



Executive Director Report – September 2016

Rhonda Barraclough

We have had a busy spring and fall for 2016. With hiring 2 contractors to take on various parts of the ALIGN work it has been a treat to be able to mentor them, and work on some of the Board and agency activities that need to get revitalized.

I am not focusing this report on the strategic directions document as it has done its time. We, as the Board, and myself need to look forward and develop new strategic directions. In reflection I believe we have been able to achieve the goals we set out 5 years ago and have met or surpassed them in our advocacy, practice, policy and political strategies. See the attached high level overview of the strategic directions for the past 5 years and my assessment of our results.

In the last year we have been able to hire 2 new contractors to meet our members' needs in the policy and procedure area, support caregivers and as an agency we have implemented our new Board structure along with the new bylaws and our new name. At the last members meeting we were able to go through all these areas and highlight the work that was being done in each area. That was helpful for members as many made comments afterward that they appreciated the overview.

My areas of focus have been on:

- Contracting, procurement and the templates – involved in the template development with the lawyer for the ministry, Bruce Armson, Norm Welsh and Marika Gieson. Waiting a review of the July roll out to give feedback, reviewed the business case for tendering campus based group care and specialized services;
- Child Welfare League of Canada (CWLC) Board member- met in PEI in June and will be meeting again in Vancouver. We met with Cindy Blackstock for the First Nation Caring Society about how the CWLC can support the activities of the FNCS and their work with the truth and reconciliation recommendations and moving the agenda forward for indigenous children. CWLC wrote a letter of support and is trying to be strategic in its activities going forward;
- Beginning stages of leadership development program and the final stages of the bursary program – the leadership bursary funds are depleted. At this point we will be closing the application process. We will need to complete a review of the outstanding bursaries and see if there is any money left to offer. Otherwise we will complete a final report this year and will have enough moving for us to administer the pay out of outstanding bursaries. A request has gone forward for



further bursary funds but no word at this time. A report will be completed and sent to the Minister as a good news story; My hope is that the Board is interested in developing further strategies to look at leadership in the sector and for ALIGN to develop a plan moving forward to offer to agency leaders. This requires further discussion at the Board level, Jim and I have had discussion with the Banff Centre and have an offer on the table for discussion;

- Providing fiscal agent support to Community Initiatives Against Family Violence (CIAFV) as that program has had large growth from both the provincial government and the City of Edmonton FCSS funding.
- Starting to plan for group care day two – I have had initial conversations with Anton about getting Kenneth Hardie and James Whittaker here for the spring 2017, we are close to completion of a special edition journal on the group care symposium we had in spring 2016;
- Alberta Mentoring Partnership – leadership table and the chair of the Youth in Care (YIC) mentoring project, the National Mentoring conference will be held in Nov 2016 and our project will be presenting there. We have also written an article that will be published in our Journal, this work is of interest across the country and we have spoken with BC, Ontario and Saskatchewan about various parts of the work;
- Sitting at the Collaboration table (formerly the foster care negotiation table). This is where the ministry takes issues of foster care and discusses them with agency, AFPA, DFNA, and others. Currently Jon Reeves is the chair and Mark Hattori is often there;
- Ministry Liaison – quarterly meeting with ADM; ongoing discussion in the policy and practice area, reorganization;
- Completing the Cross Association Workforce survey – this is a request of the Workforce Alliance; it is unclear about the future of this group with government. As the government changes and the Ministry reorganized it seems to be less of a priority for them so the future is to be determined this fall;
- Reviewing Board policy with the executive of the Board, new and ongoing project;
- Regrouping the indigenous advisory group, getting familiar with the truth and reconciliation recommendations and the UN rights of children, we need to meet the new ADM for the Community Engagement area of the MHS. They are working on engagement strategies to address the indigenous concerns of the child welfare system;
- Supporting Cathy and Nicole in their new roles and responsibilities;



Report to Align Annual General Meeting/ Board of Directors – Sept 2016

Submitted by Nicole McFadyen

Over the last 5 months I have focused on becoming current in regards to the projects, initiatives and challenges facing Agencies and Children and Family Service (CFS) in the province of Alberta.

The Government of Alberta has been under redesign. This redesign has created uncertainty in the Sectors and has left questions regarding future collaborations.

My role consists of helping agencies navigate through the many changes impacting and being implemented within the Child Intervention sector and to ensure that Agencies voices are being heard within Child and Family Services in Alberta. I have begun meeting with agency representatives to gain a better understanding of what changes have been implemented, while trying to make the connections between the initiatives/frameworks/practice priorities and how we will need to incorporate the changes in thinking and practice into our future strategic planning.

