



September 1, 2015

Honorable Joe Ceci
President of Treasury Board
Minister of Finance

RE: Budget Submission Budget 2015, 2016

First we would like to congratulate you and the NDP for your success in the May election in Alberta. ALIGN (formerly Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families) 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). We are pleased to have the opportunity to offer input into the current budgeting process.

ALIGN is a membership organization that represents most of the agencies that provide services to the Ministry in the outlined areas. We are one voice for many –140 agencies across the Province and a collective voice for our membership that gives voice to the needs and issues of these organizations who provide essential services. 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.

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.

Our Agencies' staff are generally well educated and well trained, and our programs are well researched and implemented with outcomes in mind. An ongoing issue is the fact that the agencies cannot compete with wages and benefits that workers might earn in the public sector and we have faced recurrent problems of staff retention and high turnover. Fortunately, our work with the Ministry over the last 5 years has resulted in predictable increases for wages, resulting in an overall improvement with these issues. Align feels that it is imperative that these regular wage increases continue. This is the only way we can continue to recruit and retain quality staff, which is the strength of our sector. Without competitive wages, we will not be able to maintain our important role in the effective and efficient delivery of services to our vulnerable children and families. Additional increases were not included in the last budget that was put forward.

It is our desire to stop the long standing process of advocating for funding increases in an attempt to sustain quality services. We require ongoing, predictable funding, not only for wages, benefits, but for operating costs and service delivery – essentially a full cost financial model, based upon the real and total costs of operating and providing services. We have examples of agencies that have gone many years without receiving operating costs increases. As you are aware the cost of living, and providing services, increases each year, and our member Agencies need to be able to keep pace to operate in a healthy, sustained manner.



For this upcoming budget and the 2016-2017 budgets we respectfully request a cost of living increase for both wages and operating costs. This will go a long way towards the sustainability of the contracted organizations.

During this time we would also anticipate ongoing work with the Ministry of Human Services on procurement and contracting activities (already underway), as well as the development of a Full Cost Financial model that would potentially be introduced by your government in the next few years. For the purposes of this submission, we would lastly wish to forward the need for prevention and early intervention services for our vulnerable children and families. We need to look beyond intervention, though these services are absolutely required, to also develop a strong base of community based prevention service. There are many best practices models that can be implemented in Alberta, to make us a leading jurisdiction in these available approaches.

For the long term, we recommend a significant commitment to developing leading prevention practices, including a commitment to reinvesting funds that have been saved due the effectiveness of intervention approaches like Outcome Based Service Delivery, Front –end strategies and others.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. This submission reflects our shared value of sustainability in the design and delivery of excellent services for Alberta vulnerable children and families.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this further please contact Jim Pritchard at 403-542-4891.

Sincerely,

Jim Pritchard
President – ALIGN Association of Community Services