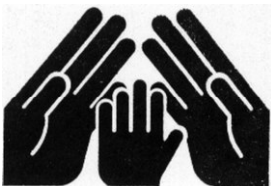


A report of the
**Alberta Association
of Services for Children
and Families (AASCF)**



“The Future is Now!”

The Human Resources Crisis
in the Non-Government Child
and Family Services Sector



A report of the
**Alberta Association of Services
for Children and Families**

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Sustaining Strong and Healthy Social Service Organizations

The non-government child and family services sector in Alberta is facing a crisis.

1. Agencies are unable to recruit and retain enough qualified staff to run their programs.

The sector is less able to attract and retain employees because of low compensation and poor working conditions relative to other sectors. The most qualified staff are most likely to leave, and agencies often have to replace them with less qualified applicants. Agencies are having to spend more and more resources on recruitment and training.

2. The quality and consistency of programs is declining.

There are fewer staff, with fewer qualifications, available to serve clients. Staff are overloaded and have less time to dedicate to each client. In addition, agencies are less able to maintain or acquire office space that meets their needs.

3. Agencies cannot plan for long-term program and organizational sustainability.

Planning is difficult when the future of financial and staff resources is uncertain. High turnover in leadership staff interrupts planning processes and prevents follow-through.

Causes

Since the major cuts to social programs in the 1990's, the Government of Alberta has contracted many agencies across the province for the delivery of services ranging from childcare to family violence prevention. The restructuring decisions made at that time have had a lasting impact on the non-government child and family services sector. Demographic, economic and funding changes across Alberta are also impacting the sector:

- ♦ **The population is growing and changing** - the demand for services is rising and issues are becoming more complex.
- ♦ **Costs of living are rising** - people need more income to make ends meet.
- ♦ **Costs of operating are increasing** - agencies need more funding to cover the price of staff benefits, rent, utilities, etc.
- ♦ **Funding has become more short-term and project-based** - agencies are not guaranteed that funding will continue after project terms end, and often do not receive much funding to cover their organizational operating costs.

Consequences

All of the parties involved in the non-government child and family services sector - whether they access, deliver, or fund programs - are impacted by the current crisis:

1. Children and families are not getting the service that they need.
2. Agencies cannot respond to social issues effectively, or ensure their own long-term survival.
3. Staff cannot afford a decent standard of living.
4. Government's limited investments are not getting results, and actually cost more in the long run.

Recommendations

The Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families (AASCF) urges the Ministry of Child and Family Services to take the following actions to alleviate the current human resources crisis and ensure the long-term viability of agencies in the non-government child and family services sector.

What Needs to be Done Now

1. Increase all non-government child and family services contract budgets by 20 per cent.
2. Continue working with Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families on understanding and identifying issues.

What Needs to be Done in the Future

1. Index salaries for non-government child and family services staff.
2. Investigate alternatives to contract re-tendering as a method of ensuring accountability.
3. Continue to support and build the partnership with the Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families.

Introduction

Significant changes in the population, economy and social service funding philosophy have lead to a major crisis in the non-government child and family services sector. Resources have been stretched to the breaking point, and the impacts are widespread.

The primary issue is one of staff recruitment and retention. This is a recurring theme across the non-profit and non-government sectors, from disability services to long-term care.

However, concerns in the sector are not limited to staffing. There are many interconnected issues at play, which we will touch on throughout this report. The challenges have become chronic, and are detrimental to the quality of social programs and the sustainability of the agencies that provide them.

Key Issues

1. Staff Recruitment and Retention

The greatest concern for many non-government social service organizations is their inability to attract and retain enough qualified staff. These human resources challenges are primarily caused by inadequate compensation and poor work environment.

The top 3 reasons given by AASCF agency staff for exiting their positions:

- 1. Salary and Compensation**
- 2. Do not believe government has the will to change the situation.**
- 3. The high turnover creates high stress and higher risk work environments.**

(Based on data from the 2006 AASCF survey.)

Turnover

Staff turnover rates are high. Child and family services organizations reported a six-month turnover rate of 20 per cent in 2006 - one-in-five staff are leaving every six months. This trend is not limited to front-line service staff. The non-government sector in general has also seen increased turnover in leadership positions.

Recruitment

The competitive job market has made attracting new qualified staff extremely difficult. During the 2006 AASCF survey, agencies reported nearly 800 job vacancies. This represents a huge lack of service delivery capacity.

