



Supporting LGBTQ Youth in Care

Agency Information Package



Supporting LGBTQ Youth in Care

Agency Information Package

CONTACT

Chad A. Craig

Vice-President & Operations Director

chad@fivefourteen.ca

519 566 3266

🌐 fivefourteen.ca

🐦 @FiveFourteen_

☎ 844 514 0514 (toll-free & fax)



About Five/Fourteen™

Introduction

Five/Fourteen Inc. is Canada's only foster agency owned and operated by LGBTQA persons and dedicated solely to providing services and support to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer, questioning, and otherwise gender-independent youth in foster care.

An independent agency with established relationships and partnerships with social service agencies, the Government of Ontario, and university research centres, Five/Fourteen—a foster agency providing a therapeutic care model, with private rooms in parent model homes, with a data-based, strengths-focused case management system provided by Dr. Shelley Craig, one of North America's pre-eminent experts in social work and sexual minority youth—exists to provide foster care services and community integration support in English, French, and Spanish, for racially and ethnically diverse youth in foster care, six years of age and over, who identify as LGBTQ or otherwise gender-independent.

Each client's individual foster plan of care is based on psycho-educational assessments, quality of life assessments, health assessments, previous experiences, and dialogue with the client, their resource workers, and their foster parents and parents. The agency works with professionals, researchers, and graduate students at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work and the Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies at the University of Toronto, and at the Psychological Services and Research Centre and the School of Social Work at the University of Windsor, to provide the most current expertise available.

Five/Fourteen takes a holistic team approach, supporting foster parents with family resource workers, and clients with client support workers, with shared support from programming coordinators, educational advisors, health and financial literacy advisors, and a qualified executive team, all under the executive direction of Lucas Medina, a gay-identified former crown-ward with

many years of experience in outside paid resource agencies and placing agencies, and academic research in Ontario's child welfare system.

Five/Fourteen's unique access to and close relationships with a large network of professionals and leaders in LGBTQ communities provides clients with direct access, through workshops, guest lectures, and mentor programming to LGBTQ athletes from Canada, the U.S.A, and the United Kingdom; top-tier LGBTQ academic experts; LGBTQA local, provincial, and national politicians, LGBTQA provincial and federal cabinet ministers; technology experts; business and finance experts; visual and performing artists, including a gay, internationally exhibited and award winning painter, and a married gay couple who are each an internationally renowned dancer; New York Times best-selling authors; social entrepreneurs and social innovators; several of Canada's most renowned LGBTQ human rights and class action lawyers; LGBTQ journalists; and more.

Five/Fourteen creates a path for clients to move seamlessly from foster care to full independence with solid life skills and a supportive community of personal and professional networks, so they can succeed as individuals with complex identities who are part of a rich and diverse global LGBTQ community, while in foster care and for the rest of their lives.



Why place with Five/Fourteen?

The Youth Leaving Care Hearings, a follow-up survey by the Ministry of more than 1,400 respondents from the sector, and the 2016 Residential Services Review Panel report identified the need for LGBTQ-positive, identity-affirming child welfare services and placements.

Acting on these findings, the Supporting Children, Youth and Families Act, 2017, declares that each youth's "sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression" must be taken into account and respected by placing agencies in the delivery of each youth's services and the choosing of their residential placement.

Ontario children's aid societies are not provided with the resources to develop and implement specialized services for every need, and Five/Fourteen creates and maintains safe and affirming placements for LGBTQ and gender-independent youth in care, six years of age and older.

Led by members of the LGBTQ community, Five/Fourteen introduces our LGBTQ youth to their cultural community and heritage. We provide specialized education and support in:

- the history of LGBTQ and gender-independent people and communities,
- the rights of youth in care, and how to self-advocate and use legal resources,
- the general coming out process,
- current terminology, and choosing one's preferred terminology,
- unique developmental challenges and health disparities of LGBTQ youth,
- overcoming barriers LGBTQ youth face in accessing healthcare,
- becoming comfortable and happy with one's sexual and gender identity/ies, including in combination with diverse ethnocultural and religious practices and beliefs,

- LGBTQ youth social, health, and behavioural concerns, challenges, and strategies for success,
- outside resources for improving the mental, emotional, and physical health and well-being of LGBTQ youth, and building positive social networks.

Five/Fourteen works with all our foster caregivers to help them understand and share our LGBTQ+ community's/communities' history, shared culture, and contributions with our clients, to broaden our clients' personal and professional networks, and to deepen our clients' connections and feelings of connectedness with our community/ies.

Five/Fourteen's family resource workers collaborate with each foster family help each foster parent/family meet their goals and best support their client(s), and to expand their skills to support a broader diversity of clients in their home.

Five/Fourteen also collaborates with partner CASs to open our programming to LGBTQ youth who are with their biological families and supported by the CAS.



