeting notes, emails, reports, videos, or photos

We keep this information secure and up to date.



Collecting Personal Information and Keeping it Safe and Accurate

When we receive a referral for services, we ask for some basic information. Once your application is accepted and we begin planning services, we may ask for more detailed information, such as:

- Medical and psychological reports
- Educational assessments
- Information from therapists or other professionals

We use this information to understand your family member's needs and strengths, so we can provide the best possible support.

We do not share your information with anyone outside Aspire without your permission. Sometimes, we are required to share certain information with government agencies that fund and oversee our services, like Community Living BC (CLBC) or the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). However, we only share what is required by law. If you have questions about how your information is used, please contact Aspire's Director of Quality Assurance.

You may ask to see the information we have on file at any time. It is important to keep your information current; we do our best to include you when we review the information we have on file. This gives you the opportunity to provide updates if anything changes or correct anything that is not accurate so we can adjust our services to meet your changing needs. Please be sure to give us copies of new reports or information that may impact the services you receive.

Consent

At Aspire, we respect your right to make decisions. That's why we ask for your consent for many things, including:

- Consent to provide service.
- Consent to share information.
- Consent for program field trips (for child care).
- Consent to photograph or video (depending on the program).
- Consent for Communication and Information Technologies.
- Consent for Safe Release (for Out of School Care)

We will always explain what we're asking and why. You can say yes or no. You or your family member can withdraw consent at any time. Just let us know, and we'll explain what that means. In some cases, withdrawing consent may affect the services we can provide, but we'll talk with you about it.

As part of making decisions for themselves, we support adults to give their own consent. Under B.C. law, adults are assumed to be able to make decisions unless proven otherwise. How someone communicates does not affect their right to make choices.

Some adults may have a Legal Representative, Guardian, or Committee who helps make decisions. If you're unsure about this, talk to your Program Manager.

We make sure our staff and caregivers understand each person's legal status and respect their rights when it comes to decision-making and consent.

Health, Safety and Well-being



At Aspire, your health, safety, and well-being are very important to us. Everyone has the right to a safe and supportive environment—physically, emotionally, and mentally. Here are some of the ways we make sure that happens:

Emergency Preparedness

Every program responds to emergencies, such as a fire or earthquake, in ways that meet the needs of the individuals being supported.

Medication Safety

We make sure the staff and caregivers who give medications are trained. Medications that go with an individual to their program must follow safety protocols. The Program Manager will share these protocols, when needed.

Standard Precautions

Staff, volunteers, and caregivers are trained to protect themselves and others from risks related to blood and bodily fluids. We work with families to reduce these risks.

First Aid

All staff and contracted caregivers are trained in First Aid.

External Monitoring

We are regularly inspected by:

- The local Fire Department
- Building inspectors
- Community Care Facilities Licensing (for licensed programs)

We also report to WorkSafe BC and to provincial government ministries for following provincial health and safety rules.

Planning for Safety

We work with individuals and families to plan for health or safety risks and come up with ways to address them. We update and revise plans as individuals' situations and needs change over time. We make sure all staff and contractors know about changes so they can respond.

Reporting Abuse

If we suspect a child or youth under 19 is being abused or neglected, we are legally required to report it. If we suspect an adult is being abused or neglected, there is not a legal duty to report, but we believe it is our moral responsibility to report it.

We have many policies and procedures in place to follow in the event a report is needed. If this happens, we take direction from:

- Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)
- Community Living British Columbia (CLBC)
- Community Care Facilities Licensing (Child Care or Supported Living, where applicable)
- Police

We also use the following resources:

- BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect for Service Providers
- Adult Guardianship and CLBC information on the CLBC Website
- Community Care Facilities Licensing: Child Care or Residential Care

Your Relationship with Aspire

Just like any community, people have different roles. Things work best when everyone helps out in ways that feel right for them.

Most of our programs are funded by the government, but we wouldn't be able to offer the same level of service—or many of the extra supports—without help from volunteers, community support, and fundraising.