Organizations also reported a declining number of applicants. The candidates who do apply tend to have less education and experience than required. Agencies often have to settle for less in order to fill their empty positions.

“Current compensation levels are such that folks do not apply. Two recent provincial and national job postings got a total of three responses - two of which were qualified. Once compensation was clarified, candidates respectfully declined.”

(AASCF survey respondent)

Resources Lost to Training and Turnover

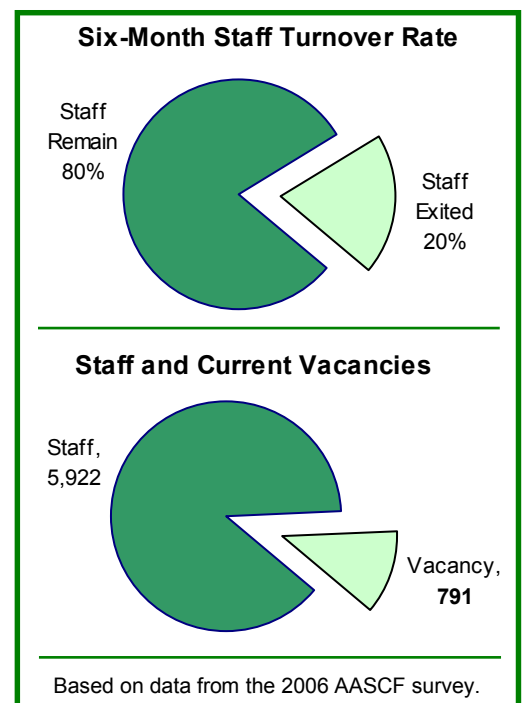
The sector has actually come to be seen as a “training ground” for people needing to gain experience. After recruits have received training and built up their skills, they are likely to leave for higher paying positions. The agency then has to start over with a new inexperienced recruit.

The loss of resources to agencies in this situation is two-fold:

- 1) Time and energy that should be spent on program delivery is lost to training.

“My office staff are using too much time hiring and training, and have less time for [improving] services.” (AASCF survey respondent)

- 2) The investment in training, and the resulting increase in knowledge, is lost when trained staff members leave.



2. Program Delivery

The non-government child and family services sector is also struggling with a reduced capacity to deliver consistent. This issue is primarily due to a persistent lack of both financial and human resources.

Reduced Staff Capacity

Organizations are experiencing a persistent lack of staff at all levels, including frontline, supervisory and management positions. As more staff leave, remaining staff struggle to stretch their schedules to take on a heavier workload, and are able to devote less time and energy to each client. The overall skill level of staff is also declining as more experienced staff leave the agencies.

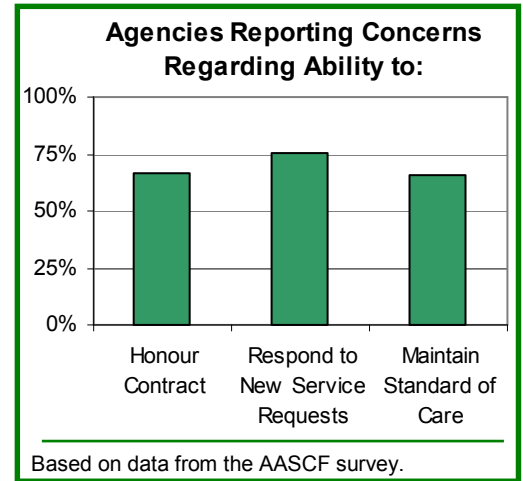
“Few [applicants] hold qualifications necessary to fulfill the roles and responsibilities to effectively provide service...

If [we] cannot find a suitable candidate... the team [will] experience more stress and burnout, and potentially more resignations. ...

If [we] resort to hiring someone with [unsuitable] qualifications... both service users and the team will be greatly impacted...

If [we can get a] suitable candidate... [how could we keep them with] the pay that we are able to offer?”

(AASCF survey respondent)



Reduced Physical Capacity

Many agencies are also finding themselves unable to expand their programs in response to changing community needs.

The cost of renting or purchasing office space has increased considerably in recent years, leaving agencies unable to afford to move to a newer or larger space. This forces agencies to continue operating in older spaces that do not meet their needs.

Aging spaces also require increasing amounts of maintenance. Agencies tend to have few funds available to cover the cost of ongoing or unexpected repairs. They are often forced to delay repairs until money becomes available.