It is my understanding that all of the work that has been done within the last few years is interconnected, complementary and adds to what we already knew. I have listed the areas I am responsible for within my role with Align.

Foundation of Caregiver Support

Signs of Safety Working Group

Indigenous Training

Provincial Collaboration Table

Child Intervention Practice Framework

Early Intervention

Well- Being Research Project

Chapter meeting/ Training and Design

Group Care Re-Design

Child and Youth Care Association

Below is an insert from the Foundations of Caregiver Support 101 training series developed by Alberta Children and Family Services and is intended for CFS staff and caregivers in a series of training. I have attached it below as it provides explanation for many of the above initiatives.

*The purpose of the **Foundations of Care Giver Support** is to provide a base from which to develop caregivers' capacity to improve positive outcomes for infants, children and youth. It builds upon Child and Family Services, **Child Intervention Practice Framework**, **Signs of Safety**, and the **Prevention and Early Intervention***



Framework. It also recognizes and builds upon the abilities and strengths, including cultural and family strengths of infants, children and youth.

The **Child Intervention Practice Framework** sets principles, outcomes and priorities for providing supports and services to infants, youth, and families who are at risk of or in need of intervention. **Signs of Safety** is an integrated approach for doing child protection work which includes principles and tools for engaging and protecting children. **The Prevention and Early Intervention Framework** provides guidelines for establishing a continuum of evidence-informed prevention and early intervention services. Implementation of the **Prevention and Early Intervention Framework** for children, youth and families focuses on the reduction of child maltreatment.

The **Foundation of Care Giver Support** will provide the principles, guidelines and practices to enable caregivers to support the safety and well-being of infants, children and youth being serviced by all CFS programs- from early intervention through temporary care to permanency.

Child Intervention Practice Framework/ Foundations of Caregiver Support/ Prevention and Early Intervention Framework

Agencies were asked to submit a PQR in 2016 and were required to answer if they would be providing “Trauma Informed” programming. Through the work of the document of *Foundation of Caregiver Support* it is the expectation of CFS that anyone providing services will be Trauma - Informed in their practice. This term used in conjunction of the understanding of the three pillars of the *Foundation of Caregiver Support* are expected to provide clarity to the sectors providing front line services.

I have spent the last few months attending several different “Trauma Informed” training sessions. Some have been Provincial initiatives like the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) funded by the Alberta Children and Family Services and provided by Hull Child and Family Services. Others, have been Trauma Informed Training from Early Childhood Development Support Services (ECDSS) , as well as Alberta Health Services Trauma training webinar. All courses do provide information regarding the Core Story, Brain Development and Trauma. They do provide information on working with individuals who have experienced trauma and the neurodevelopmental approach to understanding these individuals. Some also look at how being a caregiver in the field provides exposure to vicarious trauma and Trauma Informed practice from an organizational level.

Presently the Palix Foundation is working on their own Trauma training series. The Sheldon Kennedy Advocacy Care Centre is also developing an online Trauma



Awareness Training. In collaborative conversation with Agencies, CFS, Palix Foundation and the Sheldon Kennedy Advocacy Care Centre and the Foundation of Caregiver Support Steering Committee (FOCS), there has been some agreement that the general term may be providing misunderstandings with regards to the overall definition and/or terms of references for the term “Trauma Informed “ practice. Presently we are meeting to work out a definition that will give everyone a better understanding of where individual sector practices sit on the spectrum.

The FOCS is doing a literature review to look at different Evidence - based models of therapy that are Trauma-Informed. The committee has also requested advisory from the Provincial Collaboration table for future recommendations and direction. Children and Families Services division has completed the development of 101 training to look at 4 main areas from this document. The Core Story of Brain Development, Grief and Loss and Trauma, Stress and the Developing Brain. This 101 training series is presently being piloted the AFPA Fall 2016 conference and the Align 2017 January conference. They will be requesting feedback from participants in order to make changes to the curriculum as the pilot rolls out over the next several months. The developers are also in the beginning phases of providing a fifth module to look at Multigenerational trauma through an Indigenous lens. The 101 training series working group has invited Align to join the group to provide review and input into the training curriculum and delivery. This group is meeting later this fall to work on implementations of participant feedback.

Early Intervention

I am presently reaching out to Agencies who provide services in Prevention and Early Intervention to gain a better understanding of the strengths, challenges and concerns currently in the province. Future updates to come in this area.

Signs of Safety Working Group

I have been invited to sit on the Signs of Safety working group. Updates to come in this area.

