

AASCF Current Situation – Aug/Sept 08

Summary of Findings

RBarraclough

11/12/2008

This document captures the situation as of September 2008. It is an accumulation of responses as they were sent into the AASCF , 5% increases received April 2008

Summary of Findings – 26 Surveys

This survey was completed after the contracted sector received a 5% increase in wages and salaries from government (announced in April 2008). These are general themes that presented in the survey.

1. The AASCF members provide services to approximately 225,000 Albertans¹
2. Some agencies were able to open previously closed homes, yet a significant number remained closed or have closed in this timeframe.
 - In previous survey (March 2008) there were 26 bed closures in 35 agencies who responded. In this survey there is 26 beds closed as well since that time (April – Aug). This reported in 26 surveys
3. Staff hiring and retention is the major reason for the bed closure
4. Staff is taken from other programs, often early intervention or family intervention programs, to maintain residential programs
5. Staff is leaving with little or no notice leaving services short staff with no backup.
6. Operational costs are affecting management of facilities
7. Operational costs have increased significantly in rent, insurance, and utilities
8. Salaries are too low (approximately 30%)
9. Needs of youth have intensified, such as addictions aggression and violence. Lack of resources in the community for mental health and drug/alcohol issues are mitigating factors that contribute to staff burn out and exhaustion.
10. In terms of applications, in last 6 – 8 months there have been very few unsolicited resumes (4 years ago there were many each month). People are not applying for or looking in the human services sector for career opportunities.
11. Many staff are leaving their agency to go to the CFSA or out of the field all together.
12. There is a significant number of staff who is working in all areas of service that have less than 3 years experience (approximately 40%)

¹ This number is an average based on the respondents to this survey, and is only estimation.

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13. Fundraising activities are used to pay for operational costs
14. Most agencies received somewhere between 4- 5% for wages with last announced increase
15. Increases are not seen as helpful enough to attract or retain staff

Central Registry of Current Situation (Aug/08)

1. During the past five months (April 08 – July 08) has your agency closed services to children and families:

NO: 16

YES: 10

- Group early intervention – closed permanently as was project based funding and that funding no longer provided. 19 teen parents and between 19 – 25 children were affected
- Group home closed for 5 months so far– hiring staff not possible – 3 children were affected
- Shelter – closed 2 months due to flooding
- Group home restricted due to plumbing problems
- Group home closed- 5 youth affected
- Group home closed (1 out of 6)- 4 months – staff are leaving with little or no notice; it takes time to find individuals with the appropriate skill level and experience to best serve the youth population- approx. 10 youth affected
- Foster care – loss of home following investigation. Current foster parents are cutting back- 4 children affected in closed homes and 4 other beds due to parents reducing numbers they will accept
- Group home – closed 8 beds due to staff shortages and have 8 other beds that are still closed from last summer – beds were closed as children left program
- Women’s/ Family Violence Emergency Shelter – In house program closed intermittently due to communicable disease; and at times due to capacity issues. 55 children were turned away due to capacity issues, and outside hours of the program
- Family intervention programs – increasing waitlists due to staffing shortages

How was the closure resolved?

- All of these placements remain unresolved with the exception of the flooding and plumbing issues
- One agency was able to negotiate with CFSA for funds to keep a youth shelter open

2. Agencies currently thinking of closing a program? Why?

- Only if we lose more staff
- Operational costs are far out-weighting funding thinking of closing a group home
- Operating costs vs dollars contracted do not match – child preparation for permanency program

Describe what measures you are taking to prevent the closure?

- Looking at ways to hire part time and relief staff that are interested in moving into full time positions as they become available
- 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.
- Signing bonuses for new employees
- Fundraising
- Shared Purchasing
- Shopping around for the best utilities contracts
- Volunteer maintenance

3. Total number of children and/ or families served in the last year?

- Children = 15,275
- Families= 5,519
- Teen parents= 529
- Three agencies who provide services but do not break down by children or families = 27,795 individuals (not included in numbers above)

In 26 agencies there are at least 43,599 people served

If we average that out to the 140 agencies that we have as members we collectively serve over 225,000 people in Alberta.

4. If you know can you tell us the experience level of your staff?

(If you do not have that information readily available don't fill this in. We will ask you again in the next few months, as we are trying to understand all details that impact the quality of service to children)

Type of Program

Staff Experience

These are typical answers to this question. For the sake of brevity not all responses are recorded.

- Counseling 1@ 5 years 2 @20 years

- Shelter program - 80% of staff have relevant degrees and over 3 years experience
 - 15% of staff has over 2 years experience
 - 5% of staff has 1 year experience

- Women's shelter – majority of staff have 2 years or more experience

- Foster Care Agency 12 program staff-
 - 15% over 25 years
 - 30% over 10 years;
 - 15% over 5 years
 - 40% 2 years and under.

- Group home 100% > 2 yrs, 80% > 5 yrs, 40% > 10 yrs
 - Mentor Homes 100%>5 yrs; 50%>10 yrs
 - In-Home Support 100% >2 yrs, 100%>10 yrs
 - In-Home Visitors (Healthy Families) 100%>2 yrs, 75%>5 yrs, 75%>10yrs
 - Supervised Access 100%>2 yrs, 30%>5 yrs
 - After Hours Crisis Support 100%>2 yrs, 55%>5 yrs.