3. Long-Term Planning and Organizational Stability

Many organizations are experiencing difficulties in planning for their long-term program growth and organizational stability. This can be traced to the prevalent resource shortages and funding practices in the sector, which have forced agencies to focus on their short-term survival.

Leadership and Staff Turnover

High levels of turnover make it difficult for agencies to predict the staff knowledge- and skill-base that will be available to deliver programs in the future. This makes it difficult to plan for new programs, which typically require staff teams with a particular combination of skills.

Leadership turnover makes it particularly difficult to develop organizational plans and initiatives. The likelihood of following through on plans is decreased when the people who developed them leave the organization.

“This sector is losing - and has lost - significant capacity in leadership.”

(AASCF survey respondent)

Short-term, Inflexible Funding

Many organizations rely on project-based funding sources or time-limited service contracts. It is difficult for agencies to devote resources to long-term planning and community relationship-building under these funding arrangements, as financial support is not guaranteed to be renewed.

Agencies are often forced to fundraise to support organizational initiatives and administration. This takes staff time away from program delivery and reduces the ability of agencies to develop new programs in response to arising community needs.

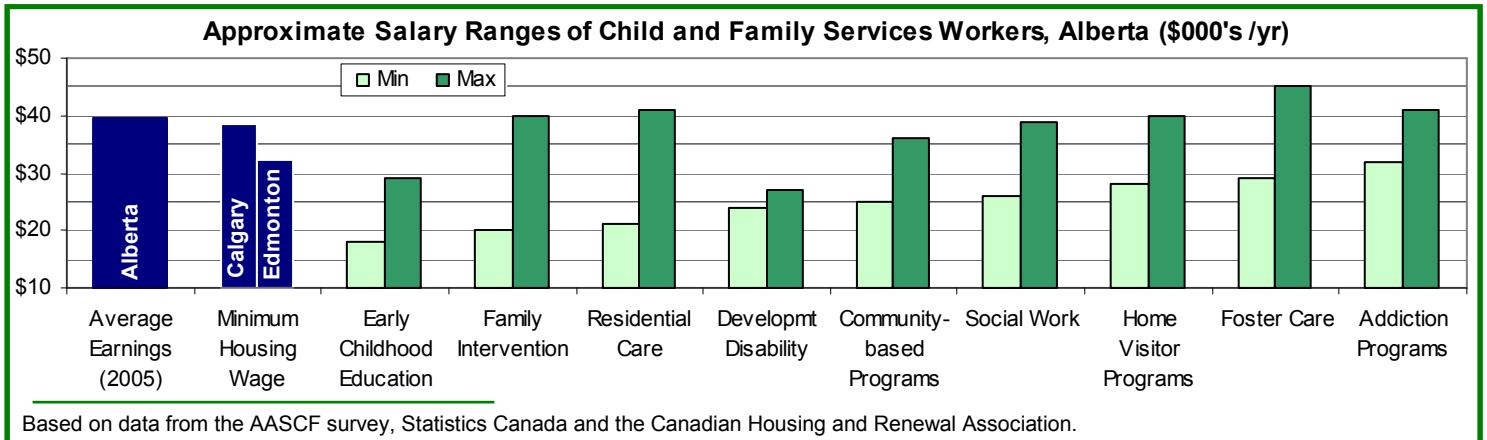
Key Factors

1. Salaries and Benefits

One of the key factors making agencies unable to retain and recruit staff is their inability to offer adequate compensation.

Uncompetitive Salaries

Salaries and benefits in the non-government child and family services sector - as in the non-profit sector, generally - have traditionally been low relative to other sectors. As average earnings increase across the province, the salary gap between community service agencies and the government, hospital, education and for-profit sectors is increasing.

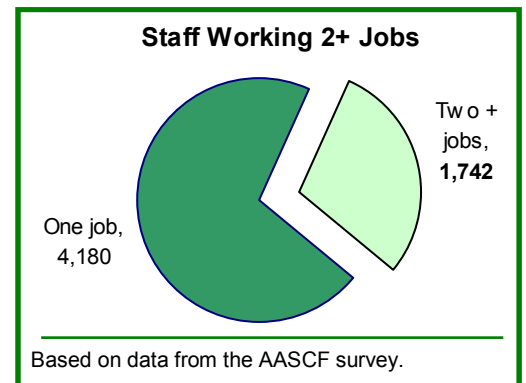


The reality for many workers in the sector is that they are unable to support their families on their wages. The Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families (AASCF) found that 29 per cent of child and family service workers were working more than one job to make ends meet.

