

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

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### 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% increase 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.

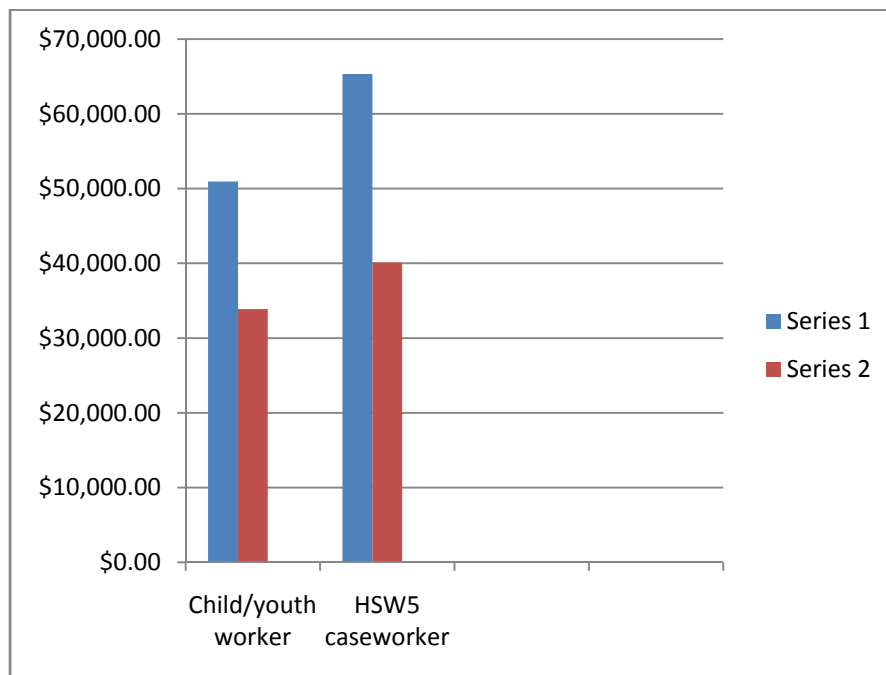
The greatest concern for funded agencies is their current inability to attract and retain enough staff. Based on the AASCF Survey results, funded agencies had a 20% turnover rate in 2006. In 2008 the turnover rate has risen to 40%. Funded agencies report significant numbers of job vacancies and a declining 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 lead 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



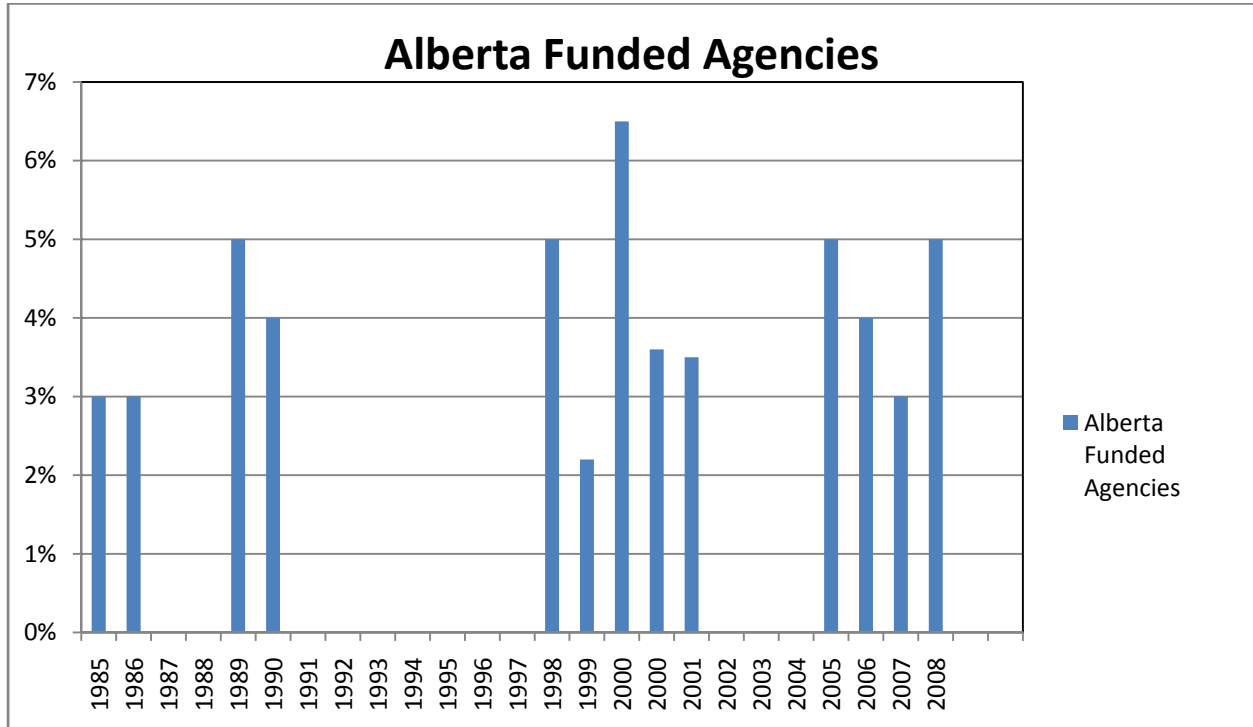
<u>Average salaries/ % Difference</u>	
Gov't.	Not for Profit
<b>Child/youth worker</b>	
<b>\$50,940.00</b>	<b>\$33,881.25</b>
<b>33.5% difference</b>	
<b>HSW 5 Caseworker</b>	
<b>\$65,333.00</b>	<b>\$40,113.29</b>
<b>38.6% difference</b>	

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**



