

A report of the
Alberta Association of
Services for Children
and Families (AASCF)

2008

The Future is
Now!



Our Members

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Aboriginal Family Support Services | Accredited Supports to the Community | Adoption 2000 Consulting |
| Aetas Health Care Inc. | Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre | Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centre |
| Alta Care Resources | Alberta Home Visitation Network Association | Ardrossan Dreamcatcher |
| Aspen Family & Community Network | Association of Communities Against Abuse | Behavioural Solutions Inc. |
| Ben Calf Robe Society | Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society | Beulah Family Services |
| Big Brothers & Sisters of Calgary | Big Brothers & Big Sisters of Edmonton | Blue Devil Wilderness Camp Ltd. |
| Bosco Homes | Boyle Street Community Service | Boys & Girls Club of Alberta |
| Boys & Girls Club of Calgary | Boys & Girls Club of Edmonton | Bridges Family Programs |
| Calgary Family Services | Calgary Immigrant Women's Association | Calgary Southwest Communities Resource Centre Society |
| Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter | Canadian Accreditation Council | Canadian Arab Friendship Association |
| Canadian Outcomes Research Institute | CARF Canada | Catherine Hedlin |
| Catholic Family Services of Calgary | Catholic Social Services | Cerebral Palsy Association in Alberta |
| Cheyenne Life Style Support | Changes | Child & Adolescent Family Mental Health(CASA) |
| Child & Youth Care Association of Alberta | Child & Youth Care Program (Grant MacEwan) | Children's Cottage Society of Calgary |
| Children First Family Services Association | Children's Services Centre | Chimo Youth Retreat Centre |
| Claresholm & District FCSS | Closer to Home Community Services Society | Community Enrichment Department – Town of Canmore |
| Community Options – A Society for Children & Families | Connections Counselling & Consulting Foundation | Cook Counselling Services Ltd. |
| Council on Accreditation | Crisis Centre | Crossroads Family Services |
| Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary | Dickinsfield Amity House | E4C |
| Edmonton & District Family Support Association | Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations | Edmonton John Howard Society |
| Elk Island Child & Youth Ranch Inc. | Elizabeth Fry Society of Edmonton | Enviros Wilderness School Association |
| Family Centre of Northern Alberta | Family Centre of Southern Alberta | Family Connections |
| Family Ties (1997) Association | Family to Family Care Ltd. | Family Services of Central Alberta |
| Focus | Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society | Healthy Families Healthy Futures |
| Hedin Consulting Service | Hera Society | Heritage Family Services Ltd. |
| High Weld Consulting Ltd. | Hull Child & Family Services | Inner City Youth Housing Project |
| Kids Kottage Foundation (CFLOC) | Kihiw Awasisak Child & Youth Cares Services | Kihiwawasisak Enterprises |
| Lakeland Fetal alcohol Spectrum Disorder Society | Lamoureux Children's Home | Lethbridge College |
| Lethbridge Family Services | Lobstick Successful Kids & Families | McMan Youth Service, Family & Community Services (Central) |
| McMan Youth, Family and Community Services (Calgary) | McMan Youth, Family and Community Services (Edmonton & North) | McMan Youth, Family and Community Services (Lethbridge) |
| McMan Youth, Family and Community Services (Medicine Hat) | Morrison Youth care Inc. | Mount Royal College – Child & Youth Care Counsellor Program |
| Mountain Plains Community Services Society of the North | Mountain Plains Family Services Society of Edmonton | New Horizons Group Home |
| North of McKnight Community Resource Centre | Oak Hill Boys Ranch | Opokaa'sin Early Intervention Society |
| PACE | Parents as Teachers Society (South) | Parkland Youth Homes |
| Pathways Community Services Association | Pathways Family Services | Pathways Home |
| Piikani Child & Family Services | Prodigy Human Service Consulting Inc. | Protegra Inc. |
| Red Deer Native Friendship Centre | Region 3 Family Based Care Society | Renascence Homes Association |
| Rocky Native Friendship Centre | Salvation Army Children's Village | Sexsmith FCSS |
| Skills Society | Sifton Family & Youth Services | Southern Homes Society |
| SPEC Association for Children & Families | Spirit of Our Youth Homes Inc. | Sunrise Community Link Resource Centre |
| Sunrise House – Grande Prairie Emergency Shelter | Sylvan Lake Kinder-Care Association | Terra Association |
| WJS Alberta | Warren Youth Services | Wasasquayow Ranch |
| Westward Goals Support Services Inc. | Wetaskiwin Youth Centre | Wood's Homes |
| Yellowhead Youth Centre | Youth Assessment Centre – Lac la Biche | Youth & Volunteer Centre |
| Youth Emergency Shelter Society | YWCA of Edmonton | YWCA of Lethbridge & District |
| Nancy Laird | Bruce MacLaurin | Betty Lynn Baker |
| Doug Rogan | | |

In 2007 our membership was 109. We have grown in 2008 to 139 members



Who We Are?