“[Some of] our staff... [can’t] pay their rent, [use] the food bank and work at two or more jobs. ... They want to continue to work in this field and with our agency [but] many cannot afford to.”

“The bottom line is that if [staff have to] work two to three jobs to pay the bills, it makes more sense for them to go [elsewhere]...”

(AASCF survey respondents)



The lack of pay increases has led many staff to move to higher paying jobs outside the sector - even for positions that require much less skill.

“Staff have left because they are able to make twice as much in a government position, or \$10,000 more in another agency.”

“[Some retail jobs start] at \$10 - \$12 per hour plus signing bonus. We can’t compete with this.”

(AASCF survey respondents)

Uncompetitive Benefits

Non-profit child and family service agencies also lag behind in terms of their ability to provide competitive benefits packages. Some organizations are even unable to provide Worker’s Compensation coverage.

Benefits offered by agencies tend to be low-cost packages with less coverage than other sectors. Many organizations are also moving towards hiring contract or part-time staff, who typically do not receive benefits.

Inadequate Compensation for Education

The salaries that agencies are able to offer are often at levels considered “starting wages” in other sectors. Employees in the non-government sector are generally well educated, and many positions across the sector have wages that do not reflect the level of education or experience required.

Inadequate Compensation for Workload and Overtime

The staff shortage in the sector has led to heavier workloads and longer hours for many staff. Many agencies are not able to offer compensating pay increases.

2. Work Conditions and Intangible Benefits

The key benefit of working in the non-government sector is the ability to make a positive difference in peoples' everyday lives, and to witness that impact on an ongoing basis. Meaningful work is important for long-term employee retention.

However, these benefits are being overshadowed by the lack of resources in the sector. The situation has deteriorated working conditions, and made it harder for staff to achieve the positive outcomes that make their jobs rewarding.

Increasing Workloads, Stress and Burnout

The staff shortage has led to significant workload increases for all remaining staff, whether they are front-line workers, supervisors or managers. Remaining staff are often required to fill multiple roles; the added responsibility can lead to unrealistic performance expectations, particularly if the roles conflict or workers have inadequate training.

Growing workloads can cause significant stress for staff that makes them less effective in fulfilling their roles. The longer that staff work under these high pressure conditions, the more likely they are to burn out and need an extended leave.

Burnout is becoming more common in the sector. Staff are less able to have flexible hours or take time off, as few people can do their work in their absence. This is particularly true for leadership staff, who are least likely to be able to take time off - a factor in the sector's high leadership turnover.

“[The] increased workload and need to cover off on open shifts in residential programs is resulting in higher rates of stress and burnout.”

“We currently have 4 staff on stress leave .. [the] average was 1 or less [over the last] 5 years.”

(AASCF survey respondents)

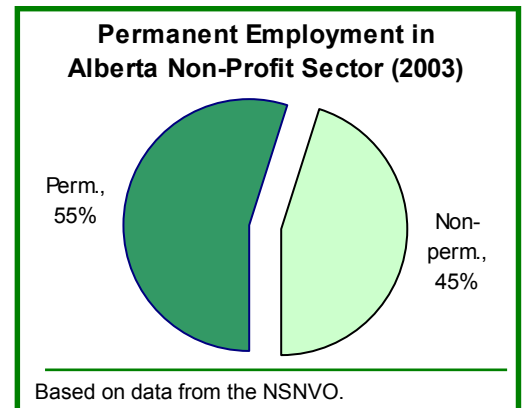
Job Insecurity

Short-term funding contributes to a climate of uncertainty, as organizational sustainability and staff employment hinge on the renewal of funding.

In order to deal with this reality, agencies have moved towards hiring staff on a part-time or contract basis. These types of employment tend to be less secure, and thereby less attractive to staff and potential recruits.

“We are relying on one-year project funding to maintain full-time employees, so new staff is on contract, without any [job] security...”

(AASCF survey respondent)



Poor Staff Development and Advancement Opportunities

Many agencies are unable to offer the training opportunities that are common in other sectors. This is mainly due to low budgets for training, and lack of time due to staff shortages.

A lack of training reduces the ability of staff to advance in their careers. The larger organizational structures and training budgets of government and industry offer better advancement opportunities, and better job security.

“Non-profit organizations typically offer excellent supervision, training... and other benefits that cannot be offered [now] due to... staff crises.”

(AASCF survey respondent)

The recent leadership development bursary funding given to the Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families is a good start. Additional funding will also be required to address other staff development needs in the sector.

