

**BC
PEOPLE
FIRST**



Member & Supporter Handbook

FREEDOM CHOICE RESPECT DIGNITY INCLUSION

Dear Members and Supporters,

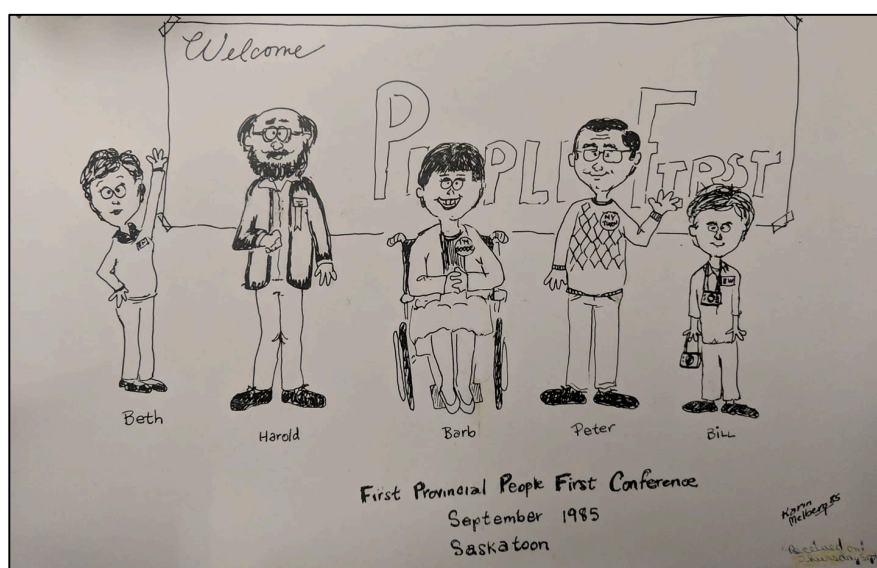
BC People First welcomes you! We hope you enjoy your time within the People First movement and that you gain valuable experiences.

This handbook is for BCPF Members and Supporters. It contains important information about being a member or volunteering with BC People First Society (BCPF). Members run our society and a Supporter of BCPF is anyone who volunteers or works with BCPF in some way other than being a Member.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email us anytime at hello@bcpeoplefirst.com or bcpfcoordinator@gmail.com.

Thank you for your commitment to the People First movement in British Columbia!

Sincerely,
The BCPF Board of Directors



BCPF MISSION & VISION

BC People First Society (BCPF) is a provincial non-profit organization that is part of the international People First movement. We are a society made up of a group of Members from across British Columbia who want to make sure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are included and respected in our communities as full citizens. We do this by supporting each other to speak up for ourselves and by sharing advocacy skills with each other.

Our vision is a diverse community where all people are:

- Included and involved
- Honoured and respected
- Appreciated for their abilities
- Supported to participate

Our values at BC People First are:

- Freedom
- Choice
- Respect
- Dignity
- Inclusion

At BCPF we want to stop the stigma surrounding intellectual and developmental disabilities and unite our Members' voices in the fight to be considered People First. The fight to not have people speak for us or down to us and to help everyone in society understand what "nothing about us without us" really means and why it matters.

Here are some of the things our Members do together:

- Write letters and make phone calls for local issues
- Complete online surveys together for plain language support
- Do presentations for schools, companies, and service providers about the importance of self-advocacy, human rights and the C.R.P.D., and issues that affect our Members and people with disabilities.

- Host forums, educational events, and networking events
- Host focus groups and policy committee discussions

We advocate for all people to be seen as equal citizens and for issues that matter to our Members. These are just some of the things that matter most to us at BCPF:

- Employment and fair wages - equal work for equal pay, entrepreneurship/small business grant support for people with disabilities, and closing "sheltered workshops" in Canada.
- De-institutionalization - getting people out of institutions and into the community.
- Affordable housing - everyone should have a good, clean home and choice in where they live.
- Equal disability benefits and gender equality – reducing the unequal rates of misdiagnosis and delay in diagnosis for women with disabilities.
- Reducing stigma in society about disability – stopping the judgements from others about the labels they give us and stopping diagnosis terms from being used as insults.
- A livable income for all - everyone deserves a guaranteed livable income and no one deserves to live in forced poverty.
- Access to quality services - all government and disability services should be individualized, person-centered, helpful, and hopeful.
- Accessible transportation and passageways - society should be made for everyone not just some.
- Inclusive, non-segregated communities - everyone should be part of the community on their own terms and not segregated based on labels.
- Healthcare that covers full body health – mental health and dental should be included in our provincial health care and assistive devices should be way easier to get.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LABELLED?

