



February 02, 2022

Hi all,

I wanted to give the membership an update on our efforts to advocate for support to group care. Since the New Year, we sent the 2nd briefing note and the group care survey to the Minister and Ministry Executive.

Thank you to all of you that filled out the survey. I hope you have all reviewed it.

The ALIGN executive has met with the Children Services (CS) executive and, in a separate meeting, with Deputy Minister Sherri Wilson and the Chief of Staff for Minister Schulz, Nicole Sparrow.

We have discussed in these meetings the staffing and economic issue for the sector as a result of COVID 19 and longer issues such as wages and staffing exiting the sector, and we discussed the recommendations for the briefing note (January 6). A summary of those conversations follows:

- We asked about the COVID funds and if they could be used as incentives for staff. That has not been considered and will not be;
- PCR testing, CS cannot influence AHS- suggested that agencies can develop the rapid testing program;
- Child intervention checks, if these are still an issue, please contact ALIGN. We have been working with the CI caregiver supports staff to ensure a quicker service is supported;
- Capacity definitions are unclear. If you feel you are full at 8/10 beds due to your staffing levels, that is not considered full if you have a contract for 10/10
- Opioid/suicide/COVID deaths - no children in care have died as a result of COVID. The understanding that an agency would see a family as the client (as defined in the group care survey) and there may have been some of those family members that have died is not the same understanding;
- WCB/insurance - we have support from CS to work on developing a safety partnership and, as a result, see decreased WCB rates. ALIGN is working on building a relationship with a safety partner through our OHS subcommittee of the BOD.
- Wages - there is no agreement on the wage issue. CS sees wages in Alberta as high based on data they have collected from Ontario west. That data is not comparable and ALIGN is attempting to influence this belief with better understanding and data.

While these efforts are a bit frustrating, we do have some activities we are working on:

- We realized that there is no clear understanding of the extraordinary costs agencies have – like WCB, insurance, food etc. So please make sure that your contract manager knows your extra costs;