

Press Release
September 30 2009

After 35 years of providing service to BC families who have infants with special needs, the staff in the Provincial Office Infant Development Programs (IDP) of BC were informed yesterday by the Ministry for Children and Family Development that the contract for the Office would not be renewed.

The contract expires today. The Provincial Office annual contract of \$300,000, which employs a Provincial Advisor, an Administrative Assistant, and five part time Regional Advisors, ensures that BC families throughout the province have access to this important resource. An interim extension of three months will be granted to allow the office to wrap up its work of over thirty years.

The Provincial Office provides direct services to families of infants with disabilities or who are at risk for developmental concerns, 194 Infant Development Consultants, other professionals, agencies and government staff. Services include linking families with children with rare conditions to other families and providing families with a range of other supports including referral information to speed their access to needed resources. Families call or email the office with concerns about their child's development and are directed to resources that can make a difference for them. Services provided by the Provincial Office to Infant Consultants and other professionals include access to a web of information, support, training and evidence based research <www.idpofbc.ca>

In BC today, 53 Infant Development Programs sponsored by a range of community agencies provide services to over 8000 families annually and are accessible to over 95% of the population. These local community services will not be cut but if the Provincial Office is closed, even temporarily, families and staff will lose access to the rich network of support offered through the office.

The IDP is linked provincially to ensure that it is accessible to families no matter where they live in BC. It is designed so that families, as much as possible, can receive the same quality of service regardless of where they may live. In our province, with its vast and diverse geography and challenging climate, an isolated Infant Development Consultant serving a family in Valemount with an infant with a rare condition is only a phone call or email away from knowledgeable information. This information may make a life long developmental difference for the infant and provide immeasurable comfort for the family.

The IDP has served over 80,000 families since its inception and is considered by international experts in the field of child development to be one of the best programs of its kind in the world.

Most importantly, families have said "This program has been with us as we came to terms with our child's disability, with humour, professionalism, resourcefulness and friendship. It has been invaluable and we know that the staff are backed by an Office that keeps them up to date".

The Provincial IDP Office has been the template for the development of Provincial Offices for Aboriginal Infant Development Programs and Supported Child Development Programs whose Provincial Offices were similarly cut. As sister programs the Infant Development Program, Aboriginal Infant Development Program and Supported Child Development provide a continuum of care for infants and young children, many representing the most vulnerable children in BC. These Provincial Offices must continue to support these children and their families and the staff who serve them.

For further information please contact the Provincial IDP Office at 604 822 4014, Mary Stewart IDP Regional Advisor for the North, 604 992 3956, Bonnie Barnes, Regional Advisor Vancouver Coastal 604 202 5882

To support the ongoing operation of the Provincial IDP Office and the sister Provincial Aboriginal and Supported Child Development Offices please email the following

Honorable Mary Polack, Minister Children and Family Development
Minister.MCF@gov.bc.ca

Lesley Du Toit, Deputy Minister, Children and Family Development
MCF.DeputyMinisterOffice@gov.bc.ca

Premier Gordon Campbell < premier@gov.bc.ca >

And email, write or visit your MLA.

Thank you very much for your support of our work on behalf of families in BC.

Dana Brynelsen
Provincial Advisor
Infant Development Program of BC