

BULLETIN

## Recommendations to improve child and youth mental health must be implemented

January 28, 2016

The 23 recommendations made by the BC Legislature's Committee on Children and Youth are critical to addressing the current crisis in mental health services for children and youth.

Health Sciences Association (HSA) represents health professionals working in mental health and addictions in acute and community health care settings throughout the province. Members include child and youth mental health support workers, psychologists, counsellors, social workers, early childhood education specialists, registered psychiatric nurses and many other health professionals who work in the field.

"HSA members who support children and youth with mental health disorders constantly tell us of the lack of resources and gaps in services, and the tragic impact this has on their patients and clients," says HSA president Val Avery. "Children and their families are left struggling to navigate a complex and fragmented system at a time when many of them are in crisis."

HSA submitted a report to the Committee which included input from members working in the sector. "We're pleased to see that the Committee report reflects the reality our members deal with while trying to support their patients and clients, and that the Committee's recommendations address many of their concerns," says Avery.

HSA supports Committee recommendations such as a new Ministry for Mental Health and a "one child, one file" approach, in order to improve integration and coordination of services that are currently provided through several different ministries and agencies.

Focusing on early intervention, giving priority to children, youth and young adults with special needs, and ensuring there are enough health professionals such as child and adolescent psychologists and registered psychiatric nurses, are also key Committee recommendations that must be implemented.

"There have been a series of reports since 2003 highlighting the critical need to improve mental health services for children and youth in BC," says Avery. "It's well past time to take action."

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[HSA's submission](#) to the Committee on Children and Youth.

The Committee's final report, entitled [Child and Youth Mental Health in British Columbia: Concrete Actions for Systemic Change](#) was released January 27, 2016.

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