

Banff Trail Family Babysitting Cooperative Membership Handbook

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Section 1: Overview

The Banff Trail Family Babysitting Cooperative (referred to as the BTFBC) helps connect families from the community and surround areas to share babysitting services with one another. The BTFBC aims to provide fun, social and positive experiences for everyone.

Families considering membership should read the expectations and processes outlined in this handbook prior to applying for membership.

It is important that each family takes responsibility and accountability for selecting the individuals who will look after your children. The cooperative does not screen individuals comprehensively and hence cannot provide you any assurance of the safety of your children or the quality of the care. You should take every precaution you would normally take when selecting someone to care for your children.

The BTFBC is managed by a volunteer coordinator. If you have any questions or concerns please contact the coordinator for additional information. The current coordinator is Jen Silverthorn, 403-282-3554, jen.silverthorn@shaw.ca.

Section 2: Application Process

a. Membership with the Banff Trail Community Association (BTCA).

All BTFBC members are required to have a current family membership with the BTCA. Members are not required to live in the Banff Trail community. However, it is recommended that families joining the cooperative reside in Banff Trail or within a community in close proximity.

The BTCA membership is nominal and online payment or mail-in membership forms are available for download from <http://www.banfftrailcommunity.ca>.

There are no additional fees associated with using the BTFBC.

b. Application Form

Families are required to complete the member profile application form (available for download at <http://banfftrailcommunity.ca/get-involved/babysitting-co-op>) and email it to the coordinator.

c. Family Limits and Wait lists

At this time, the cooperative has not imposed a cap on the number of families and hence a wait list is not maintained. A larger membership increases the chances of finding a babysitter but also means your chances of leaving your child with someone you barely know increases. Volunteers in the cooperative organize social events throughout the year to help provide opportunities to get to know each other. You are encouraged to attend, participate and even organize events. Your children will also appreciate if the individuals that will care for them are familiar.

d. Approval Notification

The coordinator will notify the family when the application has been processed, approved and the membership list is updated.

e. Withdrawing

Members wishing to withdrawal from the cooperative should notify the coordinator to be removed from the current membership list.

Section 3: Membership Meetings

a. Meeting Schedule

Member meetings are held once a month from 8 to 10pm. The coordinator maintains the meeting schedule and members volunteer to host the meeting. The date is at the discretion of the member volunteering to host. New memberships, upcoming events and any concerns that have arisen since the last meeting can be addressed. Meetings provide a good opportunity for parents to socialize and meet other parents as well as an opportunity to see where your children may be babysat or where you yourself may be caring for another member's children. The coordinator will email meeting reminders to the membership.

b. Agendas and Minutes

The coordinator will request agenda items prior to the meeting to ensure important issues are addressed and/or to allow members unable to attend to express their opinion or vote on an issue when they are unable to attend. If necessary, a brief summary of any important issues discussed or decisions made at the meeting will be emailed to the membership.

Section 4: Safety and Security

a. Police Checks

Police checks are not required by the cooperative. However, they can provide other members additional assurance. Some members will have police checks completed through their extra curricular activities. Members may also consider joining the Calgary Block Parent program www.calgaryblockparent.ca. This program performs a police check on all adults living in the household. The Coordinator will record on your membership profile if you have a current police check. (NOTE: this program is currently being suspended pending reorganization later in 2011).

b. First Aid/CPR

First Aid and CPR certification is not required by the cooperative. However, members are strongly encouraged to obtain certification. The coordinator will record your level of certification and expiry on your membership profile.

c. Home Safety

Prior to the sit, the member of the home where the sit will occur should take appropriate precautions to reduce hazards to children. You are responsible for the safety and security of your own children. A sample checklist (Appendix B) can be reviewed with your sitter beforehand. Despite our best efforts, emergencies can occur.

d. Disciplining

Requesters should discuss the method of discipline used by the sitter to ensure it aligns with your own approaches and values. Corporal punishment is not permitted. Age appropriate alternatives should be discussed between members.

Section 5: Sitting Process

a. Requesting a Sit

You may send an email to the entire babysitting cooperative or you can contact individuals on the list directly. Members are always free to say "no". It is recommended whenever possible to give the entire group a chance to respond in order to give others the opportunity to earn points and contribute to the cooperative. Once you have arranged a sitter, you may wish to email the membership to let them know you have made appropriate arrangements. If this is your first time sitting for a member or leaving your children at a member's home, you may wish to arrange a home visit prior to the sit date.

b. Point System

A point system is not used but based on the honour system that members will reciprocate requests. Should a point system be deemed necessary by the members, one can be instituted in the future.

c. Sit Checklist

Communication between the requester and sitter is important to ensure a positive experience for everyone involved. A sample checklist is provided in Appendix B that can be reviewed with your sitter beforehand.