



## MINUTES

### **First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition Early Childhood Development Roundtable meeting – May 26, 2010 Held at United Way of the Lower Mainland, Burnaby**

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#### ***In Attendance:***

Alison Bledsoe – United Way of the Lower Mainland  
Cathy Sales – St. Barnabas Daycare  
Maria Morisseau – CCRR- Vancouver Coastal  
Region  
Helen Davidson – Richmond, Children First  
Leah Drayton – Child Care, Britannia Community  
Services  
Rishima Bahadoorsingh – Affiliation of Multicultural  
Societies and Service Agencies  
Kelly Read – Mable Elmore, MLA  
Marilee Peters – B.C. Council for Families  
Debbie Jackson – BC Association of Family  
Resource Programs  
Dianne Liscumb – Westcoast Child Care Resource  
Centre  
Kim Adamson – Success By 6 - Provincial  
Rita Chudnovsky – Child Care Advocacy Forum

Lynn McBride – BC Aboriginal Child Care Society  
Mab Oloman – Coalition of Child Care Advocates of  
BC  
Jessie Deacon – Roots of Empathy  
Carole Matusicky  
Lynell Anderson – HELP  
Bev Dicks - MCFD  
Adrienne Montani – First Call

#### ***On Phone:***

Jan White – Success by 6/PLAY South Vancouver  
Island  
Lauren Nackman – Representative for Children and  
Youth

#### ***Regrets:***

Lesley Richardson – Vancouver Community College  
Linda McDonnell – ECECVancouver Island  
University

### **1. Welcome, introductions, regrets and minutes**

The meeting was chaired by Alison Bledsoe. There was a round of introductions. The minutes of the March 31, 2010 meeting were accepted as circulated.

### **2. Service Levels --- updates and impacts**

First Call continues to monitor the cuts to government and community services due to budget constraints through 2009 and so far in 2010 and their impacts on children, youth and families. Participants were asked to review the current list and note any errors or omissions.

It was reported that in some regions there have been some across the board cuts and the Children First budgets in the mid-island region of Vancouver Island and the Fraser Valley have been cut by 50% or more. Child Care Resource and Referral services had been told that their contracts would be status quo but some of their funding has been reduced for the next fiscal year as well, though these cuts may be revisited. It was noted that it is very difficult to monitor the situation because funding decisions are being made at the regional level and they are not all approaching the matter in the same way. One concern is that uneven service levels for province-wide

programs and initiatives will be the result of these regionalized decisions, as it appears that they are being undertaken without provincial guidelines.

Success By 6 cuts have not been as devastating as expected, with \$3.5M received from government this fiscal year, instead of \$5M. Negotiations are underway about the future of the partnership (MCFD, United Ways and Credit Unions) past March 31, 2011.

Participants 'walked through the 2009-10 list of ECD cuts and noted:

- Roots of Empathy - \$1.5 million budget has been reduced to \$0. Aboriginal programs were cut by \$1.5M. ROE is relying on some profit-making activities and private donations for revenue. This means about one half of the former 660 programs are running. Discussions about government funding for Seeds of Empathy are in progress.
- Baby's Best Chance, and Toddler's First Steps, the booklets, are no longer being produced, but are now available on line (Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport website). Not all families have computers.
- BC Council for Families reported that the Father Involvement Network and three other programs are no longer receiving funding from government or have had it reduced. This has reduced BCCF staffing by 3 FTEs.
- Most teen parent programs on the Island lost 50% of their funding, and many have had cuts to the parent education and support component. BC Council will try to collect information on the state of funding for these programs in its next survey.
- Funding for the mobile child care services program in Surrey, Delta, White Rock has had an \$80,000 reduction.

Note: the above is anecdotal and may be subject to correction.

**3. Discussion with Beverly Dicks, ADM Child and Family Development Services MCFD**  
Chuck Eamer, the MCFD Assistant Deputy Minister with responsibility for Early Childhood Development and Child Care, was unable to attend the meeting as planned. Beverly Dicks, also an ADM, gamely came in his stead.

Adrienne introduced Bev and explained that First Call has been tracking cuts and we are interested in the various frameworks and plans that have been promised but not yet appeared. We are also interested in understanding how do the decisions about cuts come about without a plan or plans?

Bev explained that she has responsibility for two MCFD regions (Fraser and Vancouver Coastal)

and for corporate operations and financial planning. This includes responsibility for STOB 80, the budget line for funds for contracts with community organizations. (STOB stands for Standard Object of Budget.) Bev then briefly reviewed the budget reduction process and the process for reworking contracts. She stated that it was difficult but they tried to make the best of a bad situation.

Two program areas were exempted from the budget reduction process. There were to be no cuts to:

- Aboriginal services for children, youth and families (the rationale “need to close the gap”), nor to
- services for children and youth with special needs. (The community feels that cuts have been made in this area but they were redistribution decisions and where new funding was planned but didn’t come through.)

Another principle was that there would be no across-the-board cuts. MCFD has consulted with the Federation of Community Social Services and the BC Association for Development and Intervention throughout the process, which should be complete by the end of June.

Bev noted that some of the reductions referenced earlier in the meeting were made as a result of the “South Island re-design” which preceded the process she had just outlined, and were intended to address equity issues within the region. She also explained how the shift of funding from non-Aboriginal to Aboriginal services (\$5M this year) will continue over a number of years.

#### **Questions and answers:**

*Q. How is Aboriginal focus defined?* A. Bev explained that it relates to programs provided to Aboriginal people by Aboriginal organizations.

