



March 26, 2020

VIA E-MAIL
Ref: 247576

Lisa Meneian, Executive Director
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Dear Lisa,

Thank you for your letter of 27 February, to Minister Conroy where you outline concerns for the current funding status of early intervention programs and services for deaf and hard of hearing children and specifically, the impact to your agency, Deaf Children's Society of BC. Thank you, also, for meeting with me recently along with BC Family Hearing Resource Society and Children's Hearing and Speech Centre.

The Ministry recognizes the importance of language development for deaf and hard of hearing children. Early intervention funding from the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), as well as early access supplemental funding from the BC Early Hearing Program (PHSA), is intended to support the early development of these children.

The Ministry is aware that the utilization of early intervention services has increased since the introduction of newborn screening. We will continue to review funding and service deliverables in this area. As the Ministry continues to work towards service improvements, we are developing a service framework to guide the provision and investments in the system of services for Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN), which includes the complex array of child-focused intervention services and family supports that are linked to the health, education, and social service sectors. The development and implementation of the CYSN Service Framework will contribute to the efforts of the Ministry in strengthening its overall approach to prevention, early intervention, and family support.

As we discussed in our meeting, preschools that are licensed as group child care providers, such as DCS, are able to access Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) and the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (CCFRI). Families can access the Affordable Child Care Benefit (ACCB) and the ACCB special needs supplement. As part of the Early Learning and Child Care agreement with the Government of Canada, the provincial government enhanced funding for Supported Child Development/Aboriginal Supported Child Development. The intention of this enhancement is to reduce wait times, enabling improved access to inclusive child care. We know however, there is still work to do to. Government is currently gathering input to assist us in planning for improving the child care sector's capacity to support children with support needs and will be incorporating findings from research into planning for building capacity in the child care sector. We will host an Inclusive Child Care engagement session on April 8, 2020. If you are interested to join, please let me know and we will send you an invitation.

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Given the current COVID 19 pandemic, MCFD has made available temporary emergency funding supports for child care facilities, which may be of assistance. More information can be found here: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/covid-19/qa_child_care_sector.pdf

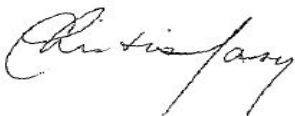
Your letter requests funding for signing Deaf children in BC and you specify preschool, ASL instruction for families, and Outreach funding for provincial service delivery. At this time, we do not have additional preschool funding beyond the programs referenced above nor is there is there additional funding at this time for the early intervention contract as noted above, the Ministry is aware of the increased need and will continue to look for opportunities to address the need.

Your letter requests re-establishing the “Knowledge Keepers” committee (formerly PERCD, currently BCDEC) to advise MCFD on a model of early intervention services for deaf and hard of hearing children. It is my understanding that this committee determines eligibility for the BC School for the Deaf and support from the Provincial Outreach Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students. As such, the BCDEC may not be the right group to advise on early intervention services, although if they have specific recommendations, we are open to receive them. PDHHS has connections with the groups you suggested as Knowledge Keepers and welcomes suggestions from families and community/government partners, including culturally Deaf persons, on how best to deliver early intervention services.

Finally, your letter requests incorporating DCS under the umbrella of PDHHS. Perhaps you can meet with PDHHS to help us understand this recommendation further. I will ask Rebecca Storey to reach out to you on this topic.

I thank you for your letter and for your time in meeting with me. The Ministry recognizes the pressures faced by Deaf Children’s Society of BC and appreciates DCS’s work with and commitment to deaf and hard of hearing children.

Sincerely,



Christine Massey
Assistant Deputy Minister
Early Years and Inclusion Division
Ministry of Children and Family Development

pc: Rebecca Storey, Acting Executive Director, CYSN Provincial Services
Diane Bremmer, Director, BC Early Hearing Program