The AASCF is a membership association formed in 1967 that represents agencies providing services to children and families in Alberta. ***Our mission is to strengthen member agencies and promote attitudes, practices and conditions that contribute to quality services for vulnerable children and families.*** Our members' services include a continuum from early intervention, family intervention, in-care services like foster care and group care, residential treatment and permanency planning, and disability related services. Services are provided throughout the province. The majority of these are mandated services provided on behalf of the Province of Alberta: Alberta Child and Youth Services, mandated services include child protection concerns of all types.

Some facts

- The AASCF represents 139 members (individuals, agencies & associations)
- Approximately 7,000 employees
- Over 2000 volunteers
- We serve 225,000 vulnerable Albertans or 80,000 children and families*
- Member agencies are located in 35 communities throughout Alberta and serve well over 200 rural and urban locations

*(AASCF August 2008 - Current Situation members' survey)

Who do we serve?

Children who are abused by people whom they trust

Children and youth who are in the care of the government and living in our group homes or foster homes

Teenagers who runaway from home and get involved in drugs

Women who are leaving abusive husbands and trying to protect their children

Aboriginal families that have moved to the city and struggle managing their families

New moms who are learning to parent their babies

Parents struggling with poverty

Children who have learning difficulties

New immigrants who struggle settling into our communities

Executive Summary

Sustainable and Predictable Funding is required to recruit and retain qualified staff to care for Alberta's vulnerable children and families

Child and family service agencies funded by the Ministry of Child and Youth Services (hereby referred to as "funded services") are increasingly unable to attract and retain qualified employees due to the low compensation they are able to offer relative to other sectors. High staff turnover has contributed to poor program continuity and has necessitated that large amounts of time be spent on training rather than program development. There are rising concerns about the ability to provide quality services to Alberta's children. Agencies have reduced service delivery in order to ensure that standards of care are being met.

AASCF Member survey results show that in 2006 agencies had a 20% turnover rate and in 2008 agencies have a 40% turnover rate.

The need for increased financial support is the result of historical insufficient funding seen in the 1990s and again in 2002 – 2005. At the present time, up to a 45% pay gap exists between equivalent positions in the non-profit and government sectors. We would like to recognize in 2008/09 that funded agencies received a 5% compensation increase and the Ministry committed the same amount for 2009/10. This funding will prevent the gap from growing further but still needs to be sustained. There is an urgent need to invest in strengthening and sustaining contracted services so that Alberta's vulnerable children and families receive help when in need.

In the last 23 years, funded services have received increases of 52.8% compared to the National Consumer Price increase over the same period of 78.84%

Solutions:

1. Reduce the historical gap by funding a 30% extraordinary adjustment to contracts. This would be distributed over a 3 year time period, with 10% annual extraordinary compensation per year for 3 years. The overall cost of this will be approximately \$22 million dollars a year.
2. Ensure predictable funding to address annual inflation as demonstrated by the Ministry in 2008 when a 5% increases for 2009 was announced in the spring of 2008. We need the ability to have predictable annual funding to sustain needed programs.
3. Continue to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Child and Youth toward improving methods of service delivery leading to positive outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

Initiatives Undertaken by the Alberta Ministry of Child & Youth Services

Over the last 12 months, the Alberta Ministry of Child & Youth Services has taken a number of important steps toward supporting funded services as they face problematic times:

- \$11 million from the 2008/09 annual budget which provided a 5% increase toward staff salaries.
- A commitment of an additional \$11 million (5%) for the 2009/10 fiscal year.
- A \$2 million Leadership Bursary Fund which is distributed by AASCF to encourage leadership education to emerging leaders within our sector.
- Establishing a New Business Relationship Committee which includes 10 agency representatives that is advisory to the Ministry of Child and Youth Services. This committee is examining the systems of contracting and outcomes with the intention of creating systems change.
- The Ministry is supporting the AASCF 2009 Conference.
- The Ministry meets regularly to collaborate with the AASCF to address challenges encountered by the child and family services sector.