We want to explain that People First groups around the world use the term “labeled with an intellectual or developmental disability” because someone else has given us that label. Maybe it was a doctor or a teacher. But somewhere, we have been given this label. You might hear us refer to labeled people or people with an intellectual or developmental disability. And non-labeled people, people without an intellectual or developmental disability.

It is important for everyone to understand that labels are not a diagnosis. Labels can be harmful stereotypes used to justify abuse, exclusion, and discrimination in our society. Any word can become a label when it is used as a way to deny people their human rights or has stigma in society. This is one of the things we stand up for in our society, to stop the judgements from others about the labels they give us.

BCPF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BC People First is run by a volunteer Board of (5-10) Directors, all identifying as Self-Advocates and people with intellectual or developmental disabilities. The Board of Directors represents the province by region and on the Executive Board. Director positions are usually 3-year terms.

Executive positions are voted on every year, with the President taking a 2-year term. BCPF Members who want to get more involved are invited to join the Board as positions become available. Members can also join Committees led by the Board of Directors.

BCPF is unique because we practice Nothing About Us Without Us at all times. People First groups around the world are some of the only organizations for people with disabilities where the Board of Directors are all people with disabilities.

This is so important and a key part of the People First movement. As a non-profit society in BC, we cannot operate without a volunteer Board of Directors.

BCPF MEMBERSHIP

BCPF Membership is currently free and is for anyone in British Columbia who:

- Identifies as having a disability
- Supports advocacy efforts for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Wants to learn about self-advocacy and the C.R.P.D.
- Wants to share self-advocacy skills and tips with others

In Canada, the People First movement began in 1973 when people who identified as Self-Advocates came together from all over North America to talk about their rights. For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their first issue was their right to live in the community – to get out of institutions.

By 1974, the first People First Chapter was up and running here in British Columbia. This first group was made up of men and women who lived in an institution and wanted to get out. They wanted to live in the community and have their voice, their choice, and their rights. For the next several years, People First groups began to form in provinces, territories, and communities across the country and these groups continue to grow and thrive.

To this day, BC People First still advocates for the rights and needs of our Members and all people. Such as affordable housing, relationship rights, increasing PWD rates, community accessibility, ending ableism and stigma, plus much more.

Members who enjoy public speaking can join our BCPF Presentation Team to talk about these issues that matter to us, do formal presentations, and share stories and experiences at panel events.

Plus, there are community involvement and social networking opportunities for BCPF Members who want to get more involved.

BCPF Membership includes:

- A printed copy of “People First Advice For Members” and a lapel pin sent to your mailing address.
- Regular e-newsletters with self-advocacy tips and resources from Self-Advocates around the province.
- Voting rights at the Annual General Meeting.
- Having a say in what we advocate for in our communities across BC.
- Peer mentorship and self-advocacy support.
- Plain language support for filling out online surveys.
- Members-only social events.
- Members-only education events.

Members who want to get more involved can:

- Attend meetings at a local BCPF Chapter or start a Chapter in your own area (we will help you get started)
- Join one of our BCPF Committees to work on advocacy and community projects (Advocacy, Fundraising, Membership Engagement, Policy, etc.)
- Join the BCPF Presentation Team or Plain Language Translation Team
- Submit advocacy stories for the BCPF blog or get support from BCPF to write your own blog post
- Members can volunteer to be a Director on the Board when positions open. Our Board and Society is run by Self-Advocates!

Members can be as involved as much or as little as they choose. Signing up as a BCPF Member is a great way to support the People First movement. Because by joining the movement you are joining hundreds of people across BC who unite our voices to end the stigma around disability and fight for “nothing about us without us” and the full implementation of the CRPD in our society. But Members don’t

have to volunteer on a Committee or take part in events, this is optional.

