

Child Intervention Think Tank June 14, 2012 - Edmonton, Alberta Hon Dave Hancock, Minister, Human Services

Good morning, everyone.

I bring greetings on behalf of our Premier, Alison Redford, and my colleagues in the Alberta government.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with all of you.

Events such as this one help bring together the people, knowledge and ideas that make a difference in improving the work we do with children, youth and families.

We know there is a lot of good work being done that needs to be recognized, celebrated and shared.

I understand some examples of leading practice were presented at the Think Tank held in May – initiatives and projects that are paving the way to changes in how we work with children and families.

These initiatives highlight some of the things I believe in:

- Focusing on principles, not on process.
- Finding the right things to support, setting some guideposts, then getting out of the way so the professionals can do the work.
- Being firm on the outcomes we expect but flexible on how we get there.

The focus over the last few years on encouraging creativity and innovation for making improvements to the child intervention system is starting to pay off.

Through initiatives such as Outcomes-based Service Delivery, High Fidelity Wraparound and Children Staying Connected with their Culture, we are seeing improved, collaborative case planning and better outcomes for children and youth.

There are many other examples of excellent practice that is guided by core principles of being solution-focused, strengths-based and collaborative.

Building supportive relationships with communities and service providers is also critical in offering quality programs and services for vulnerable children and families.

In particular, we need to listen to and learn from our Aboriginal communities and partners.

The challenge of over-representation of Aboriginal children in care is not unique to Alberta, but how we address it can be uniquely suited to the needs of Aboriginal people in our province.

We need to use our experiences to continue improving our system and the services we provide.

That's why events such as this one are so important, because they build on what we've heard from the field and learned from research.

As with any effort to make improvements, we must engage in deliberate and thoughtful change.

We also must effectively support staff through change with training and ongoing communication about the larger vision for our system.

Building a child intervention practice framework is not just about looking at our needs internally as a system.

It is also looking at how that system interacts with other government systems, community services and Albertans.

Governments, communities and organizations need to work together to address the changing demographics and the increasingly complex needs of the people we support.

The Ministry of Human Services was created to fulfil our government's commitment to better connect people with the supports they need, when they need them.

We are looking at how we can make sure that the services and supports provided through government are easily obtainable and that they work.

We are also developing a Social Policy Framework to examine how our provincial policies and programs work together to serve the whole person, throughout their life.

Last week, we launched Speak. Share. Thrive, the public engagement phase of developing this framework.

We're providing Albertans opportunities to help create a social policy framework that will guide decisions about the relevance and effectiveness of social policies and programs for Albertans.

The Social Policy Framework will help us build on and strengthen the collaborative work between government, not-for-profit agencies, municipal organizations, businesses and community groups.

These relationships will help us to respond to dynamic social challenges like child care, housing and employment in a more meaningful way.

You'll be hearing later today from Dr. Nico Trocmé about the primary drivers that lead to child protection services.

Poverty and neglect are two of these drivers and are areas of focus for the Social Policy Framework.

Your input on the Framework is needed to help create positive change in our province and help reduce or eliminate some of the drivers for child protection services.

You can join the conversation at www.socialpolicy.alberta.ca by writing in the wiki, taking the survey and learning how you can participate in a community discussion happening near you.

We are also working on ensuring information-sharing practices within government and with service agencies support the best decisions possible in regard to the health, education and safety of children and families.

This includes developing an information-sharing strategy to guide how government and service agencies can exchange relevant information more effectively for case planning purposes.

Ultimately, we are here to help children and families and make sure they have the services they need to succeed and thrive.

The communities and families we work with have many of the answers to the complex challenges facing all of us.

By listening to each other and learning from one another, we can move forward in creating a system that is strategically positioned to address concerns proactively and respond to children and families when and where they need help.

Thank you for your participation at this Think Tank and for your dedication to innovative thinking and the building of relationships that help serve and improve our work with children, youth and families.

I look forward to seeing continued improvements as a result of your work today and in the coming months.

Thank you.