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	21% with 1-3 years
	21% with 3-5 years
	21% with 5+ years
Family Preservation	28% under 1 year
	22% with 1-3 years
	22% with 3-5 years
	28% with 5+ years
Family Supports for Children with Disabilities	44% under 1 year
	39% with 1-3 years
	11% with 3-5 years
	6% with 5+ years
Family Group Conferencing	50% under 1 year
	50% with 1-3 years
	0% with 3-5 years
	0% with 5+ years
Kids in Motion	53% under 1 year
	12% with 1-3 years
	12% with 3-5 years
	24% with 5+ years

5. What are your concerns regarding staffing levels and experience?

- Experienced workers are not applying
- Difficult to maintain salaries for comparable work elsewhere
- Burnout
- Not qualified to do the job
- Future hiring prospects are a concern
- Wages and benefits- paying competitive wages/benefits to retain staff
- The time commitments (after hours & weekends) are a barrier. When we are able to hire many leave once the two conditions above can be addresses elsewhere
- 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.

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- Many very experienced and knowledgeable people are retiring and are not being replaced by knowledge
- We need to show we care about people who are new to the field and the organizations in order to keep them (and not just with money) but with many things that take money such as wellness ideas and training
- The costs of advertising for staff are prohibitive and not yielding applicants.
- When there is 75% turnover in one year the maturity and stability of the team is compromised – their ability to respond to crisis with confidence is missing and management spends too much time dealing with poorly handled situations
- Waitlists get longer
- Fewer individuals to draw from for promotions into supervisory roles. This leaves agencies more vulnerable and succession planning is difficult to accomplish
- The families and needs of youth are increasing and more complex

6. Total number of staff in organization (if fully staffed)?

Management	171
Front Line	1397.3
Office	135.3
Total	1703.6/ 26 agencies

7. Operational costs -Over the last five years (2003 – 2008) how much has your__ increased or decreased

- **Lease** + 25%+42%+25%+30%+25%+20%+62.5%+842%+50%+20%+50%+16%+38.1% (average is 33.6% this does not include the 842% increase for one agency) Some organizations own buildings or have mortgages that are stable and they are not reflected here.
- **Insurance** + 66% +29%+6-%+ 131%+280%+40%+4%+5%+138.5%+65%+47.5%+21.4%+52%+20%+200%+90%+26%+56% (average increase of 71%)
- **Utility** + 35.8% + 35% + 10% + 40%+40%+7%+250%+10+3.5%+27.6%+7.2%+20%+300%+70%+12%+81% (average increase of 59%)

All off these are increases in costs. No report of significant decreases – only one slight decrease in insurance

8. What operational costs increases have you received in your contract (by %) over the last 5 years?

- + 1%
- + 4%
- +3% in one year
- +5%
- +3.5% over the past 5 years
- +6% over 5 years
- +10%
- 50% for insurance
- +5% x 2 in 5 years

The remainder of respondents did not receive an increase at all. Variety of responses and a variety of regions from those that did answer

9. Any comments regarding operational costs?

- There needs to be regular increases to these budget lines – neglecting this for so long has resulted in the need for such large requests to meet costs.
- Increases should not come with a micromanagement approach to the contracts
- We fell behind some years ago with cutbacks, have been making up the differences with fundraising and FFS work and have not caught up
- No dollars for things like research and IT – two areas you can hardly live without these days
- The region is continually passing more and more administrative responsibilities onto the agencies for reporting, billing, accountability. There is no acknowledgement that these requests increase our administrative costs. Yet there is a continual expectation that our administrative costs be lower.
- Some regions cover and other do not
- They are killing us
- Utilities increase
- Higher levels of damage in the homes
- Increased cost of food
- We are a unionized organization and our negotiations are likely to increase staffing costs
- Programs that are going through re-tendering are closer to the actual as reflected in proposal budgets

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- Constantly having to apply for grants/donations for a variety of sources to supplement some funding

10. Have you received an increase to your contract this year? If so, what percentage? If not, do you have a signed amended contract and are you waiting? What percentage is the actual increase?

- 5% for salaries and benefits
- Approximately 5%
- RFP process helped get to actual cost of doing business
- Actual increase equates to 2.3%
- PDD funding was less +3.5%
- Don't have yet- no signed agreement
- Foster care 4.8% (parents) 4.7% (staff)
- 3.54% for contract
- No increase
- Approximately 4% less for FFS
- Mileage increases

11. How will the increase assist you in staffing and recruitment?

- Don't know yet.. last year's increase did not have an impact due to the huge gap between our sector and the general economy
- Some FFS contracts were not given the increase
- Increases in vehicle allowances have helped for drivers and visit supervisors – costs for vehicles are still high
- Main area will help is in *retaining* staff
- Due to multiple funders the increase has to be split among all staff so they receive less than 5%
- Helps to close the gap between what we are funded for and what we actually have to pay staff (union)
- Does not cover the cost-of-living increases in Calgary
- Staff are leaving for much higher pay in the region
- Doesn't- have given notice and a request for more funds, if no significant increase we will close down
- Only allows us to tread water and keep staff from making less this year than they did last year
- No help – gap too big!