Each year, we host fundraising events and also receive support from others who organize their own events to help us.

Getting Involved

There are many ways you can be part of our community—if you'd like to!

- **Become a member of Aspire** – Membership is low-cost and gives you a voice at our Annual General Meeting (AGM), where you can vote for board members and help shape our future. Visit our website at www.aspirerichmond.com for the membership application.
- **Volunteer in our programs** – Help out with open houses, picnics, training sessions, meetings, and more. Talk to your Program Manager to learn how.
- **Donate or help fundraise** – You can make a tax-deductible donation, choose where your gift goes, or donate equipment or services. Visit our website at www.aspirerichmond.com for ways you can give.
- **Join our Board of Directors** – Help lead and guide our organization. Talk to your Program Manager if you are interested.
- **Attend Aspire Events** – we host special events throughout the year where families, individuals we support, staff, and volunteers can connect in a relaxed and friendly setting. Attending these events provides opportunities to connect with other families.

Some of these activities take a bit of time and effort, but they come with great rewards. You'll meet other families, build a support network, learn new skills, and share your own experiences. You'll also help strengthen community



inclusion and support the services your family member relies on.

We hope you'll get involved in whatever way works best for you!

Ongoing Communication

Just like any strong community, good communication helps everything run smoothly. When people stay connected, they know what's going on, feel heard, and know what to do if they have questions or concerns.

We know life can get busy, and things can change quickly. That's why we make a real effort to keep in touch with you.

We're committed to keeping families informed. Here's how we share updates:

- **Website** – Visit www.aspirerichmond.com for news and information.
- **Newsletter** – We send out regular updates with stories, events, and more.
- **Social Media** – Follow us to stay connected.
- **Email Updates** – You may receive occasional messages with important news.

We share updates about our programs, training opportunities, upcoming events, and activities. You'll also hear stories from the people we support, families, staff, and community partners.

As technology changes, we'll keep exploring new ways to stay in touch—and we'd love to hear your ideas and feedback too!

Expectations

Good relationships work best when everyone knows what to expect.

As a family member, here's what you can expect from our staff, caregivers, and volunteers:

- You and your family will be treated with respect, dignity, fairness, and courtesy.
- We will follow our mission, values, and Code of Ethics.
- We'll provide planning and support that fits your needs.
- We'll communicate openly and regularly with you.
- Our team will keep learning and improving through training and professional development.

- We'll meet or exceed government and accreditation standards and always work to improve our services.

Here's what we ask from you:

- Share with us the information we need to support your family member well.
- Follow the program policies.
- Treat staff, other families, and individuals with respect, dignity, fairness, and courtesy.
- Take part in orientation and training, if appropriate, to help staff and caregivers understand your family member's needs.
- Communicate openly with us and let us know if you have concerns.
- Be involved in planning for your family member.

Some programs may have additional expectations, like specific staff qualifications or levels of parental involvement.

Problem Solving and Complaints

We work to prevent and manage concerns or problems as they happen. We believe good communication is the best way to solve problems. Our staff are trained to handle concerns respectfully and effectively, and we work hard to stay connected with families, caregivers, and the people we support.

If you have a complaint, we want to hear about it. We'll do our best to resolve the issue quickly and make sure you're getting the support you need.

Your privacy is protected, and making a complaint will not affect your access to safe services.

Who Can Make a Complaint?

- Anyone using our services
- A family member or representative
- Anyone concerned about the services we offer

If you would like help filing a complaint you can ask a family member, staff member, or anyone you feel comfortable with to help you. We can also support you to find someone to help. A person assisting you in this type of situation is called an advocate.

How to Submit a Complaint

We encourage you to speak up as soon as a concern comes up. It's best to try to resolve things directly with the people involved.

We'll go over our complaint policies with you during your orientation, and you can ask for a copy anytime.