Lucas Medina, Executive Director

Lucas Medina is Five/Fourteen's founder and executive director. A former crown ward, he has spent much of his life after leaving foster care advocating for youth in the system.

Lucas has worked for child welfare agencies since 2001. He serves on committees of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, for the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and the Child Welfare Secretariat. In these roles, he has met with and listened to more than 100 LGBTQ youth in and leaving care to understand their needs. Lucas is an avid community volunteer and an experienced business and staff manager, and he graduated from the Public Administration and Governance Program at Ryerson

University with a research focus in Ontario's child welfare system.

Lucas began Five/Fourteen to help change life for youth in care, like him, who have complex personal identities, and need a safe, supportive, and affirming environment in which to flourish and succeed as individuals, now and for their whole lives.

“

Some days it is so humbling to witness the young change makers from care who are working so hard to make a difference for children now in care. I truly think they are leading any positive change in a system that has been so resistant... I am so pleased that Five/Fourteen was licensed.”

• **Irwin Elman**

Provincial Advocate for
Children and Youth





Programs

Program One

Program One includes two counselling sessions per month, regular social and cultural activities, life skills development programming (e.g., financial management, effective time use, grocery shopping and cooking, getting a driver's licence), health and sexual health counselling where age and/or behaviour appropriate, ongoing foster caregiver skills development programming, three hours of staff time per week, biweekly staff visits with foster caregivers, and regular monthly client care team meetings.

Care is provided through a holistic strengths-based, continuum of care, team approach, supporting foster caregivers with family resource workers, and clients with Five/Fourteen social workers, with shared support from programming coordinators, educational advisors, health and financial literacy advisors, and a qualified leadership team, all under the direction of a gay-identified former crown-ward with many years of experience in outside paid resource agencies and placing agencies, and academic research in Ontario's child welfare system.

Clients in Program One participate in Quality of Life (QOL) assessments once each month during the first six months of Specialized Care, and then once each quarter. Utilizing a proprietary system, designed in consultation with a team of eight experts at Deloitte, these assessments provide an ongoing quantitative assessment of each client's progress and mental health state, and are used as part of Five/Fourteen's ongoing program evaluation to quantitatively evaluate overall program success. QOL assessments are developed and subsequently revised, assessments are analyzed, and program success is evaluated in collaboration with University of Toronto Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work Associate Dean, and Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies researcher and advisor, Dr. Shelley Craig, and shared with placing agencies and Ministry partners.

The agency provides ongoing training and development for foster parents and clients, starting with agency orientations, and continuing with a revolving and evolving range of subject-specific courses including but not limited to: the history and cultural self-awareness of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer, questioning, two-spirited, genderqueer, and otherwise gender-independent community/ies; self-reliance and life skills; conflict avoidance, mediation, and management; token economy systems for behavioural improvement; peer support skills building; self-reflection and awareness; resume writing, interview skills, and personal branding.



Program Two

Contemporary research has clearly demonstrated that traditional/mainstream services create barriers — intentionally or otherwise — for LGBTQ youth that include feeling unwelcome and/or ignored and unsupported, and perceiving incompetence or cultural ignorance on the part of the service provider. LGBTQ youth too often are unacknowledged — or have their identities ignored — in these services, and the complex needs, worries and strengths of these youth are overlooked. This lack of acknowledgement has led to this population being largely invisible in the child welfare system, which in turn leads to further unmet needs and a fear of coming out.

Most clients thus arrive at Five/Fourteen at the beginning of their coming-out and self-acceptance processes, and require strong and caring supports to help reduce the impacts of the psychological, emotional, and social strain, to reduce depression, anxiety, and placement breakdowns, create a sense of permanency for the client, and develop long-term continuity of care. Research has shown, for example, that trans* youth are 90% less likely to attempt suicide when placed in a supportive and identity-affirming home environment.

Clients in Program Two receive all care itemized in Program One, plus an additional two hours of staff time per week, and additional family resource staff time as needed. Foster caregivers are provided increased support and coaching in Program Two to ensure best possible continuity of care, and to prevent conflict leading to placement breakdown.

Clients in Program Two undergo a thorough psycho-educational assessment, and take part in client orientation, intensive regular weekly private counselling with a registered therapist, biweekly quality of life assessments, agency-organized monitored social and cultural activities, thorough health and wellness assessments and services including a sexual health counsellor where age and/or behaviour appropriate, and five hours of staff time per week including at-least weekly staff visits and regular meetings with their full client care team.

For both programs, any service deemed necessary for a client beyond those stipulated in the care agreement (e.g., academic tutoring, psychologist appointments, prescribed accessibility devices or services) will result in an increased per diem and/or additional expenses being billed to the CAS.





Five
Fourteen[™]