Lack of Human Resource Expertise and Management Skill

Most agencies lack the resources to hire or train a staff member for human resources management. The world of work is becoming more complex, and a lack of skilled Human Resources support means employee needs may not be met.

High turnover in management and supervisory positions, as well as a lack of training, has also led to a decline in management capacity. This can leave staff with inadequate support, and may lead to workplace tension, particularly when the staff-to-management ratio is high.

Lack of Recognition

The inadequacy of funding for salaries and benefit from government, and the lack of action to change the situation, communicates to workers that they are not highly valued – yet another detriment to morale.

“Some [staff] feel they are under-valued as professionals when they make much less than... government positions [and other professions].”

(AASCF survey respondent)

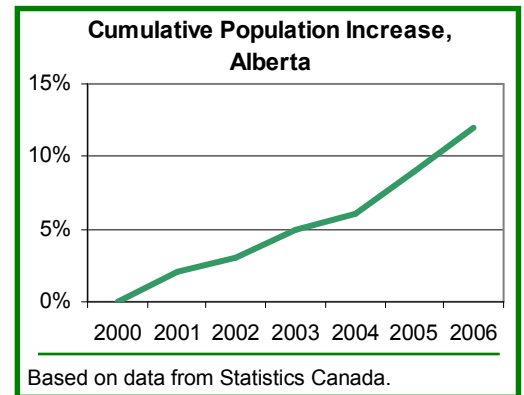
Causes

A number of questions arise from this discussion. What are the underlying causes of the situation the non-government child and family services sector is facing? Why has the urgency hit such a high pitch at this time?

1. Population Growth

Alberta has experienced rapid population growth over the last few years. This has contributed to significant changes in the province's demographics, including:

- ♦ **Increasing diversity**, as many immigrants bring a range of new languages, customs and culture;
- ♦ **Growing urban Aboriginal population**, as more people transition from reserves to the cities;
- ♦ **Changing families**, as the diversity of family structures increases – lone-parent, full-time dual-earner families, and other “non-traditional” family structures are becoming increasingly common.
- ♦ **Aging population**, as seniors are enjoying longer, healthier lives;



These changes have led to a greater number of increasingly complex social issues. As a result, all types of families are coming to require some level of support - not just the “high risk” cases facing chronic issues.

As the needs of the population grow, more social services staff are required to deal with the rising demand. Staff also require more skills to effectively deal with increasingly complex issues.

However, the current resource shortages are reducing the ability of agencies and staff to provide the quality of service the population needs. The NSNVO found that organizations dependent on government funding were most likely to report problems with meeting increased demand.

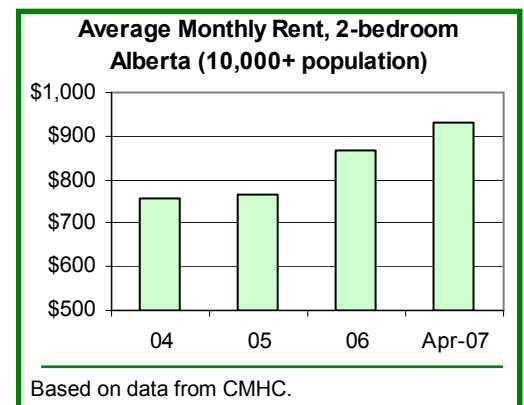
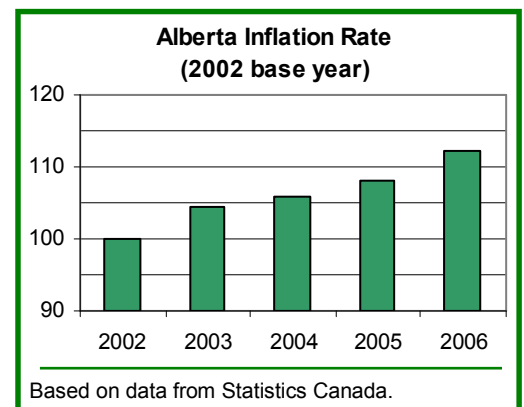
“I cannot hire mature, experienced, qualified staff to work in an environment where clients [are] presenting... more and more severe [issues].”
(AASCF survey respondent)

2. Rising Costs of Living

Alberta's economic growth is, of course, the primary factor drawing people to the province. It is also the driver behind the increasing cost of living.

The cost of basic necessities like housing, food and utilities have risen rapidly in the past few years. This means that Albertan's need to earn more income to make ends meet.