If you have a concern, please talk to your Program Manager. If it's not resolved, you can find more information about our complaint process at www.aspirerichmond.com in the Feedback section. You'll also find links to the complaint processes for our funding agencies and the Richmond School District.



[Aspire
Richmond
Feedback Page](#)

Resources

We know your role can sometimes feel overwhelming. Your Program Manager is a valuable Resource if you have any questions.

Aspire Family Resource

The Aspire Family Resource Manager is available to support you as you navigate everyday challenges and explore available services. Here's how the Family Resource Manager can help:

- Share information about local and provincial services and supports
- Assist with transitions, like starting kindergarten, moving from child to adult services, or when an adult child leaves home
- Help you connect with other families and support networks
- Provide advocacy when needed
- Offer books, articles, and other helpful resources

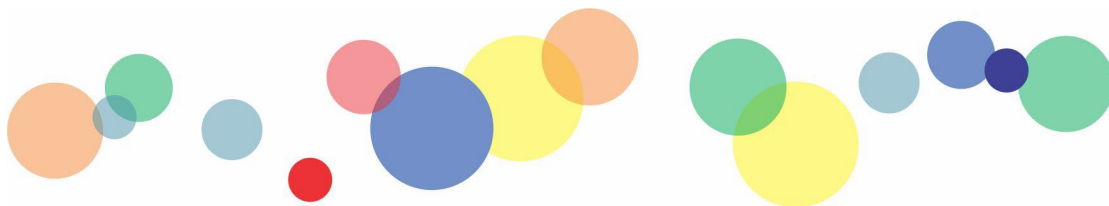
If we're not able to provide the support your family member needs, we'll work with you to explore other options and refer you to other community organizations that may be able to help.

Other Helpful Resources

There are many other services available to support you and your family. Here's a short list of some key organizations:

- [Ministry of Children and Family Development \(MCFD\)](#)
Provides funding and decides eligibility for children's programs like Infant Development and Supported Child Development. Also offers childcare subsidies and support for childcare spaces.
- [Community Living British Columbia \(CLBC\)](#)
Supports adults with disabilities through programs like LIFE Services, Respite, Supported Living, and Home Share. CLBC also offers planning support through its Richmond office.
- [Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction](#)
Offers income assistance and BC Disability Benefits for people 18 and older. Benefits may include monthly financial support, medical and dental coverage, and bus passes.

- [TransLink HandyDART](#)
A door-to-door transit service for people who use wheelchairs, scooters, or need help using public transit.
- [Advocate for Service Quality](#)
Helps individuals and families who are unhappy with services provided by the provincial government or funded agencies.
- [Representative for Children and Youth](#)
Supports young people (up to age 24) by making sure their voices are heard and their rights are respected during important decisions.
- [Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee of BC](#)
Offers guidance on guardianship, health care consent, and Representation Agreements for adults who can't make decisions on their own.
- [Nidus Personal Planning Resource Centre](#)
A non-profit that provides information about personal planning, including Representation Agreements.
- [Family Support Institute \(FSI\)](#)
A province-wide organization led by families, offering support, training, and networking for families who have a member with a disability.



Youth Connections

What We Do at Youth Connections

Youth Connections is a licensed after-school recreation program for youth with diverse abilities aged 12–19 years. If your child stays in high school for an extra year, they can continue to attend Youth Connections until the end of the month they turn 19.

Youth Connections gives youth the chance to:

- Take part in fun activities
- Build skills
- Be part of their community

Youth spend time in the Youth Connections program space and out in the community doing planned activities. Activities support each youth’s personal goals that were developed during the Person-Centred Planning process as outlined in the Planning section earlier in this handbook. Some activities may include swimming, going to the library, learning how to use public transit and much more. Activities are based on the youth’s interests as well as community programs and facility availability.

Youth Connections is Aspire Richmond’s longest-running program. We are committed to:

- Personal dignity
- Community inclusion
- Respecting each youth’s interests

Through play and recreation, we support each youth’s physical growth, thinking and learning, social skills, and emotional well-being. Youth work on skills that may include self-care, money skills, and independence in daily life. We believe this is a positive way to extend a youth’s school experience. It is also a great way to have fun and make new friends.

