

RCAF Family Connector Program - FAQs

1. Who can volunteer?

Any adult family member may volunteer to be a Family Connector.

2. When you say ‘Connector’, what is the expectation?

Our Connectors sound important because what they do is important - But the job is actually quite simple! Each RCAF family that is posted to a new location deserves to be warmly welcomed into their new community and each RCAF family experiencing service-related separation deserves meaningful support and that’s where our Connectors come in. There is no cost to volunteer other than time. In fact, our Connectors are likely to gain a lot because they meet so many great people.

3. What are the requirements to volunteer with the Program?

Connectors need only have a desire to help other RCAF families! Good communications skills and a general knowledge of the local and military community are also assets; however, Connectors are first and foremost a friendly point of contact for families. Local MFRC staff and /or a designated Representative from the Unit will be available to help answer any specific questions about local/community services, etc. Volunteers will also need to undergo child abuse registry and criminal records checks (at no cost to you).

4. What is the time commitment?

The time commitment varies depending on the number of families that are assigned to a single Connector (typically 1-3 families). It also depends on your availability during the day, evening or weekend (it’s very flexible!). In most cases a few short phone calls or quick text threads are all that will be required, also you may also choose to connect with your assigned family in person at some point. The MFRC will provide training and guidance on reaching out to the family (or families) you are matched with.

5. Is there training? Who provides it?

Yes! Your local MFRC staff will provide basic volunteer orientation and training to teach you the ins and outs of the Program and how best to assist other families. The training is a one-time requirement and should only take a few hours of your time; it will also give you a chance to connect with other volunteers. Then a representative from the unit you are working with will help you connect with your assigned families.

6. Doesn't the MFRC already do this?

The RCAF Family Connection Program is a new way to connect families. By matching Connectors with families based on common family dynamics and encouraging units to establish more direct communications with families, this personalized Program hopes to build a stronger RCAF community, one family at a time. Of course, the Program could not succeed without the invaluable partnership of local MFRCs and volunteers will still be encouraged to share all the incredible work that the MFRCs and other family support partners are already doing.

7. I'm being posted this year and would love a Connector! Do I need to do anything?

The RCAF Family Connection Program is available at every RCAF unit in Canada. If you are being posted to an RCAF unit, you should expect someone to contact you about a family connector within a few weeks of receiving a posting message. However, this is still a relatively new Program reliant on local volunteers; if you don't hear from anyone please reach out to the unit directly or to the local MFRC and tell them you would like a Connector! MFRC contact information can be found at www.cafconnection.ca. You can also contact the Family Support Team by e-mail at RCAFFamily_ARCfammille@forces.gc.ca and we'll help connect you with the appropriate Program coordinator.

8. What if I'm not contacted about a Family Connector?

If several weeks have passed and you haven't been offered a Family Connector, feel free to reach out to your new MFRC and mention to them that you would like a Family Connector from your new unit. MFRC contact information can be found at www.cafconnection.ca. You can also contact the Family Support Team by e-mail at RCAFFamily_ARCfammille@forces.gc.ca and we'll help connect you with the appropriate Program coordinator.

9. Doesn't the military member already get a Sponsor? How is this Program different?

This Program is not a replacement for military sponsor initiatives currently practiced at many Canadian Armed Forces locations. The RCAF Family Connection Program is about families connecting with other families, because we recognize that families often feel forgotten and left out during moves and during service-related separations. This Program aims to fix that by making families part of the process from the start.

10. How do I know if this Program is available to me?

Provided that your uniformed spouse/partner/loved one is posted to an RCAF unit (at a Wing, base, or other location), the RCAF Family Connection Program will apply to you. If you are not posted to an RCAF unit, please contact your nearest MFRC for information regarding other programs in your area that may be helpful to you and your family.

11. My spouse/partner/etc is away right now. Can I get a Connector?

Yes, Connectors will also be assigned to families when the service member is away for more than 30 calendar days. Anytime you require support or information while your spouse/partner/loved one is away, regardless of where you are posted, please contact your local MFRC. You can also call the Family Information Line at 1-800-866-4546.

12. Are Connectors there to help a family through the entire relocation/service-related separation experience?

Connectors have a very simple role. They are a helpful ally to those who are in a new, unfamiliar place. Connectors can provide info on local services, directions to support resources and connect families with other families in the same unit. However, it's important to remember that Connectors are volunteers who are primarily a friendly point of contact. Services such as counselling, taxi driving, babysitting or yard-work are far outside of the scope of the Connector role.

13. I don't want anyone to contact me. Can I opt out of the Program?

While we hope the Connection Program will be a unique way to help families connect and learn about available local resources, you can certainly opt out at any time if the Program isn't right for your family. However, please remember that you can opt back "in" at any time by contacting your local MFRC, your member's unit or reaching out to the Family Support Team at RCAFFamily_ARCfamille@forces.gc.ca.

14. I think this is a fabulous idea, but I can't be a Connector right now. Is there any other way I can help?

Yes! Please help by spreading the word about the Program to others who may be interested in volunteering. You can also be helpful and visible at unit family functions whenever you are able.

15. Will I have the same Connector for our entire posting?

Not necessarily. Connectors will generally become less active with a family once the family has been given opportunities to connect with their community. As families get posted out, new connectors may be assigned through the unit to your family. Each connector will have the same training and access to relevant information. And if you think there might be something missing from the training, let us know how we can improve!

16. What about confidentiality?

Confidentiality is an important issue and we take your privacy seriously. Connectors are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all sensitive and private information while in acting in a connector capacity and thereafter. To this end, all volunteers are required to sign a Volunteer Service Agreement which specifies Rules of Conduct and an Oath of Confidentiality. Furthermore, you are never obligated to share any personal information that you do not wish to with your Connector.

17. Why is this Program important?

The RCAF Family Connection Program is important because mobility and separation are two major stressors for military families. In response to RCAF family voices heard from coast-to-coast, this Program will help improve direct communication with families and focus on the types of connections that truly build communities. It will also ensure a consistent level of support across all RCAF units.

18. Who does this Program apply to?

All families posted to any RCAF unit, regardless of their environmental affiliation (Army, Navy or Air Force).

19. What if we are not an RCAF Family?

If you are the loved one of a Canadian Army or Royal Canadian Navy member, but you are posted to an RCAF unit, this Program also applies to you. However, the Program is not currently available at Canadian Army, Royal Canadian Navy or other non-RCAF units. We encourage you to reach out to your local MFRC who can provide you with a wide range of family support information and resources. You can find local contact info by visiting www.cafconnection.ca.

20. How many volunteers does each unit need?

The more the merrier! Exact numbers will vary depending on unit size, operational tempo and annual personnel turnover. The Command Team (Commanding Officer and Senior non-commissioned member) at each unit will determine the volunteer cadre size that best meets their unit's respective needs.

21. Can uniformed members volunteer to be Family connectors?

While the intent of the Program is for non-military adult family members to become connectors, there is nothing preventing uniformed members from taking on a family connector roll on their own time and after regular duty hours. This would NOT be considered as a Unit Secondary Duty.