When incomes do not keep up with inflation, people become less able to afford a decent standard of living. Many non-government child and family service agencies have only been able to offer small pay increases, if any.



3. Rising Operational Costs

Organizations in the non-government sector are typically smaller than government departments and for-profit companies. As a result, social service agencies tend to have proportionally higher fixed operating costs than other sectors.

Inflation has increased over 12 per cent since 2002 and, just as the cost of living has increased for families, the cost of operating has increased for agencies. However, few organizations have received increased funding to cover these increases. This has forced many organizations to either cut their costs, or rely on fundraising to subsidize the amount they get from funders.

The growing reality is that many agencies that are not able to make up the difference, and must operate on deficits.

A. Salaries and Benefits

Staff salaries and benefits represent the greatest proportion of the cost of running a social service organization. It is also the budget area which is most often cut when costs become higher than funding revenues.

While the Ministry of Children’s Services has been able to give some limited compensation increases recently, the amounts tend not to adequately cover inflation. In general, funders have been unresponsive to the rising cost of living and the price of benefits.

“Current funding does not allow for regular [increases for] cost of living or ... exceptional performance.”
(AASCF survey respondent)

As a result, many agencies have been forced to hire more contract staff and cut their support staff (management, clerical, maintenance, etc.) to reduce costs.

“We have had to cut the coordinator and admin positions supporting the services, as funds for these are tied directly to volume of service provided; [This] means less supervision of front line staff and [less] support to families”
(AASCF survey respondent)

B. Other Core Costs

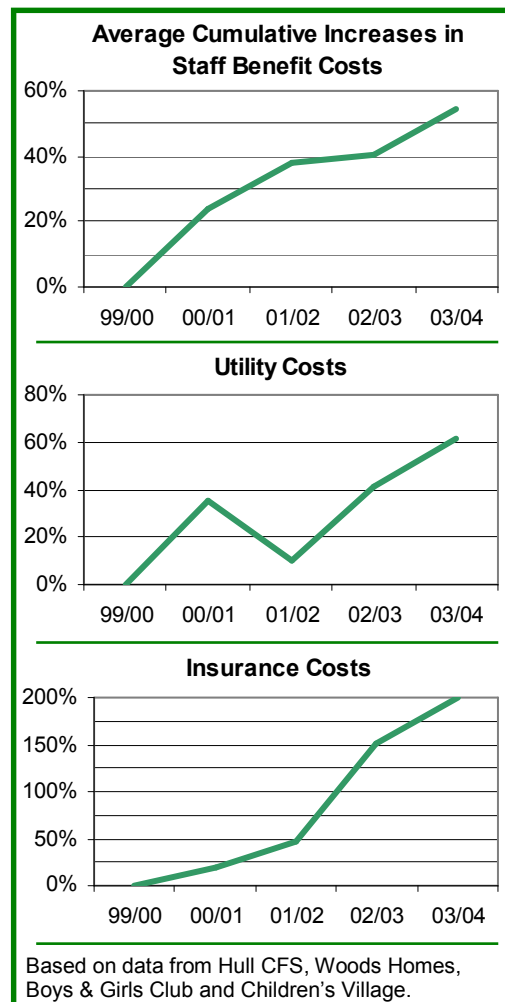
Core costs other than salaries and benefits make up the smallest proportion of operational expenses. Yet, they are essential items whose cost are typically beyond agencies’ control. These include:

- **Occupancy Costs** (rent, lease, utilities, etc.)
Much like apartment rents, rates for office space are increasing. This is a barrier for many agencies, who are often located in smaller, aging spaces that do not meet their needs, or compromise client security and confidentiality. Moving to a better space is often not an option.
- **Facility Maintenance** (IT, office repairs, etc.)
Agencies often cannot afford to hire designated IT or maintenance staff. Repairs may be put off until extra funds become available, even if they are essential to ensuring health and safety of staff and clients.
- **Finance Expenses** (bank charges, accounting, Audit fees)
- **Board and Management Expenses** (liability insurance for directors and board members)
- **Other Administrative Costs** (records maintenance, central office costs – including postage, office supplies, reporting requirements, etc.)

As most of these costs are fixed, increases in these areas make it difficult for agencies to offer staff compensation increases.

C. Direct Program Costs

Direct program costs are the second largest group of operational expenses. They include products or services directly related to delivering programs, such as equipment and supplies, travel, training, volunteer expenses, etc.



