

AFCCA: Youth Insights

What Youth Experiencing AFCCA Want Caregivers to Understand

What is AFCCA? Aggression toward Family/Caregivers in Childhood and Adolescence (AFCCA) is a pattern of behaviour that causes significant physical and/or psychological harm to the child/teen showing the aggression, to the person(s) who the aggression is directed at, and to other family members who may witness it.

A recent study sought to identify the **social, emotional, and mental health needs of young people impacted by AFCCA.** Youth who had exhibited AFCCA and siblings impacted by AFCCA from across Canada participated in the study via surveys and interviews. You can learn more about this study [here](#).¹

“I needed help, but they weren’t hearing that I needed help.”

What We Need Our Parents And Caregivers To Know

We are scared

“Because of the aggression and things that were told [to] me due to my aggression, I have a very, very big fear of abandonment.”

We feel alone

“It’s very draining and very isolating.”

We don’t know how to express our feelings

“Yelling was the only thing I knew to do to release my anger.”

We need you to be patient with us

“I felt like the automatic reaction was usually anger rather than trying to understand.”

We need you to understand that adoption comes with trauma

“There’s a lot of things going on, thinking back on it...because of the...trauma of my adoption; not knowing about my birth culture and things like that.”

We need you to hear us

“When I don’t feel my voice is heard, it makes me angry, but I... didn’t have the coping mechanisms to realize why I was feeling how I was feeling and acting how I was acting.”

Supporting us means learning about our human rights!

- We have the right to be heard and have our views taken seriously, but sometimes we don’t know how to express what we’re feeling, so we need your help.
- My sibling(s) and I will likely have competing needs and best interests; you may have to try to balance both.
- We have the right to be supported, access treatment and feel protected instead of punished.
- Please learn more about our rights based on the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

Some things that might help our family:

- Understanding that my behaviour may stem from factors related to trauma I’ve experienced, neurodevelopmental abilities, and my capacity to cope and/or communicate in various ways.
- Taking the time to explain your feelings calmly and attentively with me.
- Providing or seeking financial support for my mental health needs.
- Finding caregiver peer supports to help reduce my feelings of isolation and learn best practices from other caregivers.
- Finding respite (time for rest or away from each other). We could all use it. I know you need it, but my siblings and I need it too!
- Learning about children’s rights and making them part of your caregiving to help me feel heard and validated.

¹ DeCarlo-Slobodnik, D., & Gervais, C. (2022). *Young persons’ reflections on their rights as children in the context of aggression toward family and caregivers in childhood and adolescence.* University of Ottawa. <https://www.adopt4life.com/resource-library/young-persons-reflections-on-their-rights-as-children-in-the-context-of-afcca>