Our families come from many cultures, family structures, and parenting styles. We value family involvement and celebrate families through special events. We welcome ideas, skills, and suggestions. Please let us know if you have ideas that could help our program and if there are activities you do not want your child to participate in. We are happy to work together to support your child.



Where and When

Youth Connections is located at Richmond Caring Place on Minoru Boulevard. Our hours are as follows:

School Days

- Open Monday to Friday
- 2:30pm – 6:00pm
- Closed on statutory holidays

Summer Holidays and School Breaks

- Open Monday to Friday
- 8:30am – 5:45pm
- Youth attend for full days, typically 7.5hours per day
- Daily Schedules are arranged with the program manager
- Closed on statutory holidays

Our Staff

Youth Connections has a high number of staff working with youth to make sure everyone is safe and supported. Our staff work hard to create a fun and welcoming environment that encourages learning and community involvement.

All staff are trained in First Aid and CPR and support youth in a safe and respectful way. Some staff also have a Class 4 driver's licence so they can transport the youth in the Aspire vehicles.

Ongoing training is encouraged and supported. Staff also receive training in:

- Personal planning
- Goal setting
- Behavioural supports

You may also see and meet volunteers at Youth Connections. We welcome volunteers with different abilities. Volunteers receive training to support program activities. They may help by:

- Joining in activities
- Helping with cleaning or set-up
- Going on walks
- Supporting daily activities with youth

Volunteers do not provide direct care and are not responsible for supervising the youth.

Community Resources

We welcome support from community professionals. You may see different professionals visiting Youth Connections, such as:

- Public Health Nurses
- Physiotherapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Behaviour Consultants
- Supported Child Development Consultants

These professionals work together with our staff to help meet the needs of the youth who attend Youth Connections.

Eligibility and Getting Started at Youth Connections

Before a child can join Youth Connections, a Supported Child Development (SCD) referral form must be completed. The Supported Child Development Program manages the waitlist through a Waiting List Priority Tool to decide who can join the program. This tool looks at things such as:

- Date of referral
- Time spent on the waitlist
- The youth's age
- Family circumstances
- The needs of the youth
- The needs of the program

Because youth at Youth Connections may have complex support needs, we also consider the safety of the group and staff when reviewing the waitlist.

Youth Connections is licensed for up to 17 youth. The number of youth attending at one time depends on their support needs and the number of days each youth attends. A space usually becomes available when a youth turns 19 years old, and/or leaves the program.

When a space is available, an Aspire application is completed and an orientation is scheduled. The family orientation is a time for:

- You to share important and up-to-date information about your child including recent reports or assessments
- You and your child to visit the program space and ask questions
- The registration package to be completed with you
- The start of developing the individual care plan for your child

We work with staff from any previous program to support a smooth transition. We are committed to making the move into Youth Connections as fun, welcoming, and stress-free as possible—for both you and your child.

Pick-Up

All people allowed to pick up your child must be listed on the Care Plan, including

- Regular pick-up people
- Alternate/emergency pick-up people

If the regular pick-up people are not available, the program should be notified, and the alternate pick-up person should be informed that the program may request photo identification to confirm their identity. Staff will always check the Care Plan before releasing a child. In rare situations, verbal permission (in-person or by phone) may be accepted for someone not listed on the Care Plan. For safety reasons, it is important that many different people are not picking up the same child.

For more information, talk with the Program Manager.

Arriving or leaving the program independently

Parents may ask for their child to arrive at the program or leave the program on their own. Before this happens, two things must be completed:

1. The parent and Program Manager will meet to talk about the youth's skills and development and safety when they are not supervised by Aspire staff.
2. A Consent – Safe Release form must be signed by the parent.

Once a youth signs themselves out of the program, Aspire staff are no longer responsible for their supervision or safety.

