



Dear Parents and Caregivers,

As we approach the holiday season, we recognize that Christmas can be a difficult time for many families. While this time of year is often associated with joy and togetherness, we understand that for some, it can bring up feelings of stress, grief, and hardship. We want to acknowledge that everyone's experiences are unique, and for some, the holidays may not feel like a time of celebration.

We also know that the pressures of the season—whether due to financial struggles, the loss of a loved one, mental health challenges, or complex family dynamics—can create extra strain. Please know that it's okay to not feel like “celebrating” during this time. You are not alone, and there are supports available for families who may need assistance or a safe place to turn.

In light of this, we want to remind you that there are local resources available to support families who may need assistance during the holidays. Whether you or someone you know is in need of food, emotional support, or crisis intervention, these services are here to offer compassion, help, and understanding.

## **Support Services for Families in Our Area**

### **Mental Health, Addiction Suicide and Family Violence**

- **Suicide Crisis Helpline** – If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis or feeling overwhelmed, please reach out to the AHS Mental Health Help Line 1-877-303-2642 or text or call 9-8-8 for the Suicide Crisis Helpline [988.ca](https://988.ca). **Call 911 if someone is in immediate danger.**
- Call the **Addiction and Mental Health Help Line** at 1-866-332-2322, available 24/7, this is a confidential service that provides support, information and referrals to Albertans experiencing addiction and mental health concerns, including problem gambling.
- **First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line** If you're experiencing emotional distress and want to talk, call 1-855-242-3310. It's toll-free and open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **Children's Help Phone** – A confidential service offering counseling for children and youth. Call 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868 [kidshelpphone.ca](https://kidshelpphone.ca).

- **Family Violence Info Line** – If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, help is available 24/7. You can reach the Alberta Family Violence Crisis Helpline by calling or texting 310-1818 or visiting their [online chat](#) for confidential support . **Call 911 if someone is in immediate danger.** Family violence is a crime.
- **Men & Call 1-833-327-MENS (6367)** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for help and support from one of our skilled and trained counsellors. When you're struggling, it's hard to know who you can trust and where you can go [menand.ca/get-help](http://menand.ca/get-help).
- **Child Youth and Family Addiction and Mental Health Drop-in Counseling** - Serves families with children aged 6-17 years of age. *Sheldon Kennedy Centre of Excellence - Red Deer Polytechnic*, 70 College Circle, Red Deer, Alberta. For information call 403-340-5274.

### Community Support Services

- **211 Alberta** – A free and confidential helpline providing information about community services and supports. You can reach them by calling 211 or visit [ab.211.ca](http://ab.211.ca).
- **Social Diversion Team:** If you are concerned for the wellbeing of someone who is experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges or substance abuse challenges, and they are not posing an immediate harm to themselves or others, call 403-406-2200 between 7 am and 7pm, please call 2-1-1 for after-hours referrals or support.
- If you are facing **eviction** or at risk for **homelessness**, Prevention Services are available. To learn more about Red Deer's programs visit [social-well-being-and-community-initiatives/housing-and-homelessness](#).

### Food Supports

- **Blackfalds Food Bank** – Offering food assistance to those in need. Call 403-600-1768.
- **Innisfail & District Food Bank** (Serves Penhold residents) – Offering food assistance to families and individuals in need. Call 403-227-0600 or visit [Innisfail Food Bank](#).
- **Olds & District Food Bank** – Available to help with food assistance for families. Call 403-556-1693 or visit [Olds Food Bank](#).
- **Red Deer & District Food Bank** – Offering food support to individuals and families facing challenges. Visit [Red Deer Food Bank](#) or call 403-342-5355.
- **Rocky Mountain House Food Bank** – Supporting families with food security. Call 403-845-7546
- **Sylvan Lake Food Bank** – Providing food for those experiencing food insecurity. Call 403-887-4534 or visit [Sylvan Lake Food Bank](#).

## Additional Services:

- Connect with the main **Alberta Supports Contact Centre**: Call 1-877-644-9992 between the hours of 7:30 am to 8 pm (Monday to Friday, closed statutory holidays) or email [css.ascc@gov.ab.ca](mailto:css.ascc@gov.ab.ca) .
- **24-hour Emergency Income Support Contact Centre** Get emergency financial assistance to help with basic needs like shelter, food, clothing and transportation. Open 24/7, call 1-866-644-5135 or email [css.iscc@gov.ab.ca](mailto:css.iscc@gov.ab.ca)
- **Emergency Needs Allowance** If you require these emergency benefits, please call the Alberta Supports Contact Centre at 1-877-644-9992 for more information on how to apply [www.alberta.ca/emergency-financial-assistance](http://www.alberta.ca/emergency-financial-assistance).

We encourage you to reach out to these services if you need support, or if you know someone who may be struggling. No one should feel isolated during the holiday season, and these organizations are here to help with understanding, care, and respect.

If this is not an emergent need and you would like to connect with a Family Support Counselor in the new year please fill out this form [bit.ly/fscreferral](http://bit.ly/fscreferral).

Please take care of yourself and each other. If you or your family need someone to talk to or need assistance, we hope these resources can provide the support and compassion you deserve.

Wishing you peace, comfort, and strength throughout the holidays.

Warmly,

Amy, Cindy, Danielle, Julie, Keitlyn, Kara, Madison, Melissa, Rozalyn, Tracy  
Family Support Counsellors  
Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools  
<https://www.rdcrcs.ca/schools/fsec>