

BULLETIN

## Child development professionals mobilize to seek funding for kids in need

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Children with disabilities face a lot of challenges, but with support in the early years, many can overcome barriers and achieve their full potential.

Now imagine the heartbreak of the parents who learn that funding shortfalls will keep their kids from getting that help - until it's too late. That's the reality for many families in BC, and HSA is working to do something about it.

Child Development Centres in BC provide early intervention services to children with disabilities such as autism, cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. These children are mainly under six years old and the services facilitate their participation in the community and school. More than 30 agencies provide such services in BC, and most of the funding is provided by the Ministry for Children and Family Development.

For several years, Ministry funding for these services has been inadequate to provide the level of services that children with disabilities and their families require. As a result, wait lists for these services have grown. Long wait lists for services exist at CDCs around the province.

Funding for 2015 is inadequate to maintain even the current service level at CDCs, and budget increases for

the next 3 years are only 0.41, 0.52 and 0.85 per cent - far less than inflation. If funding is not increased, then service levels will be reduced, and even more children will be deprived of receiving the services they need within the critical window of time when they can benefit most from the service.

HSA's Constituency Liaison program recently held a workshop for members working at CDCs around the province. Participants were trained in basic government relations techniques, given practice on delivering a clear message on the need to increase funding for CDCs, and asked to meet with their local MLAs over the next few weeks.

New funding is hard to achieve these days, but HSA intends to make sure the government undertands the cost of not acting is far, far greater.

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