Members are expected to:

- Complete a Membership Enrolment Form.
- Update membership and contact information as needed.
- Come to the Annual General Meeting, if possible, in-person or by video or phone.
- Attend BCPF educational or social networking events when they want to.
- Never engage in any form of harassment, discrimination, unfair or disrespectful treatment of any individual.
- Treat other Members with respect, be considerate of the feelings of others, respect each other's differences, use good manners, and never use threats to get a point across.

Most important, BCPF belongs to the Members! And here are a few more important guidelines from the People First movement for the society to uphold:

- Only Members get a vote.
- People First follows a democratic process. This means it is ruled by the members. It means that all members get a vote. It means that the leaders are elected by the members.
- People First has Advisors. Advisors offer guidance and support. They are volunteers. They do not vote.
- Advisors are chosen by the Members.
- All members must be given the chance to learn. They must be given space to take part to the best of their ability.
- People First members mentor new members and help their self-advocacy skills to develop.
- People First is a peer group process. Over time, each person learns at their own pace.

Starting a Chapter as a Member:

- Chapters should be started to give BCPF Members a place to talk about issues that matter to them in their area or work on advocacy projects together.

- Any BCPF Member can start a Chapter – we can help you get started.
- Each Chapter must have a Chairperson/President and at least 5 BCPF Members involved.
- Chapter Members are usually all from the same city, town, or First Nation (but sometimes from two or three places combined).
- Chapters should meet monthly or quarterly. By phone, video conference, or in-person following all public health guidelines.
- The Chapter Chairperson needs to make sure their contact information is kept up-to-date with BCPF.
- The Chapter Chairperson needs to make sure meetings are in a safe place, such as an office, library, coffee shop, park, or other public space approved by all Chapter Members.
- Chapters need to send a report to BCPF once a year with some basic details about the Chapter, such as Member names, number of meetings, how many Members, Chairperson name, and a summary of your events or community projects.
- Chapters are eligible for funding from BCPF to host advocacy or training events, usually 1 or 2 events per year, depending on the funding limits of BCPF.
- Chapter Members should be volunteering their time to attend Chapter meetings (but can still be paid Members of the BCPF Presentation Team or Plain Language Translation Team).
- Chapters can get help from BCPF to make flyers for events or promote events online and with our Community Partners.

VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT & TASKS

Board Members, Committee Members, and Volunteer Advisors usually volunteer a minimum of 4 hours and a maximum of 10 hours per month.

Members and Supporters who volunteer with the BCPF Board, BCPF Committees, or other BCPF projects are expected to:

- Attend all (or most) of the meetings from start to finish, sending apologies to the group or Chairperson for missed meetings

- Prepare for meetings by reading the agenda, relevant documents, and any unread committee emails before the meeting.
- Participate in the meetings and committee business.
- Display reliability and remain accountable for all choices, behaviour, and actions.
- Be fair, considerate, and honest in all dealings when representing BCPF.
- Ensure that all committee members are given time to express opinions, and that all opinions are thoughtfully considered.
- Respect the confidentiality of information, especially with personal matters and sensitive information.

Volunteer events usually last 1 hour to 3 hours long and may include taking part in planning meetings and attending other events such as:

- Community outreach events at fairs or exhibits
- Advocacy and education events such as presentations, forums, and panels
- Community partner events as a BCPF representative
- Committee projects around fundraising or member engagement

What is a BCPF Advisor?

Advisors are volunteers with BCPF who are not also Members. Advisors are people BCPF Members can trust and feel comfortable with. Advisors are appointed by the Board of Directors or a BCPF Committee or Chapter and are expected to:

- Empower BCPF Members by being supportive and understanding
- Help a Board Member or Chapter Chairperson in a specific region of the province or with a specific Committee
- Assist Board Members to receive information in a form that allows them to understand what is happening at meetings, events, and in the operations of BCPF.
- Support Board Members to understand the issues affecting them and help BCPF educate people in the province about these issues (CRPD).

