



## **Briefing Note for Honorable Minister Irfan Sabir, Minister of Human Services:**

### **ALIGN**

#### **Association of Community Services (formerly Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families - AASCF)**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this brief is to inform the Minister about the work of ALIGN, Association of Community Services. ALIGN is a key partner with the Ministry of Human Services, and a stakeholder in the matters of Child Intervention (CI), Early Intervention (EI) and Family Supports for Children with Disabilities (FSCD).

ALIGN is a membership organization that represents most of the 140 agencies that provide services to the Ministry. We are one voice for many – a collective voice for our membership that promotes the essential services our members provide. In Alberta, the model of human service delivery is based on a model involving a blend of Ministry staff, contracted agencies, and community service agencies, working together at the family, community, and regional level. This mix is advantageous because it makes service delivery more efficient and, effective, drawing on a diverse pool of expertise and community connections. ALIGN Association of Community Services works to strengthen member agencies and promoted attitudes, practices and conditions that contribute to quality and sustainable services for vulnerable children and families.

We achieve our mission by:

1. Creating a network of agencies for information sharing, social policy development and advocating on behalf of service providers;
2. Developing professional practices for service excellence; and
3. Representing the interests of member agencies on regional and provincial committees

ALIGN has 48 years of experience and wisdom; we are experts in leading practice in the sector. The community, teaching institutions, the Government of Alberta and other associations recognize us for our expertise across the Province. Our leadership and participation on important issues involving our sector are constantly sought after. With our shared experience we act as a central hub for our members and share information, research and resources. We are also seen as a central connector to our agency sector, making communication and input more effective.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Alberta Association of Children's Care Centers was incorporated in 1967 by a number of people providing residential services. One of the first issues in 1967 was the training needs of child care worker staff. In 1968, policy implications and training continued to be a main issue. In the late 1970's the Association began working on standards of practice at the request of the Ministry. This Standards work lead to an Accreditation process that was delivered by the Association into the early 2000.

In 1987 the earlier Association became the Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families (AASCF), expanding to include agencies beyond group care providers, including family support agencies, parenting programs and others. The disparity between the public sector and community service sector wages emerged as a critical issue. The issue of wages is key to the recruitment and retention of educated, experienced, and career minded staff. This, in turn, is linked to the quality and sustainable services necessary for vulnerable Albertans.

In 2005 the AASCF split into two separate agencies. The membership organization remained AASCF and a separate accrediting agency- Canadian Accreditation Council on Human Services (CACHS) was born.

Since 2006 the AASCF has focused its work on the relationship with Ministry, focusing on workforce issues of wages, retention and recruitment, leadership, along with policy and legislative issues. We strive to work collaboratively with the Ministry in areas that affect our collective clients and vulnerable Albertans.

In May 2015 the AASCF rebranded as ALIGN, recognizing the essence of collaborating around the cause of serving the children and families in Alberta.

## **CURRENT SITUATION**

For the last 5-7 years we have worked collaboratively with Government of Alberta on a number of key initiatives, projects and policy development activities. This has lead to a much more aligned approach for services in Alberta. We bring the collaborative voice of the contracted community agencies to provincial issues, providing the integral perspective of the front line and our unique communities.

Current provincial activities we are involved in include:

- Workforce Alliance
- Outcome Based Service Delivery (OBSD) provincial table (co-chair Leads table)
- Practice Framework development
- Foundations of Caregiving – reconstructing group and residential care

- Psychotropic Medication project for central and northern Alberta
- Training opportunities for Agencies in Indigenous studies; Family Group Conferencing; Mental Health First Aid; Signs of Safety; Circle of Courage and others
- Occupational Health and Safety – OHS Futures Grant and research project
- Alberta Mentoring Partnership – leadership team and child and youth in care mentoring project advisory group
- Leadership Bursary – funds were provided to AASCF in 2007 to support the development of Leadership Bursaries to agencies that provide direct services to child intervention; home visitation; and disability programs.
- Member of Alberta Alliance of Mental illness and Mental Health (AAMIMH) - support by Ministry of Health.

## **NEXT STEPS**

As the Ministry develops its mandates and prepare for the future we would be eager to continue our valuable partnership and be involved in discussions, advisory tables, and other activities as they arise. We represent a significant number of employees (approx. 6000) in the human services (specifically child and family services) field and want to make a difference to the vulnerable Albertans while working closely with the Government of Alberta.

We would be happy to meet with you and your representatives to discuss the Human Services portfolio specifically in the area of child and family services. We have played a major role in decreasing the number of Aboriginal children who have come into care; provided alternative care situations for families as needed ( kinship, safe homes, etc); and assisted Outcome Based Service Delivery (OBSD) in showing extremely promising outcomes.

We enjoy a good relationship with your staff and look forward to our continued work with yourself and the Ministry.

While much has been accomplished together, there still remains much work to be done.