



Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC) Reflection Framework

In-Service Training

Course Description

ARC, or Attachment, Regulation and Competency, is a framework for working with children and youth who have experienced trauma and builds on the resilience of children, youth and families. ARC Reflections is an ARC-informed caregiver training curriculum that focusses on:

- Building healthy attachments among children or youth and caregivers
- Supporting children or youth in their ability to identify, understand, tolerate and shift emotional and physiological responses and experiences
- Supporting normative developmental competencies that may have been derailed by trauma exposure
- Integrating trauma experiences

Learning Objectives

Session 1:

- Review how trauma influences development.
- Identify how behaviours are often survival strategies.
- Discuss how early relationships, labels and self-preservation impact the child's and youth's lens.
- Explain how behaviour addresses a need and are often the child's and youth's unconscious attempt to avoid perceived danger.
- Outline the importance of the ability to recover – a skill needed to recover when in distress and to manage day-to-day lives.
- Demonstrate how to be curious and to learn to observe, listen and respond to the messages children and youth are sending.

Session 2:

- Participants will demonstrate an understanding of the importance of self-care for caregivers.
- Participants will recognize how self-awareness contributes to self-care and self-regulation.
- Participants will demonstrate an understanding of how self-care can enhance your ability to respond to a child's behaviour rather than reacting to it.
- Participants will begin to develop a diverse set of tools for self-care that they can use on an ongoing basis.

Session 3:

- Participants will demonstrate an understanding of how to build a relationship when a child or youth comes to live with them.
- Participants will be able to explain how a child or youth can use disconnection as a coping mechanism for protection and not rejection of the caregiver.
- Participants will identify how being an effective observer of a child and youth's behaviour can build a relationship with the child or youth in their care.
- Participants will understand how to use mirroring to understand the child or youth's needs that underlie the behaviour the child or youth is showing the caregiver.

Session 4:

- Participants learn how a child or youth progressively builds the capacity to self-regulate
- Participants learn the effect of a child or youth's dysregulation on their caregivers.
- Participants will understand how self-regulation contributes to a child or youth's understanding of feelings as well as their ability to communicate their feelings to their caregivers
- Participants will discuss strategies that promote a child or youth's regulation and how to reconnect with the child or youth when everyone is calm.

Session 5:

- Recognize how a caregiver's reaction will influence a child or youths' behaviour.
- Caregiver will identify the importance of being proactive rather than reactive in responding to behaviour.
- Caregivers will recognize how to identify the need behind the child or youth's behaviour.
- Caregiver will explore tools that can support them in responding to a child or youth's behaviour and recognize the implications of using them.

Session 6:

- Caregivers will identify how identity is formed in each developmental stage.
- Caregiver will recognize how our "lens for self" is created and becomes the filter a child or youth uses to interpret their experiences.
- Caregivers will understand how children and youth who have experienced trauma can create a negative lens and its effect on behaviour.
- Caregivers will identify their role in supporting a child to create a more powerful and positive self which will support them in building resilience.

Session 7:

- Caregivers will identify how their family's and their own experience of transitions affects their ability to support a transition.
- Caregivers will recognize how the child or youth's previous experience with transitions and their lens for self-protection will influence how they perceive a transition.
- Caregivers will understand how a child or youth cope with transitions.
- Caregivers will recognize how they can better support transitions for the children and youth in their care

Key Messages

- Trauma profoundly influences child development, shaping their perceptions of self, relationships, and danger. Understanding that behaviour often stems from a need for survival helps in addressing it effectively.
- Children's behaviours are attempts to meet their needs. To understand and support them, caregivers need to consider their perspective and the resources they have. Responding with curiosity and empathy is crucial.
- Caring for children who have experienced trauma is challenging. Caregivers must acknowledge their feelings, stay aware, and build a self-care toolbox to maintain their well-being, especially on difficult days.
- Developing relationships with children and youth who have experienced trauma takes time and requires understanding their unique perspectives on connection and family. Meeting them where they are and providing consistent support can help them manage their feelings and behaviours better.

Guided Discussion Questions

- What have you learned about what "pushes your buttons", puts you on the stress road and leads to big feelings in you?
- When you experience these big feelings; what skills have you learned and used to support yourself in regulating your energy?
- Think about a recent challenging experience when you may have felt disconnected from the child or youth in your home. What did you do to support learning from that experience, for you and the child? Prompt for conversation:

Consider timing, method, and approach to revisiting the experience with them, all with the goal of shifting the outcome the next time?

- After difficult or challenging experiences when the child or youth disconnects from you, what do you do to reconnect with the child or youth?

Resources

Resource one: Alberta Foster and Kinship Association

303, 9488 – 51 Avenue NW, Edmonton, AB T6E 5A6
(780) 429-9923
Toll Free (within Alberta): 800-667-2372

Resource two: Caregiver Supports Program

Link: <https://afkaonline.ca/programs/caregiver-support-program/>

Resource three: The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Link: <https://www.aecf.org/>