- Want to be included and involved in the organization by supporting BCPF Board Members with advice and suggestions when needed but do not take over any lead roles from the Board or Members. Advisors do not make decisions for the Board Members, they want to support the decision making process for the Members.
- Attend either monthly Board Meetings or Committee meetings (no meetings in August or December).
- Attend the BCPF Annual General Meeting.
- Support activities such as presentation planning, speaking note prep, and recording meeting minutes, when needed.
- Help evaluate and coach advocacy skills when asked and enjoy helping to build others up.
- Focus on people's strengths and advocacy goals. Advisors encourage Members to have their say and may help ensure no one is left out at meetings or events.
- Understand the term "nothing about us without us"

The goal is for Board Members to make decisions by themselves - the Advisor is encouraged to share their opinions and knowledge for the purpose of helping Board Members to understand the consequences of decisions both good and bad.

Good Advisors help but don't tell the Members what to do. It is about empowerment and trust.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Members and Supporters should take reasonable care for their own health and safety, and that of other people, when volunteering or taking part in events.

Here are some examples:

- Do not attend any in-person events if you feel sick or are displaying flu-like symptoms.

- Please inform Event Supervisors or the Provincial Coordinator of any hazards, if needed.
- When volunteering outdoors with BCPF remember to wear sturdy shoes and be prepared for the weather.
- If you are going to be out in the sun remember to wear a hat, sunscreen, and bring lots of water to drink.
- If you are going to be outside in the rain or cold remember to wear warm layers of clothing, a top layer that is waterproof, and waterproof footwear.
- If you encounter a task or a piece of equipment that you are unsure of or have not been trained to use, please contact the Event Supervisor so they can show you how to properly and safely carry out the assigned task or use the piece of equipment.
- Volunteers are not permitted to perform duties alone and will always be scheduled in pairs or groups.

ACCIDENTS

The Provincial Coordinator needs to complete an incident report within 48 hours of all injuries and accidents that may occur at BCPF events. If you are injured while volunteering please report to the Event Supervisor or the Provincial Coordinator as soon as possible.

If you are unsure if any occurrence should be reported, please speak with the Event Supervisor.

If someone is seriously injured do not attempt to move the victim, remain calm and call 911 immediately or send someone to call 911 for you. Be prepared to remain on the phone with emergency services and follow their directions. Report to the Event Supervisor and/or the Provincial Coordinator as soon as possible.

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY

Sometimes at events or meetings, you may hear information regarding BCPF Members that is confidential. Panel members and speakers often share personal stories. Please respect people by letting them share their own experiences – do not share someone else's personal information without permission.

If someone outside BCPF, such as a journalist or government official, questions you on information about the society you believe to be confidential, please politely refer them to the Provincial Coordinator or the website contact page.

Only the elected BCPF Board of Director media representatives (usually the President and Vice-President) are allowed to provide information on any and all BCPF activities to the media.

DRESS CODE

While representing BCPF at professional and community events, Members and Supporters are expected to maintain a business casual dress standard. But it is also important that you feel comfortable so please wear whatever feels right to you for the occasion.

If you are given an identification shirt, badge, or vest you must ensure that you are wearing it at all times for that specific event.

BCPF promotes a fragrance-free environment to minimize the allergic and/or medical reactions that fragrances can cause for some people.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

The disciplinary procedure exists to make sure that issues are solved as quickly and with as much fairness as possible. Disciplinary action may be taken when the work, behaviour, or actions of a Member or Supporter cause harm, or, negatively impact the society or another Member.

A BCPF Member or Supporter can be dismissed without warning when gross misconduct takes place. Gross misconduct includes, but is not limited to, major theft, physical assault, negligence due to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and sexual harassment.

BCPF will take measures to work with all volunteers to find committees and projects that best suit the strengths of each person and accommodate individual learning styles. The following disciplinary stages apply to unsatisfactory handling of work or conduct when other options such as retraining and coaching have not been effective:

- Stage 1 – Verbal Warning
- Stage 2 – First Written Warning
- Stage 3 – Second Written Warning
- Stage 4 – Termination

MEMBER CONTACT INFORMATION

If you move, please update your mailing address with BCPF. If you change your phone number or email please let us know. Email us at bcpfcoordinator@gmail.com or fill out a new membership form.

Sometimes we need to contact all Members about important events, such as the Annual General Meeting. As a Member, please make sure your contact information is up-to-date.

RESIGNATION

Please notify the BCPF Provincial Coordinator if you wish to leave your volunteer position or resign from membership with the society.

Reference letters for BCPF volunteers are available by request and may depend on the length of volunteer service. Please contact the Provincial Coordinator when needed.