Late Pick-up

If an emergency happens and the youth will be picked up late, the pick-up person must call the program as soon as possible and alternate pick-up arrangements must be made.

If a youth is not picked up on time and no one has called:

- Staff will try to contact the family
- Staff will try to contact someone on the authorized pick-up list
- Messages will be left when possible
- Every effort will be made to reach someone. If no one can be reached, staff ask for assistance by contacting either:
 - the Program Manager
 - the Aspire Emergency Response Person

Late Pick-up Fees

Two verbal warnings are given before late fees are charged. After these two warnings, a fee of \$5 for every 5 minutes late will be applied. The late fee is charged each time a child is picked up late.

After three late pick-ups, the Program Manager will meet with the parent. If late pick-ups happen more than three times in four months, a written warning will be issued and continued late pick-ups may result in a termination of service.

Family Checklist

This Family Checklist helps make the transition to Youth Connections smooth and successful.

- Drop off and pick up your child on time. Staff schedules are based on your requested times. Being on time helps us keep safe staff-to-child ratios.
- Call the night before if your child will be late or absent.
- Do not send your child if they are sick or starting to feel unwell
- Label all items with your child's name or initials, including:
 - Clothing
 - Shoes
 - Personal supplies
- Send a full change of clothes if your child may need one.
- Check the lost and found regularly for missing items.

- Send weather-appropriate outdoor clothing:
 - Fall & winter: rain gear, warm clothes, gloves
 - Spring & summer: light jacket, hat, towel, swimsuit, sunscreen
- Send any personal supplies your child needs, such as:
 - Absorbent undergarments
 - Liners
- Send food from home to help support your child’s allergies and food preferences:
 - School days: a snack
 - Full days: a packed lunch and snack
- Let us know if you would like your child’s birthday celebrated at Youth Connections.
 - Send a cake or cupcakes (no nut products, please)
 - You are welcome to join us, or
 - Send a camera and we will take photos for you

Family Involvement

Youth Connections is not a parent-participation program, but we welcome family involvement. When families are involved:

- The youth often have a better experience
- Families know more about how their child is doing and get to know the staff who support their child
- Families meet other parents and their child’s peers

Families are expected to be involved in developing/reviewing their child’s Care Plan and to participate in annual planning.

Families are encouraged to visit the program at any time, attend special events and celebrations and volunteer in the program, if interested. Family involvement helps us work together to support your child in the best way possible.

Getting Around in the Community

We spend a lot of time out in the community doing fun and meaningful activities with the youth. To get around we use:

- Public transportation

- Staff vehicles
- Aspire vehicles

We always make sure we have written permission from families before transporting the youth. To keep everyone safe, we ensure that:

- Vehicles are insured and well-maintained
- Staff who drive have the required Class 4 driver's license
- All transportation follows Aspire policies and procedures

Health and Safety

Your child's health, safety, and well-being are our top priorities at Youth Connections. Youth Connections is a licensed program. Our building, outdoor spaces, and daily activities are planned with safety in mind. We keep the youth safe by:

- Having regular inspections by:
 - Child Care Licensing Authorities
 - Richmond Fire Department
- Having regular safety checks by the Aspire Occupational Health and Safety Committee
- Following licensing rules for staff-to-child ratios
- Completing daily cleaning and regular maintenance of indoor and outdoor spaces
- Making sure all staff are trained in:
 - First Aid
 - CPR
 - Child abuse recognition and reporting
 - Emergency and critical incident response
- Ensuring all staff, volunteers, and practicum students have cleared criminal record checks
- Practicing fire and earthquake drills every month
- Keeping an Emergency Earthquake Supply Pack on site
- Using relief staff so employees do not work when they are sick
- Creating an individual Care Plan for each child that includes:
 - Safety needs
 - Plans for missing persons, if needed
- Using appropriate car seats and booster seats when transporting children
- Providing wheelchair-accessible transportation when required

