

November 6, 2009

Rhonda Barraclough
Executive Director
Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families
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8330-82 Ave
Edmonton, AB T6C 4E3

RHONDA

Dear ~~Ms. Barraclough~~:

Thank you for following up on our recent conversation and highlighting for me the questions your agencies have about how our Ministry is preparing for Pandemic Planning. Further to your email, please find our Ministry responses below:

1. **How and at what level of frequency will the Ministry be communicating to the Authorities and how will they, in turn, be communicating to us?**
 - The Department and each Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA) have Business Continuity Teams in place. Communications regarding the pandemic are shared from the Department to the Authority members on the teams, and from the Authority members to their respective executives in CFSAs. In addition, the Department shares information from Alberta Health Services as it is received.
 - The Ministry will be providing letters to the CFSAs for distribution to their external stakeholders. The letters will inform stakeholders that our current protocols and policies will continue to be in effect in a pandemic situation. If our essential services are severely impacted and our existing policies and protocols are deemed insufficient in managing the situation down the road, stakeholders will be advised.
 - Children and Youth Services will not communicate health messages, as we are not health professionals and these messages are being communicated by Alberta Health Services.

2. **What is the Ministry's plan in relation to the Alberta Pandemic Plan? (*How will their plan guide/direct essential service delivery?*)**
 - The Ministry has drafted a plan that highlights the activities that it needs to undertake to fulfill our requirements within the Alberta Pandemic Plan. Alberta Health and Wellness is the lead agency in addressing the pandemic and the associated health component. Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA)

is the coordination point for the Government of Alberta and the private sector to minimize the impact to Albertans.

- With respect to the pandemic, all ministries have been directed to maintain their essential services for as long as possible during the pandemic. To minimize the impact of the pandemic on our essential services, we intend to track our staffing levels in each region and re-allocate the necessary resources to address any shortages within the Ministry.
- If these actions are not sufficient, the Ministry will look within government and the private sector to address staff shortages to ensure essential services are maintained.

3. What is the status of the Regional Authorities' plans in relationship to the Ministry's plan?

- The Department and each CFSA have Business Continuity Plans in place which have been implemented to some extent over the past year. The Department and CFSA Business Continuity Plans and the Ministry Pandemic Plan will be updated on an ongoing basis as necessary to ensure the maximum protection of our staff, clients and to ensure that our essential services are provided.

(How will their plan spell out direct impact to service delivery?)

- The CFSAs will be reporting absences to the Department so that we can track staff availability as well as risks to staff and clients in each region. This information will be provided to the Ministry Executive Team to ensure the appropriate actions are being taken to address issues as they arise. By monitoring our staffing levels we can better re-allocate staff within a region affected or from other regions to ensure we have the staffing available to handle all requests of our Ministry.

4. What role will/could the AASCF play in communicating and coordinating?

(asking questions, coordinating information, ensuring best practices, disseminating key communication from the ministry and authorities) *we have begun posting best practises, and information that we have received on our website with the hopes that for some smaller agencies they can find the necessary information they need to plan appropriately. We would be happy to post any information from the Ministry or Regions regarding these questions or other information*

- The AASCF can assist by ensuring that member agencies have their own plans in place. The plans should address how they will continue to provide services in the event of a pandemic, how they will monitor their staffing levels, including access to relief staff, and how they will communicate to the regions in the event that they are unable to provide the required level of services under contract.
- Many of the CFSAs have already been in contact with their contracted agencies to discuss the need for agencies to have plans in place.
- Our general communications to agencies will also be provided to the AASCF, which you may wish to redistribute to your member agencies to ensure that they have received the most up-to-date information available.

5. **What are the potential scenarios and subsequent contingency plans that will be required?** (*scenarios based upon moderate impact, engaging legislative powers etc.*)
- Our plans address a 20% reduction in Ministry staffing levels with the possibility of seeing that rate as high as 35% over a two- to three-week period. We have discussed with each program area in our Ministry what emergency legislation/policies need to be enacted or established in a pandemic scenario to ensure the needs of our clients continue being met.
6. **Is there a potential that we will be considered essential services and be mandated to work?**
- Ministries must continue to deliver their essential services in the event of an emergency and therefore all necessary actions will be taken to ensure staffing levels remain appropriate and that no children and youth are put at risk. Our goal is to continue to ensure that clients, staff, agencies and other caregivers are supported.
 - As indicated above, it is expected that each Agency have a plan in place to ensure their operations continue. If the operation cannot continue, the agency needs to contact the respective region to determine supports for the agency or if necessary, to transition the affected children, youth and families to another facility or program.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions regarding the Ministry's pandemic plan.

Sincerely yours,



Gord Johnston
Assistant Deputy Minister

cc: Danica Frazer, President, Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families