Chapter Meetings – Membership Recruitment - Conference Committee

I have attended 3 chapter meetings before the summer break. I will attend these meetings whenever possible to connect and have ongoing communication with members. I have been meeting with potential new members and explaining the benefits of membership for both the Association and the member.

We are currently 3 months away from the Align 2017 January Conference. The committee has been working on finding presenters and sponsorship. We currently have a wide variety keynote speakers and workshops in the lineup.



Group Care Redesign Group

It was recommended by CFS at the June 2016 meeting that this working group would dismantle into several small working groups to address some of the remaining work to be done. The expectation is that Group Care will be going to tender this Fall. The plan is to start with Campus Based Care. The dates are to be announced.

Well Being Project

At the request of the Ministry of Human Services, Children and Family Services Division formed a small working group to explore options related to screening and assessment of well-being.

Historically, the work of child protection by its very nature has been deficit focused. In addition, many of the assessment tools used for children, youth and families also come from a deficit or “what is wrong” approach. In Alberta, significant work has occurred to refocus child protection through the development and implementation of the Child Intervention Practice Framework. Most recently the Foundations of Caregiver Support has developed and adopted a foundational approach to working with infants, children and families involved in CFS.

The piloting of a well-being tool that is evidence based, easily accessible by the youth and those around them, is paramount to the large initiatives focused on providing optimum interventions to at risk youth and their families. The task of the working group was to determine if child well-being scales exist that are strength based in their approach, evidence based, appropriately normed, potential or completed norming in the indigenous community, and were appropriate for caseworkers, agency staff and caregivers to administer, and can be used at an outcome measures at a program level.

This summer a Master of Social Work student from the University of Calgary has been tasked with working on a literature review, drafting orientation, a focus group process, work plans and next steps in order to help the project move forward. I have also been meeting with agencies that have shown some interest in sharing their process in which they are already collecting data in this area. This group is to reconvene this fall.

Indigenous Training

Allying with Indigenous People – Cultural Solutions training for Calgary area and South is currently taking registration for an upcoming training in Calgary September 20-23, 2016

Omanitew- Cultural Solutions has a upcoming training in Region 7 - November 2016.



We plan to have 2 trainings in Edmonton and another 2 in Calgary & South over 2017. An independent evaluation of the trainings has just been completed and provides an excellent overview of the ongoing benefits they both provide with regards to individual, and organization practice and awareness. The report will be released once reviewed by the working committee.

Align is presently reconvening our **Indigenous Advisory Group** in order to gain some guidance in planning for the upcoming year. Please stay tuned for further information in this important area of work.

Conclusion

In closing, it is my intention to continue to gain a strong understanding of the views, opinions and challenges that each of our members experience, in order to help us achieve true collaborative services between Children, Youth and Families, the Ministry of Human Services and Children and Family Services regionally.

Summary of ALIGN Project Updates May 2016-Sept 2016 – Cathy Mitchell

Mental Health First Aid Grant (MHFA) symposium and caregiver training:

There are still funds left in this grant; ALIGN and the AFPA both put forth applications for a grant extension through to March 31, 2017 proposing the scope of how the dollars can be used and broadened to meet the current training needs of caregivers. Planning is underway for a one-day symposium and other specific training for caregivers across the province.

Because of the good work done by the Psychotropic Medication Committee who developed the “*Pathways to Better Mental Health*” resource, the same individuals were asked to participate on the MHFA symposium/ training committee. The committee members representing foster parents ALIGN, Ministry of Human Services, agencies, CASA, and the AFPA met on June 20, and August 11 with plans to meet on Sept 15. They are to discuss the symposium development and other training that will be helpful to support caregivers in the mental health area. “Caregiver” encompasses agency and department foster parents, kinship parents, adoptive parents, residential and group care staff.

The main theme of the symposium will be the mental wellness of youth in care, the use of psychotropic medications and how caregivers can become more knowledgeable in supporting these youths. We plan to have medical expertise as well as culturally informed individuals presenting. Representatives from the OCYA have agreed to present and this will include hearing from youths who are or who have experienced



treatment with psychotropic medications. The presentation will include what worked, what didn't work and what could caregivers do differently to support the youth better.

The date and presenters for the symposium have been confirmed.

“Mental Wellness for Children and Youth in Care: Support for the Caregiver”

Date: January 25, 2017 (Confirmed)

Location: Fantasyland Hotel (Confirmed)

Confirmed speakers are Dr. Wanda Polzin; the two nurses running the projects in Calgary and Edmonton - Sheena and Jeff; Dr. Lana Potts, and the OCYA Representative and Youth.

