



Honourable John Horgan
PO Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9E1

November 4, 2021

Honourable Mitzi Dean
Ministry of Children and Family Development
PO Box 9057 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9E2

Dear Premier Horgan and Minister Dean,

We, the board members of the British Columbia Association for Behaviour Analysis (BC-ABA), are writing to express our concerns with the provincial autism funding program changes announced on October 27th. BC-ABA was founded in 2008, to connect and support Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) practitioners in BC. ABA practitioners work in home, school, and community settings, and provide services to a diverse clientele which includes individuals with challenging behaviours and diagnoses such as autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and those who work and live with those individuals (e.g., parents/family members, teachers, support workers). We currently have approximately 200 members who provide ABA services throughout the province.

We applaud the provincial government's commitment to increase access to funding and services for neurodiverse children and youth, those with disabilities, and their families. We support the government's objective of increasing equitable services for low income, Indigenous, English Language Learning families, and those living in more remote areas. Many families throughout the province have been without necessary specialised supports for too long. Change to the current funding model, however, should not come at the cost of decreased access to services and fewer choices for families who rely on existing services.

As you are aware, individualised funding for services for individuals with autism has been available in British Columbia since 2002. Individualised funding provides families greater autonomy in selecting the types of services and service providers that are the right fit for them and their needs. We share your concern that, for some families, there are barriers to navigating the current funding and support systems. For these families, a 'hub'-style model, done well, could reduce inequities in access to services. That said, the proposed centralised, 'one-stop-shop' model that has been announced may leave some families unable to access and/or continue with the services they so desperately need.

We also have questions about what a needs-based model of service would entail. No information has been provided about which measures will be used to determine an individual's/family's needs or the qualifications of the assessors conducting these critical evaluations. It is also unknown how long services will be provided for and whether needs will be re-evaluated at particular time intervals. Furthermore, it is unclear how many individuals and families currently accessing autism funding will lose their existing support and services.

Another concern we have regards the feasibility of the 'hub' model and the challenges and costs associated with the staffing and administration of a large organization or agency. We know that the move to centralized services can also negatively impact timely access to services, as evidenced by other provinces where transitioning to a hub model has resulted in increased delays in accessing assessments and services ([Ontario Disability Coalition, 2019](#)). Moreover, we are concerned with the quality of services that will be provided via hubs and how these services will be impacted by variables such as caseload size, staff training and supervision, and recruitment and retention of staff. We want to emphasize the importance of having qualified, competent professionals on staff; in our work, which is diverse in terms of scope and often entails supporting individuals with complex needs (e.g., severe challenging behaviour), it is essential that practitioners delivering behaviour analytic services possess the necessary training, education (credentials), and experience in ABA.

Finally, we are disappointed with the lack of transparency and collaboration during the planning process. The sudden announcement of significant changes to the funding and service provision model, and absence of specific details on implementation and execution of the hubs, has resulted in increased stress and worry for already vulnerable families. Key stakeholders were excluded from the planning process. We ask that you meet with, and listen to, families and service providers to truly consider the negative impact that these changes will have on their lives.

This is an opportunity for the government of British Columbia to demonstrate leadership through the development of a world-class model of support for individuals with autism, neurodiversities, those with other disabilities, and their families. A commitment to building a better future for these individuals necessitates listening to their concerns and providing the help they need, when and how they need it. Without collaborative relationships, changes informed by stakeholders (including parents and professionals) and based on research on best

practices, the new funding and services model is likely to be inadequate or even harmful for the individuals it is designed to help.

Sincerely,

The British Columbia Association for Behaviour Analysis Board of Directors

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