4. Funding and Contractual Issues

Non-government child and family services agencies typically receive the bulk of their funding through government contracts. The immediate assumption would be that these contracts provide more stability than other funding sources. However, agencies are facing many challenges as all types of funders have moved towards a short-term funding focus.

- ♦ **Core (long-term) funding** – stable, ongoing funding which factors in operational costs of the organization. It provides stability and flexibility for organizations with ongoing programs.
- ♦ **Project (short-term) funding** – targeted to a specific program over a defined time period. It is best suited to programs with fixed end dates. Budgets typically only cover direct program costs and front-line staff. Core operating costs and agency staff are only covered in part, if at all.

Funding is unstable, as it hinges on the priorities of funders, who often prefer supporting new programs over existing ones. Agencies risk losing funding if they do not modify their current programs or create new ones.

Service contract re-tendering is another short-term funding strategy.

Core Cost Shortfall

The focus on project funding has resulted in the chronic under-funding of agencies' core operations. The CCVO found that 61 to 80 per cent of programs run by mid-sized agencies were under-funded for core costs. Organizations also had an average 20 per cent shortfall in direct program costs.

Cost shortfalls lead to a constant need for fundraising to make up for funding gaps. However, fundraising is not a significant source of revenue for smaller agencies, since campaigns cost resources, and donations are not assured.

“Although the province is in an economic boom, little to no increases in funding has come to the non-profit agencies working with youth. We still have to fundraise just as much, if not more to support our programs and give staff minimal [wage] increases.”

“There is an increasing expectation that agencies fundraise to offset costs...”

(AASCF survey respondents)

Uncertainty and Inflexibility

Short-term funding does not offer the sustained commitment needed to deliver programs that address ongoing community needs. Even successful projects are not guaranteed to continue past the funding term.

“[Re-tendering] interrupts service provision to clients’... it creates [uncertainty] in this industry, resulting in skilled and dedicated staff leaving.”

(AASCF survey respondent)

In addition, many funders define and enforce specific funding budgets. This is intended to ensure accountability. However, it ultimately decreases agencies' autonomy to plan for the future and respond to arising needs.

“Contracts are put into place and the budget remains the same for many years with little regard to the increase in operation costs, cost of living, benefits [or other] incentives for staff...”

(AASCF survey respondent)

Administrative Burden (Reporting and Project Cycle)

Expectations for project evaluation and reporting have also increased in an attempt to ensure accountability. These processes require resources and administration, yet agencies are rarely offered additional support to complete them. This is a major issue for agencies with multiple funders.

“[Due to] the increased number of contracts and projects, reporting requirements have [risen] significantly.”

(AASCF survey respondent)

Staff also have to devote energy and time to the project cycle - set-up, fundraising, wind-down - that could be spent on program delivery. This also leaves less time left to plan for program and organizational sustainability.

Competitive Environment

Competition between agencies for funding reduces the potential for beneficial cross-sector partnerships. In addition, the pressure to eliminate “unnecessary costs” to achieve the lowest bid further contributes to under-funding and increased staff workloads and stress levels.

“[Re-tendering of contracts has created] a competitive and adversarial environment amongst agencies, rather than a resourceful, collaborative one... [It sends] a clear message that if agencies want to be in the game, they better keep their costs low.” (AASCF survey respondent)

Consequences

The current human resources crisis has consequences that contradict with the goals of the services agencies provide.

1. Impact on Families and Children

Families and children are not receiving the quality of support that they need. Many services are at risk of being cut off due to under-funding or concluding contract terms. Constant staff turnover is also making it harder to form the stable, trusting client-staff relationships that are crucial to positive outcomes.

This impacts all people in need of services, regardless of their backgrounds. However, this lack of continuity is especially negative for high risk families and children, who often lack stability in their lives. Added instability not only hinders progress and has the potential to make things worse.

“Clients will suffer the most ... the quality of supports will go down ... [and] we may need to cut spaces or close programs.”

“[We are less able to] meet specific needs, care is becoming generic.”

(AASCF survey respondents)

2. Impact on Non-government Child and Family Service Agencies

Organizations are losing the skills, knowledge and experience that are the foundation of their ability to consistently deliver quality services. They are also losing their ability to develop and support long-term programs, or offer flexible responses to arising social issues or organizational needs. This focus on short-term survival is detrimental to the long-term health of the community and the organizations.