Initiatives Undertaken by Funded Agencies

- Working with the Ministry on developing a New Business Relationship which will lead to a new contracting system and clear goals and outcomes for children and their families
- Providing training to our members to support professional development
- Development of an annual conference for front line staff and leaders to look at the issues that are relevant and current to the sector
- Development and promotion of a Leadership Bursary, funded by the Ministry, to develop the leadership capacity within the sector
- Encouraging and developing recruitment and retention strategies such as a website for job opportunities, highlighting opportunities for students, reorganizing staffing models and collaborating with agencies
- Efforts continue to increase public awareness and acceptance of community support at all levels, including fund raising and volunteer resources.
- Developing collaboration and partnerships among members to reduce costs, increase effectiveness and efficiencies.

Backgrounder



Sustainable and predictable funding is required to recruit and retain qualified staff to care for Alberta's Vulnerable children and families.

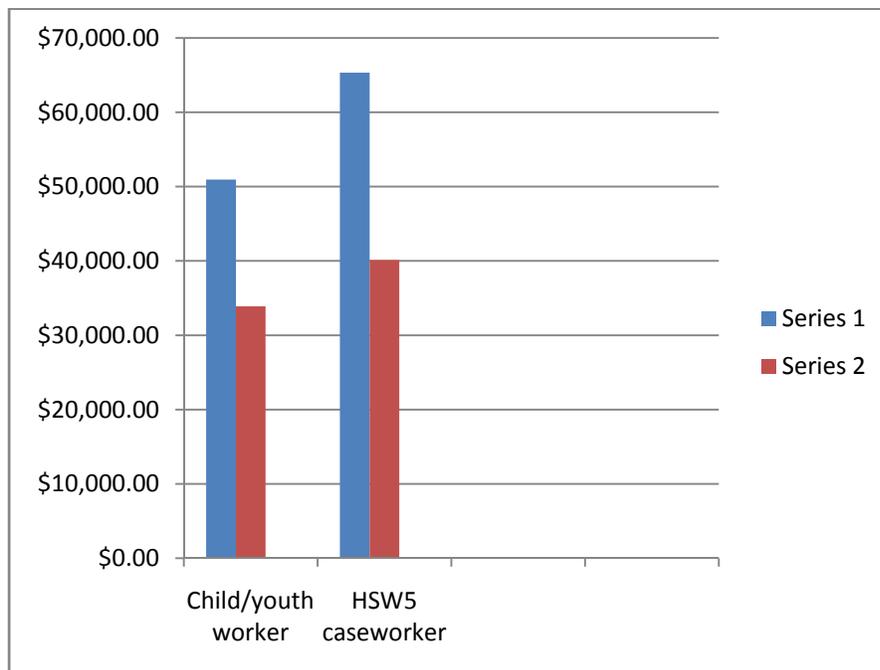
The greatest concern for funded agencies is their current inability to attract and retain enough staff. Based on the AASCF Survey results, funded agencies had a 20% turnover rate in 2006. In 2008 the turnover rate has risen to 40%. Funded agencies report significant numbers of job vacancies and a declining number of applicants. As of August 2008, 40% (average) of the staff in the funded agencies had 2 years or less experience. This staffing issue has led some agencies to close beds, or reduce services, until the vacant positions are filled.

Salaries and Benefits

Inadequate compensation is the most common reason given by staff leaving their jobs. The salaries and benefits offered by the agencies have long been lower than similar positions in other sectors, such as health, education and social services, and are becoming increasingly unattractive in the current competitive job market.

“Economic pressures are forcing more staff members out of the non-profit sector and into higher-paying positions in the public and private realms. National research shows that two-thirds of respondents working for non-profits reported they left the sector to earn a higher salary.” (HR Council, 2008)

