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Stephen Brown
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Ministry of Children and Family Development
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cc. Honourable Mary McNeil
Minister, Ministry of Children and
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Dear Deputy Minister Brown:

RE: ICM

We first want to recognize that your office has been receiving many complaints relating to the unfolding of the ICM system and to express our appreciation for your recent actions to welcome feedback, validate the concerns, and institute strategies to address identified problems. We promised our members we would share their feedback with you and the following is the result of our communications.

We are writing to share concerns raised by our membership as they struggle through the massive changes and work load increases due to the implementation of the ICM system. MCFD staff and BCASW members from affiliated organizations, are experiencing impacts on families and workloads as a result of the changes. We are hearing a strong message of recognition for the need to institute a new system. The fear is that this particular system is not proving to be the positive change workers were led to believe. Social workers as a professional body are quite resilient and willing to give more than 100% to the families in their care. We are not hearing simple resistance to change, but rather a sound professional assessment of the flaws in the system itself. Below are a few of the comments we have gathered. Our organization works hard to support our members and promote the profession of social work and we are alarmed by the high level of anger, frustration, fear and weariness workers are experiencing. Some comments:

- It is the opposite of what was promised - less time with paperwork and more time with families.
- If a system hinders the work of child protection, the probability of risk of a high impact event for a child has been increased, thereby also increasing the level of distress for child protection workers.
- What is the evaluation process and are child protection workers part of this vital component of a new system?
- If there is an evaluation, it needs to be anonymous. Workers are not feeling safe.
- Where was the pilot project? Where was the in depth training prior to implementation?

- Where is the evidence that this is the best system for MCFD?
- This system will not ever support child welfare work.
- There have been delays in court procedures due to SWs being too busy with ICM – resulting in children staying in foster care longer than warranted and families losing important time together.
- It is four to five times longer and harder than the old system to do what is required.
- Children are getting missed in the process and information is getting lost.
- There are so many screens that it is horrendous and concerning to complete the forms.
- There is no physical signature in the new system.
- The system is based on a business model and may work for MSD but not for protecting children.
- It is harder to keep track of children in this new system. Social Workers are unable to find information they have already entered.
- Social Workers are now forced to take copious notes because of their fear of liability and the need for useful records.
- We were promised ‘no more change’ and all we have seen are layers and layers of change.

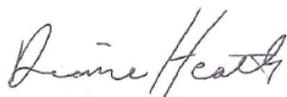
In our communication with our members we have requested their input for remedies to any of the identified problems. We recognize that you have received much feedback on what has gone wrong and will be working on ways to make it “go right”. Your recent letter to staff was appreciated by many. It is critical to validate their concerns and analysis. Still some, perhaps many, staff are fearful of stepping forward to name the flaws of this new system and their degree of frustration as well as their suggestions for change. They also are worn out and have no time to spare.

We will do our best to assist with that important communication exchange so that your Ministry gets the benefit of the collective wisdom of our members. Involving workers in the solutions carries the greatest hope of all. Open and timely ongoing communication with staff will be essential. Repeated and honest recognition of the depth and implications of the additional workload for staff will continue to work towards mending the anger, frustration and despair that has accumulated.

What appears of equal urgency is that your Ministry receives the funding and staffing support needed immediately to move quickly to resolve the technical and training problems and provide relief to overburdened front line workers. Your workers care about addressing poverty and finding solutions for ending child neglect and abuse. When they see millions of dollars being poured into a flawed system with nothing extra for them to help their clients, or ease their workloads it is easy to understand their depth of discouragement.

We remain supportive of a data management system that works for social work staff and benefits children and families. Please keep us informed of your progress and let us know of any ways we can provide assistance.

Sincerely,



Dianne Heath MSW RSW
on behalf of Barb Keith MSW RSW, President BCASW & Carol Ross MSW, Chair BCASW Child Welfare Committee