



BC ASSOCIATION *of*
SOCIAL WORKERS

#402 – 1755 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC V6J 4S5

The Honourable Adrian Dix, MLA
Minister of Health
Room 337 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

E: HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca

November 21, 2018

Dear Minister;

The British Columbia Association of Social Workers strongly supports the inclusion of social workers on professional health care teams as part of community Primary Care Networks and Patient Medical Homes.

Social workers support individuals, groups, and communities to thrive within complex systems, often operating as advocates for social justice. Social workers have a long history of integration within health care systems, where social work clinicians provide patients with tools and assistance to navigate resources and networks of treatment. Social workers are further poised to act as therapists and counsellors in areas of mental wellness and substance use.

In today's context of primary care redesign in British Columbia, physicians and health authorities are looking at innovative strategies to improve patient care in community settings. Evidence from the "GP for Me" initiative demonstrates that social workers are of significant benefit to physician-led treatment teams, especially with vulnerable populations. Moreover, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, as well as the Doctors of BC, support social work as the profession of choice when it comes to addressing the social determinants of health for patients who necessitate a large portion of physician time. Creative, holistic strategies from social workers can ultimately improve care and reduce demand on doctors.

More and more Canadian social workers are being included in key roles within primary health teams. As the only profession to be trained in biopsychosocial interventions with patients and systems, social work is an essential discipline in the primary care environment where people arrive with histories complicated by poverty, mental illness, addiction, isolation, violence, and

discrimination. Interdisciplinary health care teams without social work members are not equipped to support patients to receive maximum benefit from medical care.

Our Association strongly urges the Ministry of Health to support communities across British Columbia by providing them with the tools necessary to develop and fund social work positions as part of Primary Care Networks and Patient Medical Homes. You are likely already aware that the demand for social workers from Divisions of Family Practices is growing across the province, as doctors and their teams become more burdened with the social needs of their patients.

A strong social work presence in primary health and community care will decrease the impact on acute hospital and physician time.

I would be pleased to meet with you to discuss the role of social workers on professional healthcare teams.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Crawford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Crawford, RSW, President
BC Association of Social Workers

MDC/me