Further caregiver training - Planning is also underway for training sessions in Edmonton, Grand Prairie, Red Deer, Calgary and Lethbridge for caregivers on various topics:

Fentanyl Information: Checking availability of AHS; much of their training and info is on line.

LGBTQ and High Risk Youths: David Rust has submitted a proposal and we are awaiting available dates and costs.

Medication Administration: Looking into the availability of an RN that meets CAC/CARF Standards.

Pharmacist: AFPA Conference pharmacist presenter Carey Lai will be videotaped in November; his permission to post the session on both the AFPA and ALIGN websites is being sought and will be incorporated into the medication administration training.

Trauma Informed: CASA offers Therapeutic Crisis Information (trains caregivers to look within behavior for cause and gives them tools to use) (3 Days) (perhaps one session in Edmonton, one session in Calgary)

ALIGN Research Journal:

The Residential Care Symposium April 2016 Special Edition is just about ready to go to the publisher. Given that the requests for the presenters to submit an article went out in May the challenge became when they could respond given summer holidays and other commitments. We have received four out of the six requested articles. The other two presenters have been in recent touch and plan to have their articles submitted by mid September. We are hopeful that this Special Edition will be ready in October 2016.



Fall 2016 ALIGN Research Journal: We currently have three articles that are ready to go and several are still with the editing committee or with the author for revisions. Again the challenge has been the summer months and individuals on holidays. We are hopeful that a 2016 Fall Journal will be ready to go in November with the plan to have another one in the spring of 2017. Several ideas for article recruitment have been brought to our attention that needs further exploration.

Health and Safety in the Child and Family Services Sector:

(This summary is a combination of minute meetings and information sheets authored by Tom Barker) The Research Team last met on June 16, 2016, the Interim Report Summary: has been released and the research team is looking at options for distributing this report. [Healthyworkplacesummaryreport.pdf](#) Some suggestions are; press release to newspapers, copy to the Ministry of Labour, association newsletters, publish on the websites, maybe an article in the ALIGN Journal.

The Research Partnership Program (RPP) was designed to give agency leaders in human services a process to develop and grow health and wellness initiatives that will have a strong possibility of creating real change. The purposes of the program are: to stimulate wellness initiatives, to work collaboratively using a participatory approach, and to develop models of change. Agencies participating in the RPP will actively be involved in assessment, planning initiatives, implementation of their program, creating communication and policy materials, and program evaluation. Representatives from these agencies will participate in the Alberta-wide Health and Wellness Conference in 2017, to share success stories and lessons learned from their agency's program. The RPP is currently working with three agencies: The Ronald McDonald House, the Central Alberta Women's and Emergency Shelter, and Heritage Family Services. Each agency works with an academic partner from the University of Alberta. Data on employee health and wellness needs was gathered from both self-administered surveys as well as discussions between agencies' health and wellness committee members and other leadership, and University of Alberta's academic partners during March-April 2016. Working together, agency staff members, leaders, and research partners developed these health initiatives by: 1) creating and analyzing baseline data for each agency; and 2) adapting health and wellness theories/models to each agency's specific needs. We hope to develop case studies from these agencies that can further inform our HWHP framework and provide examples for other Alberta human-services agencies. We would like to identify other interested agencies in each of the sub-sectors to continue this work.

Fall 2017 Health and Wellness Conference: We are working with the University of Alberta Faculty of Extension Marketing and Media Group to set up this



conference. More discussion is needed with the research team around the planning, ideas for speakers and marketing of the conference.

ALIGN is part of the steering committee for this research project.

Healthy Workplaces Intervention Framework: We are beginning to see a framework that we can make available to non-profit human-services sector agencies in 2017.

Be a Wellness Leader Program (BWL): We have a version of the BWL materials and facilitators guide on the web site and are looking for ways to deliver it to the sector in Fall, 2016 and Winter, 2017. A representative from Align will partner with the University of Alberta to co-facilitate one-day sessions in Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary for agency staff interested. This program will be discussed at the AGM Sept 23, 2016.

Certificates of Recognition for Agencies (COR): Information on how an agency can go about obtaining a COR is online, however the info is in different places and needs to be brought together into one user friendly manual for easier access. The process to obtain a COR is involved and agencies will need clear information and support. Several agencies in the province have obtained a COR and will be useful resources as we develop the manual.

Meetings will occur this fall with both WCB and the Ministry of Labor to discuss how we can work together to make the process of obtaining a COR more manageable for the membership with the goal of lowering their insurance premiums.