- In cases of an emergency, an accident, or a 911 call, we will
 - Write a report for licensing authorities
 - Contact you right away

Sickness

Please keep your child at home when they are sick. This helps protect your child, other youth, and staff. Your child should stay home if they have:

- Unexplained pain
- Trouble breathing, wheezing, or a persistent cough
- Fever of 38.3°C or higher
 - Your child must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning
 - No fever-reducing medication (such as cold or flu medicine) can be used during that time
- Sore throat or trouble swallowing
- Infected skin or eyes, including mucus or pus
- Undiagnosed rash
 - A doctor's note is required before returning if the rash is not contagious
- Red, itchy, or watery eyes, unless caused by allergies
- Severe itching on the body or scalp
- Vomiting
 - Your child may return after 24 hours without vomiting
- Diarrhea (more frequent or loose stools)
 - Your child may return after 24 hours without diarrhea
- A known or suspected contagious illness, such as pink eye
- Low energy or not feeling well, and unable to take part in the program

Children do not need to stay home for:

- Mild cold symptoms (such as sniffles or mild coughs)
- Allergy symptoms
- Non-contagious illnesses

Returning to the Program after being sick

Your child may return when they are free of symptoms and feel well enough to participate in daily activities, including outdoor play.

In some cases, a doctor's note may be required before returning.

BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) guidelines

We follow all BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) guidelines. If there is a gastroenteritis (stomach illness) outbreak, youth with symptoms must stay home for 48 hours after symptoms stop.

If your child has a communicable illness such as:

- Measles
- Mumps
- Strep throat
- Flu
- Impetigo
- Head lice
- COVID-19

Families must follow treatment instructions and required isolation times.

If there is exposure to a communicable illness families will be notified by a notice on the Parent Information Board, and/or an email sent to families. Information about symptoms to watch for will be shared, and a health guide from Vancouver Coastal Health may be posted.

All family information will remain confidential. Please tell us if someone in your household has been exposed to a communicable illness. This helps us watch for symptoms while your child is in our care.

If a youth becomes sick during the program

If a youth becomes sick while at the program and is not able to take part in regular activities, they will be given a quiet and comfortable place to rest separate from the group, and will be supervised at all times by a staff member. Parents or caregivers will be contacted right away to arrange pick-up for their child as soon as possible. If a parent cannot be reached, staff will try to contact emergency contacts listed on the care plan.

Families must have alternate care arrangements in place in case their child becomes sick and cannot remain in the program. These arrangements should be set up when your child is registered at Youth Connections.



Fees

The provincial government, through the Supported Child Development Program, provides some funding for Youth Connections. However, this funding does not cover the full cost of operating the program; because of this families pay a monthly program fee. Fees are different for full or half-day spaces. Your fee amount is listed on the Parent Agreement and will stay the same for the time period listed on the agreement. Program fees are paid on the first of each month

Fees are based on how many days per week the youth attend over the full year including school breaks (winter, summer, spring breaks). Fees are spread evenly over the months in the fiscal year.

For children who attend part-time, families can request additional days if there is space available. Fees for the additional days are billed in addition to the regular monthly fee.

Activity Costs

Sometimes families may be asked to help cover the cost of a special activity if the activity cost is higher than the program budget.

If your child has a pass, such as City of Richmond Recreation Pass or Access 2 Entertainment Bus Pass, please make sure your child brings the pass to the program.

If you have questions about fees, please talk with the Program Manager.

Absences and Vacations

Vacation absences of up to 30 days must be reported at least 2 months in advance, when possible, and approved by the Program Manager. Absences of more than 30 days must be approved by the Director. Regular weekly absences for non-medical reasons may affect your child's enrolment.

Ending Services

Ending the program requires two full calendar months' written notice. The program will end 60 days after written notice is received. Notice may be given by either the family or the program.

Financial Support

Financial help may be available through:

- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Affordable Child Care Benefit Program

- Special Needs Subsidy

These subsidies are based on family income.