*Q. What’s guiding regional decision-making? Where do you look for advice from the community?* A. Consultation at the regional level for budget cuts was with the early years tables, e.g Vancouver Coastal has an Early Years table and the Fraser Region table includes funders and public agencies.

The next two questions were specific to early childhood development and child care.

*Q. Aside from the two partners previously mentioned (the Federation and the BCACDI) where does the Ministry get input on the early years and child care?* A. Bev responded that those were not the only two with whom the Ministry consulted and that much of the consultation was done at the regional level. For example, Community Service Managers consulted with the community and then with each other.

It was noted that Community Service Managers are unlikely to be consulting with the child care sector as it is not a contracted service. It was also noted that regional tables have different approaches and that at some child care had representation but that the sector was generally under-represented. Another observation is that we still theoretically have a Provincial Child Care Council but their meetings are in camera and they have neither consulted with the community

nor reported out to the community for years. [Note: The most recent Council report is now available on the MCFD website is for 2008-09.]

Q. *Where is the frame within which regions make their funding and service decisions? What are the principles used?* A. In response Bev read from the briefing note that Chuck had provided. “Current status of the Early Years Framework is that it has been deferred due to financial constraints.” Background: “the early years framework was a priority action identified in Strong, Safe and Supported (Pillar One). ...It was to be a strategic action to develop, cost and implement... a comprehensive, innovative cross-ministry five year plan. ...It was also intended to guide provincial, regional and community future learning opportunities ...and to complement and support existing early years activities.”

Bev went on to say that related cross-ministry discussions have formed “a strong foundation for the emerging Integrated Framework for Children and Youth ... also known as the Children’s Lens.” She hopes that this emerging framework will alleviate some of the challenges experienced by the community sector by the lack of cross-ministry collaboration (e.g. MCFD is reducing our budget by this, Health by this and we can’t access the Gaming Grants that we used to).

Participants commend that a proactive provincial vision of early childhood services was long overdue in BC.

A document on parenting from a provincial committee was delivered to MCFD in February 2009.

The following questions were also posed but Bev recommended that they be asked of Chuck Eamer, as they were not questions that she could answer:

Q. *Will the unreleased Early Years Plan be a component of the Children’s Lens? When will this plan be released?*

Q. *As the Ministry works on ‘closing the gap’ for Aboriginal children what is the plan for consulting about on-reserve children?*

Q. *Has the Integrated Framework been drafted and, if so, when will it be released and will there be community consultation?*

Q. *Is there a cross-ministry table guiding the Integrated Framework for 0-18?*

Bev then spoke briefly about *Child and Family Support, Assessment, Planning and Practice*, known as “[CAPP](#).” She also provided a description of the structural changes in the Ministry and outlined the responsibilities of the various ADMs:

- Peter Cunningham, North and Aboriginal services shift
- Deb Foxcroft, Aboriginal jurisdictions
- Doug Hughes, Interior and CAPP
- Bev Dicks, Fraser and Vancouver Coastal and corporate redesign
- Chuck Eamer, Vancouver Island and ECD, child care and ICM systems

Roundtable participants suggested that having an organizational chart available on the Ministry website would be very helpful. (Note: In the absence of this information from government the BC Association of Family Resource Programs has developed a booklet.)

As this part of the agenda drew to a close it was noted that there had not been any mention or discussion of a number of ECD specific matters such as:

- The introduction of full school-day Kindergarten and its impact on child care
- What is the nature of the interaction between the Ministry of Ed and MCFD on this matter?
- If ‘closing the gap’ is a goal, how will on full-school day Kindergarten be available to on-reserve children?
- The Minister refers to “public private partnerships” for preschools. What is meant by this?
- Many plans have been promised but none have been produced yet. In the meantime, it has been reported that there is an erosion of services. Is the Ministry assessing the impact of the cuts, policy and changes and regionalization on children, youth and families? Shouldn’t this be done from the perspective of quality assurance?

There was some discussion of the capping of the Children in the Home of a Relative (CIHR) program and the new Extended Family Program (EFP), particularly with regard to reduced eligibility for caregivers. The EFP is income tested. Bev will provide information on the eligibility threshold.

The Chair thanked Bev for her participation in the meeting and the information that she had provided. For discussion of the ECD specific questions, an invitation to meet with the Roundtable will be forwarded to Chuck Eamer.

#### **4. Roundtable updates and announcements**

- Roots of Empathy will be having a celebratory event (see [website](#) ).
- ECEBC conference scheduled to incorporate a lunchtime discussion of Early Learning and Child Care.
- The BC Child Care Advocacy Forum is celebrating a decade of advocacy and moving on. The partner organizations agreed at the beginning - as they do today - that BC and Canada need a publicly funded child care system that entitles all children access to quality child care and that this system must: honour and respect diversity; provide families with real choices; and provide caregivers with wages, benefits and working conditions they deserve.

2009 was the final year of funding from the Vancouver Foundation and partners have decided to cease their formal arrangement for collective advocacy. They have contributed the Forum's remaining resources to support First Call and the ECD Roundtable to carry on

the work because they think that the Roundtable best reflects their spirit and vision. Representatives of the Forum's member organizations will devote whatever time and resources they can to the Roundtable to ensure that child care remains a priority.

- A number of Roundtable members had presented to the hearing on child poverty held by the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth, and the focus of these presentations was discussed. There was a consistent message from the presenters about the importance of early childhood development and the social determinants of health as keys ways to address child poverty. The transcripts of the hearing are [on-line](#).
- The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC is holding their annual general meeting on June 3, 2010.06.29

**5. Next meeting date: TBA [Subsequently confirmed for July 6, 2-4 pm at First Call, 202-1193 Kingsway, Vancouver]**