

## **FACT SHEET: Infant Development Program of BC (IDP)**

**Background:** In late September 2009, the Ministry for Children & Family Development announced it was closing three provincial offices serving children with disabilities due to budget limitations. The cuts will eliminate the Provincial Offices for the Infant Development Program, Aboriginal Infant Development Program and the Supported Child Development Program. Like other provincial offices, their role includes critical oversight and support to ensure that funded front-line programs deliver effective services and consistent results.

The Provincial IDP Office has supported the Infant Development Program in BC since 1975. The current budget (\$300,000) covers a Provincial Advisor, an administrative assistant, and five part-time Regional Advisors. The work of the Provincial IDP Office is guided by a volunteer Steering Committee of parents and professionals representing provincial agencies, BC Children's Ministry, BC Children's Hospital, universities and research units connected to their work.

While the budget cut won't affect direct funding to 53 local IDP programs, it will directly impact the services they provide to families. **The IDP's Provincial Steering Committee has stated that eliminating the Provincial Office does not serve the best interests of infants and young children with disabilities and is urgently asking MCFD to reconsider this decision.**

More about the IDP program below, and about the role of the provincial office that is being cut:

### **BC's Infant Development Program:**

*'Family-centred, early childhood intervention using a trans-disciplinary model of care'*

**Family-centred approaches** aim to support and strengthen parents' abilities to nurture and enhance a child's well being and development. (*Dunst, 2007*)

**Early childhood intervention** refers to services provided to young children at risk or children with developmental delay or disability to promote well being, to remediate existing developmental concerns, to prevent conditions worsening and to promote overall family functioning. (*Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000*)

**The trans-disciplinary model** of care ensures that each family has strong support from one person to provide coordinated intervention and care. This allows specialized professionals like therapists to see more families, reduces time demands on families and overall system costs. Expected outcomes are the same for the child. The approach better serves families at less cost than using multiple professionals in a multi- or inter-disciplinary system (*McWilliam, 2007*)

#### **IDP facts in brief:**

- 53 local community IDPs serve over 8,000 families annually throughout BC
- Available to families of infants and young children aged 0 – 3 years, where there are concerns about the child's development.
- Children are referred if they are at risk for developmental problems, have a developmental delay or a diagnosed disability

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- Helps families to access appropriate resources, to learn about child development and to learn skills that encourage their child's development.
- Close to 200 part-time and full-time Infant Development Consultants are available to visit families in their home and to provide information and supports
- Geographically accessible to over 95 % of BC families, with over 40,000 home visits/year
- 80,000 families served since the programs started in the 1970s.
- Local IDP programs are sponsored by a range of non-profit societies.

### **Role of the IDP Provincial Office:**

Provincial staff (full-time Provincial Advisor, assistant and 5 part-time Regional Advisors) support local staff in their work with families by:

- Providing service standards via a Policy & Procedures Manual to promote equity of service across the province
- Linking families and Infant Development Consultants to resources and up-to-date information on evidence-based early intervention practices
- Organizing staff-training opportunities where these are not available in smaller communities
- Collecting and distributing statistics to highlight trends and guide improvements
- Working with universities and colleges to develop courses in early childhood intervention.
- Managing a large provincial lending library of books, articles, journals and DVDs to support families and programs throughout BC
- Collaborating with other early childhood services to ensure awareness and response to issues facing infants and young children with disabilities and their families
- Maintaining an up-to-date registry of program information so that families and service providers throughout BC can access IDP services
- Connecting with specialized services for very low-incidence populations (e.g. children with vision or hearing loss) to ensure IDP staff have the special knowledge and skills required to work effectively with these children and their families

The Provincial Offices for the Infant Development Program, Aboriginal Infant Development Program and Supported Child Development Program all play a critical role in the overall success of local programs and in successful outcomes for children and families. The minimal savings from eliminating these roles are greatly outweighed by long-term costs. If these offices are closed and key resources are lost, it will cost far more to replace them in future. Meanwhile, children and families will pay the price for reduced overall program effectiveness and accessibility, which also has long-term cost implications.

***MOMs joins other provincial groups representing families of children with disabilities to urge you to contact your MLA to ask that the province restore funding and continue to support these important roles.***