Tax Receipts

A tax receipt will be issued by the Finance Department at the beginning of the year. The receipt will cover fees paid in the previous year and is issued to the person who paid the fees.

Your Child's Record

Once your child is accepted into Youth Connections, we create a record for your child.

This includes:

- A paper file
- An electronic file in a secure system called ShareVision

The file includes important information to help us support them safely, such as

- Care Plan
- Person-Centred Plan
- Registration forms
- Individual plans or protocols related to your child's needs
- Progress notes written by staff
- Change Protocol checklists
- Reports and correspondence related to your child's development and support

With your permission, we may also keep a copy of your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) from school. This helps us support continuity between school and after-school care.

Keeping Information Up to Date

We work hard to keep your child's file complete, accurate, and up to date. We rely on families to share new reports, updated assessments, or changes related to your child's needs.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We are committed to keeping all personal information confidential and secure. The file is available only to appropriate staff. This ensures staff have the information they need

to care for and support your child. Electronic files are protected with secure access and permissions, and only authorized staff can view these records.

You may review your child's file at any time by speaking with the Program Manager. If you believe something in the file is incorrect, please let us know so we can correct it.

Storing Records After Leaving Aspire

When your child leaves Aspire, records are stored according to government regulations. They are kept for:

- At least 7 years after the individual becomes an adult, or
- Longer, if they continue with Aspire in an adult program

Custody and Court Orders

When parents or caregivers live separately, we follow the information provided by the enrolling parent or caregiver. If there is no copy of a custody or court order on file, we cannot deny access to the non-enrolling parent. If concerns arise, the unauthorized pick-up policy will be followed.

When a court order is in place, a sealed copy of the custody or court order will be kept in your child's file. Staff always follow the details in the court order. If staff need help to enforce a court order, 911 will be called for assistance.

Families must tell staff about any changes to custody arrangements or court orders. Providing updated documents helps us keep your child safe and follow legal requirements.

Communication and Keeping in Touch

Good communication between families, staff, and others who support your child is very important at Youth Connections. We work together to make sure your child has a positive experience.

Ways we Communicate

We meet with families once a year to talk about how things are going and make changes if needed. At this meeting, we review your child's:

- Care Plan

- Person-Centred Plan, such as F-Words
- Any other plans or reports

Staff are available to talk at drop-off and pick-up times about how your child's day went. We have an open-door policy. You are welcome to drop in or make an appointment if you have questions or concerns.

We may send emails with program updates, reminders, or information about community events.

We may also share information through:

- Aspire Richmond's website
- The Aspire Facebook page
- Email
- Newsletters and other mail-outs



www.aspirerichmond.com

Please feel free to reach out anytime—we value communication with families.

With your permission, we share information with your child's school or other professionals or programs. This helps support continuity of care.

Leaving Youth Connections

One day, your child will be ready to leave Youth Connections. This may be because:

- They are finishing high school and moving into adulthood
- They are starting a new program
- Your family is moving to another community

When this time comes, we are here to support you and your child through the transition.

Aspire hosts an annual transition meeting for families. This meeting focuses on the move from Children's Services to Adult Services and gives families a chance to:

- Ask questions
- Learn about adult service options
- Prepare for next steps

We work together with families, other agencies, and schools to help plan for the next stage of your child's life. Planning support for adulthood usually begins when youth are 17 or 18 years old. Starting early helps make the transition more gradual and smoother.

We understand that leaving Youth Connections can bring many feelings, such as sadness or worry about change, happiness and pride, and excitement about new opportunities. These feelings are normal for both youth and families.

We value the relationships built at Youth Connections and encourage you to share your feelings with us. Ask for any support you may need.

After your child leaves the program, you may be invited to complete a short feedback survey. This helps us learn from your experience with Aspire.

We also love staying in touch. You are always welcome to keep in contact to let us know how you and your family are doing.

Youth Connections will always be part of your journey.

NOTES



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