

Frequently Asked Questions for Community Partners

Q: Who is Bluesky?

Blue sky is a residential care agency contracted by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Department of Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) to provide Level Four Residential Services to children and youth in care. Blue sky has been providing residential services in the eastern part of the province for over a decade. Blue sky is the larger of two accredited residential care providers in the province.

For more information, please feel free to visit our website: www.blueskyfamilycare.com

Q: What kind of services does Bluesky provide?

As requested and contracted by CYFS, we provide group homes, emergency placement homes, and individualized living arrangements (ILA's). The chart below provides a brief description, and further detail is provided in the RFP document which is attached.

Residence Type	Age Group/Gender	Purpose/Duration	Locations
Emergency Placement Home (EPH)	0-18 years co-ed	To provide shorter term residential placement while longer term plans are developed. Duration typically less than 60 days	St. John's (5 beds x 3) Placentia (5 beds) Botwood (2 beds) 2 EPH beds in GFW
Group Home	9-12 13-18 male, female or co-ed	To provide residential placements when the long term plan is for the child/youth to stay in a staffed setting with other young people.	St. John's (4 bed x 2) Marystown/Burin (4 beds) 4GH Beds in GFW Stephenville
Individualized Living Arrangement	any age	Long-term in nature, need an individualized setting with not more than two residents	St. John's (x5) Placentia Glovertown Burin Peninsula Corner Brook

Q: I heard that Bluesky was a homecare agency. Is that true?

No. Blue sky is a service provider that only provides residential care and related services for children and youth. However, we do have a relationship with a home care agency, CareGivers. Both organizations are part of the same parent company, and share a commitment to providing good community services across the province. Some administrative services - such as accounting, payroll, and information technology are shared. Additionally, employees of both organizations are part of the same collective agreement. It is important to note that there are

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different employee classifications within that collective agreement, including home support worker, behavioural aide and child and youth care worker (CYC). Blue sky employees are almost exclusively classified as child and youth care workers.

Q: What kind of residences does Bluesky operate?

Part of our therapeutic approach to care is providing homelike residences for children and youth. We want to help our young people feel a part of the community, and so we operate in single family dwellings that look much like the homes in your neighborhood. We don't identify our homes with any signage, nor do we name them by anything other than the street address. Each home has a small office and locked space for medications, etc, but beyond that, our homes look like 'typical' homes. We do not have bars on windows, 'quiet rooms', or any other institutional features.

Q: What qualifications do Bluesky employees have?

The field of child and youth care is a relatively new one, and in the past, people came to work with a variety of different backgrounds. Some people had a lot of direct experience in working with children and youth, others had education in a related field like teaching or psychology. Currently, we require that employees have a post-secondary program of at least two years duration in a related field. We actively target graduates of the new Child and Youth Care Worker programs that have been developed in the province over the last few years.

As we move out across the province we recognize that there may be people with extremely valuable experience who do not meet the educational criteria that is part of our hiring requirements. We are prepared to consider these individuals for employment on a case-by-case basis. All employees, regardless of educational background, are required to begin the certification process for child and youth care workers. It is our goal to help 100% of our employees develop the competencies required in this certification. As well, it is a requirement that all employees successfully complete and maintain current certification in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) and our CARE program.

Q: How are the homes managed?

Each group home and EPH has a designated Home Manager who is responsible for day-to-day operation of the home, including supervision of the staff in that home and service planning for the children/youth. (ILA's, because of their highly specialized nature and low ratio of staff to residents, operate a bit differently depending on each situation). Home Managers are typically the managers who will most frequently directly connect with schools, community groups, health care, and other organizations.

Each home manager reports to a designated Bluesky program manager, who is responsible for guiding programming for a number of homes. There is a senior leadership team comprised of four directors - Operations, Programs and Services, Human Resources and Quality - who together provide guidance and supervision to this team. In turn, this leadership team reports to the Chief Operating Officer and the Executive Director.

Every member of our team, from our frontline staff to our senior leadership, are introduced to our professional practice framework, CARE (Children and Residential Experiences). Developed by Cornell University CARE is widely used internationally as an approach to care that is rooted in

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the best practices in child and youth residential care. As part of our organization's commitment to being a CARE organization, we use practices, training and professional development that is aligned with the six key CARE principles. At its heart, CARE is a relationship based approach, with focus on strengths, developmentally appropriate activity, cultural and ecological alignment, and family involvement.

Q. Who is responsible for the minors Blue sky provides care for?

Children who live in a residential placement are generally in the care of the Director of Child Youth and Family Services, either through a voluntary or court ordered removal from their family home. Blue sky is responsible for meeting the needs of the child or youth within the context of the residential placement. We work together with the child's family, their social worker and other professionals who may be involved in providing services for the child or youth. Legal responsibility for the child may rest with the parents, the social worker or another designated individual.

Q. Some of the children and young people in residential placements have behavioral problems. How are they managed?

Quite often, children and youth who are in a residential placement have been subject to trauma, abuse or neglect. They may also have physical and/or mental health issues. Any of these circumstances can lead to social, emotional and behavioral challenges that may present as difficult behavior.

With this in mind, we work to help children and youth achieve success and build esteem by providing opportunities for success. We do this by setting expectations for young people based on their zone of proximal development, rather than a rule-based system. We use a series of assessments and planning tools to create a service delivery plan that is customized for each young person in one of our residences. This plan is designed to build on a young person's strengths, allowing them the opportunity to grow and develop from where they are. Part of the service delivery plan may include a behavior management plan and/or an individual crisis management plan.

All our GH and EPH staff are trained in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) techniques as part of a mandatory five-day training program. When a young person is in crisis, staff are able to use these techniques to help the person in crisis de-escalate, and avoid the need for any physical intervention. However, in order to keep a young person safe, staff are also trained in the physical techniques to keep a child or young person from harming themselves or others. In our ILA's, staff are required to do a minimum of a 3 day TCI program, but may or may not be required to be trained or use physical interventions.

Q: What is the working relationship between Bluesky and the Department of Child Youth Family Services?

Blue sky Blue sky operates as an independent organization - we are privately owned and operated, and separate from government. We set our own policies and procedures based on current government policy and legislation as well as best practice in the field of child and youth care. As part of our contract with government, we are subject to regular review by the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS). On a practical basis, we work quite closely with CYFS in providing services to children.

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Q. Blue sky is accredited. What does that mean?

Blue Sky is accredited by CARF Canada under the Child and Youth Services- Group Home standards. . (www.carf.org/Programs/CARFCanada). By definition of the accrediting body, group home programs provide placements to children/youths for whom there are documented reports of maltreatment, abandonment, absence without leave, or other identified needs, or treatment services to children/youths with identified behavioral needs. Services are provided in a safe and supportive setting and are time limited. The program goal is to reunite the child/youth with the natural family or other permanent placement when in the best interest of the child/youth. In all situations, integration into the community to the greatest degree possible is achieved.

For the community, CARF accreditation benefits include:

- Assurance to persons seeking services that a provider has demonstrated conformance to internationally accepted standards.
- Improved communication with persons served.
- Person-focused standards that emphasize an integrated and individualized approach to services and outcomes.
- Accountability to funding sources, referral agencies, and the community.
- Management techniques that are efficient, cost-effective, and based on outcomes and consumer satisfaction.
- Evidence to federal, provincial, and local governments of commitment to quality of programs and services that receive government funding.
- Guidance for responsible management and professional growth of personnel.