“We are losing the depth of staff capabilities... Recent diploma grads are becoming senior staff in less than 6 months due to turnover instead of capability. ”

(AASCF survey respondents)

3. Impact on Staff

Staff are less able to afford a decent standard of living due to salary rates that are not keeping up with inflation. Many are forced to either take a second job (which further reduces quality of life), or leave for another one with better pay, just to meet their basic needs.

4. Impact on Government

The current situation is having multiple impacts on government, as well as other funders of child and family services.

Poor Return on Investments

Government is undermining its own investments. Agencies are less able to meet their contractual obligations when they are under-funded.

Resources that should be spent on program delivery are constantly being diverted to short-term survival. Agencies that cannot afford to offer decent wages to keep enough experienced staff have to spend more time hiring and training new recruits. Core cost shortages also force staff to waste time on fundraising activities.

“Time and resources [are being] spent on [recruiting and training] new staff, instead of... direct service to children and families.”

“When [agencies] have no options but to hire someone with only minimal suitability, it places [everyone] at risk. [It won't] be long before we start to read about the negative impacts ...”

(AASCF survey respondents)

Costs of Unmet Community Needs

Any cost-savings achieved by under-funding agencies are eventually lost if the programs are not meeting the needs of families and children. Government will end up with higher costs in the justice and health care systems, for example, when primary intervention is inadequate.

“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.”

(AASCF survey respondent)

Costs of Unmet Staff Needs

Cost-reductions attained through low staff compensation are temporary when staff do not earn enough to make ends meet. Government will end up paying more to support those staff with income supports, housing supplements, and other low-income programs.

Conclusion

The programs provided by non-government child and family service agencies are essential services that are of significant value to society. As such, these agencies should be funded in a manner that ensures that the community receives the consistent, high-quality service that it needs. Likewise, staff providing these services deserve to be compensated fairly.

The assumption that “non-profit” means “cheaper” needs to be quashed. Operational and human resources expenses are proportionally higher than in other sectors, and non-government agencies should not be forced to do more with less.

Government departments - and other funders - that contract agencies to provide services on their behalf should provide sufficient funding to cover the full cost of operating the programs they contract for. In addition, contracted agencies should be given sufficient stable funding to cover their core operating costs. It is detrimental to both parties if agencies need to spend time and energy to secure additional funding to cover shortfalls.

Why must action be taken now?

“Programs will close, more and more staff will be assaulted, and this sector will suffer. Fewer beds will be available and fewer people will be prepared to work in this sector. What are we saying? THE FUTURE IS NOW!”
(AASCF survey respondent)

The evidence is clear - the child and family services sector is facing a crisis. If this situation is allowed to continue, it will continue to get worse:

- ♦ Worse for **children and families**;
- ♦ Worse for **agencies**;
- ♦ Worse for **staff**, and;
- ♦ Worse for **government**.

Recommendations

“It is very important that we not simply [create] responses that address the immediate stability in the sector and the wage parity issues. There needs to be a sustainability plan that addresses these issues on a long term basis. [It should] include [things like] involvement with schools who produce our staff, and marketing [to increase the] interest of possible candidates who may want to invest their careers in the work we do...”
(AASCF survey respondent)

Based on the evidence reviewed in this report, the Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families (AASCF) is making the following recommendations to the Ministry of Child and Family Services.

Short-Term Recommendations

1. **All non-government child and family services contract budgets must be increased by 20 per cent.**

This must be done to allow the sector to overcome the current lag in salaries and to cover operational cost increases. This will help to abate the current staffing crisis by helping agencies to attract and retain more qualified staff. It will also allow agencies to focus on program delivery, rather than recruitment, training, and additional fundraising.

2. **The Ministry must continue working with AASCF on understanding and identifying issues.**

Long-Term Recommendations

1. **Salaries for non-government child and family services staff must be indexed.**

This must be done to ensure that agencies can offer salary increases in response to cost of living increases. It will help agencies to retain their staff, who will be less likely to leave in order to make a living.

2. **The Ministry must explore alternatives to contract re-tendering as a method of ensuring accountability.**

Re-tendering has detrimental impacts on long-term agency stability, cross-sector relationships, employee morale and, thereby, program effectiveness. Other accountability measures must be explored.

3. **Both the AASCF and the Ministry of Child and Family Services must continue to support and build their partnership.**

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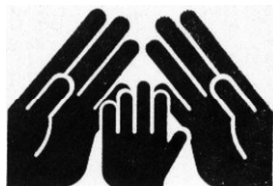
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