

Vision for the Future: Strengthening ALIGN Together



As the new Executive Director for ALIGN, my vision is to create a financially sustainable association that moves beyond reliance on government and community project grants. I aim to diversify revenue streams by expanding memberships, conference growth, and marketing our developed products which support the social services sector, not only in the province of Alberta, but also more broadly. My goal is to establish a cost-recovery model that ensures valuable resources supporting the best outcomes for children, youth, and families, remain accessible to all.

This vision is rooted in empowering service providers through collaboration, innovation, and advocacy. By fostering partnerships and promoting high standards of care, ALIGN will strengthen the capacity of agencies to support children, families, and communities across Alberta, while also ensuring an equitable voice for all services that impact children and families. Together, we can drive meaningful change, ensuring every family has access to the support they need for a brighter future.

We are all facing the challenge of rising costs in service delivery and increasing demands, yet our shared goal remains the same: ensuring the well-being of children and families in Alberta. It's important to explore how we can shift our collaborative efforts toward driving systematic change at the community level. By working together, we can explore alternative, creative solutions to best support children and families. Collaboration is key to learning from and supporting one another in these efforts, maximizing our collective impact.

To grow membership, people need to recognize the value of joining the association. This includes understanding both the immediate benefits and the long-term impact of being part of our organization. Members may ask, “What do I gain right away?” and “What are the short- and long-term advantages?” It's important to see membership not just as an annual fee, but as an investment in best practices for children and families. While the outcomes may not be immediate, by strengthening the sector together, we can influence systematic change and shape the future of services for children and families.

This requires active involvement from members, potentially through participation on committees, and fostering open, two-way communication between the membership and the association. ALIGN remains committed to listening and responding to the needs of its members by offering resources such as training, leadership development, employee retention strategies, government advocacy, and networking opportunities, to name a few.

How we will achieve this:

- **Collaborative Networks:** Strengthen partnerships with government, Indigenous communities, and service providers to promote unified and effective approaches to child and family services.
- **Capacity Building:** Provide training, resources, direct member support, and resources like the Well-being Toolkit to enhance the ability of agencies to deliver high-quality, impactful services.
- **Advocacy and Leadership:** Actively advocate for policies and funding that support the sustainability and growth of essential programs and services.
- **Innovation in Practice:** Promote the adoption of new, evidence-based practices and technologies that advance service delivery.
- **Cultural Responsiveness:** Ensure services are inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of children and families, including the integration of Indigenous Worldviews within our work.
- **Academic Involvement:** Foster strong connections with academia by encouraging active participation and input in ALIGN's board, committees, and initiatives. Additionally, promote and engage in research, contribute to journal articles, and collaborate on projects that align with our mission and drive the sector forward.
- **Sustainability and Accountability:** Focus on building long-term financial sustainability by diversifying revenue streams and continue with transparent financial practices, ensuring resources are used efficiently and aligned with our mission to support children, families, and communities. Regularly assess our programs, projects, and initiatives to measure impact and effectiveness, ensuring accountability to our members and stakeholders.

Together, through collaboration, innovation, and a shared commitment to the well-being of children and families, we can build a stronger, more sustainable future for ALIGN and the communities we serve. I look forward to working with all of you as we continue this important journey.

SONJA Executive Director | ALIGN Association of Community Services
Polz SonjaP@alignab.ca

One Voice, so Children, Families and Communities Thrive.