Wage comparison 2008 salaries



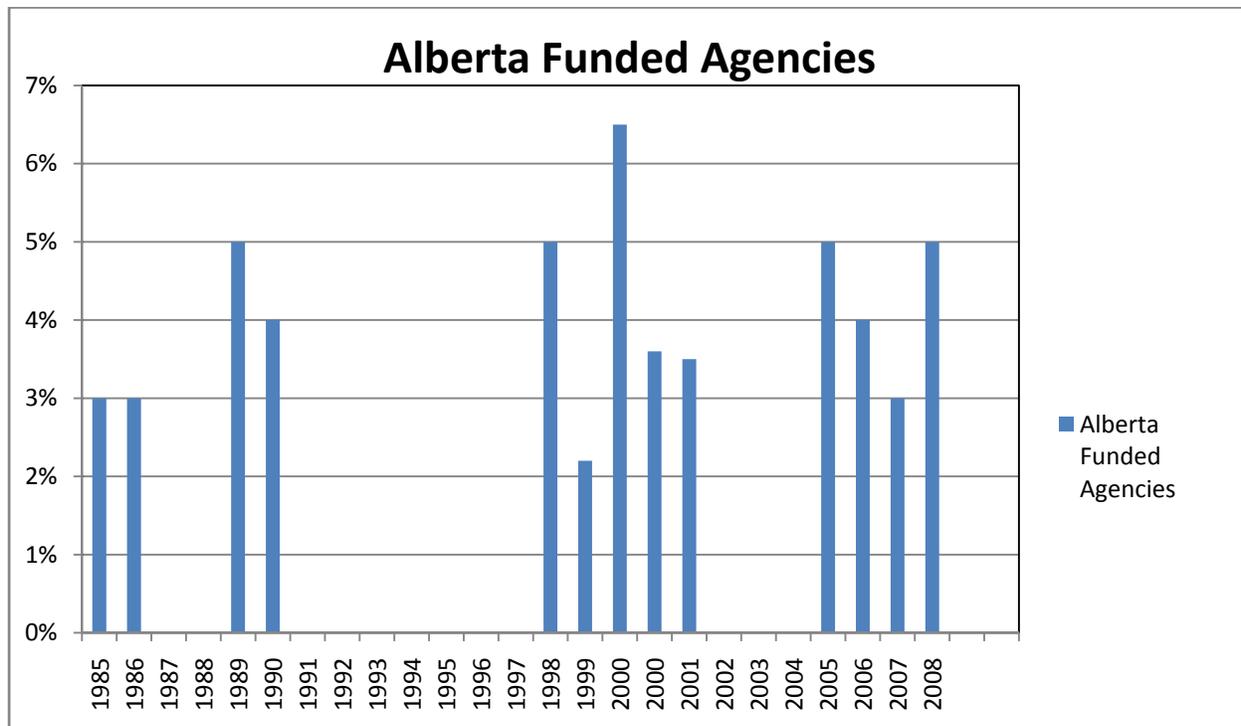
| <u>Average salaries/ % Difference</u> | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Gov't. | Not for Profit |
| Child/youth worker | |
| \$50,940.00 | \$33,881.25 |
| 33.5% difference | |
| HSW 5 Caseworker | |
| \$65,333.00 | \$40,113.29 |
| 38.6% difference | |

Series 1 = average government salary (Government of Alberta website) Series 2 = average not for profit salary (2008 Boland Survey of Not for Profit Sector Services)

Beyond wage differences in government there is a pension plan, yearly increments and a benefits package. In a funded agency there may be some benefits, and usually no pension plan and likely no yearly increments.

Salary Adjustment Experience by Alberta Agencies 1985 – 2008

Funded services experience wage gaps, as seen from 1991-1998 and again in 2002 – 2005, creating long term staff recruitment and retention issues. The chart indicates a 52.8% increase over 23 years as compared to the national Consumer Price Index (CPI) increase of 78.84%. This historical gap is what needs to be repaired.



The Ministry of Child and Youth Services have been investing regular increases toward funded services since 2005. This has been gratefully received. Unfortunately, the need for a 30% extraordinary injection of funds remains critical toward a solution to sustain agencies in order to attract employees back to this sector. This injection of funds will not fully close the gap between funded agencies and the public sector. This will achieve a more competitive balance.

"We are losing staff not only to other agencies, and the CFSA, but many are choosing to leave the field entirely"

"An inordinate amount of time and resources are required to orient, supervise, monitor, professional development to bring staff up to a level of competency that we expect. "

(AASCF survey respondent)

"In a recent survey, the HR council found that those employees who are looking for a new job, 41 per cent mentioned dissatisfaction with salary as their primary reason"

(HR Council, 2008)

Working Conditions

The current staffing shortage is not temporary.

“The growing number of retirees will affect staffing levels in all sectors. Research finds that community service and health care are expected to be the most adversely affected as staff retire” (Vocational and Rehabilitation Research Institute, 2004)

The high staff turnover in funded agencies has created significant increased training and supervision and demands. The deteriorated working conditions make it harder for staff to work safely and effectively, reducing the likelihood of achieving positive client outcomes. Funding and staff shortages have also limited the ability of funded agencies to offer training and career advancement opportunities that are commonly available in other sectors. The Leadership Development Bursary from the Ministry is a positive initiative. The reality of the situation is that the longer the staff works under these high stress conditions, the more likely they are to burn out, need sick leaves, and /or seek alternative career choices.

“Kids will react to staff leaving them and feel as if they are not valued. This usually manifests itself through violence and acting out... which requires more time and attention”

“Once the youth are discharged, then staff leaves. This is indicative of the attachment framework and the individual's commitment to the youth. They remain with the youth until discharge and then leave the field for less stressful employment. We continue to utilize overtime and team members from other programs to fill vacancies in homes that remain open.”

(AASCF survey respondents)

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Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families

2008

