

AR 3628

February 25, 2019

Ms. Jennifer Fuchinsky, Fatality Inquiry Coordinator  
Justice and Solicitor General  
9th Floor, Peace Hills Trust Tower  
10011 - 109 Street  
Edmonton, AB T5J 3S8

Dear Ms. Fuchinsky:

Thank you for providing a copy of the Honourable Judge Saccomani's report from the public fatality inquiry into the death of Ms. Cassandra Lavoie.

This situation was extremely tragic, especially for Ms. Lavoie's family and friends, who continue to feel her loss. The report highlights the critical role of contracted agency staff and caregivers in ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals served by the Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) program. The Ministry of Community and Social Services values the report and its recommendations. This letter is to provide a response to the recommendations for the PDD program.

#### **Recommendation 1**

Alberta adopts the establishment of minimum core competency standards. Disability support staff must have the knowledge, skills and ethical compass to perform a wide array of tasks for the protection and safety of vulnerable clients entrusted to their care. The use of basic competencies to set workforce development and training will contribute to successful job performance, improve workforce retention, enhance the quality and delivery of services and promote the inclusion, dignity, value and respect to which all disabled persons are entitled.

#### **Response**

We accept this recommendation. The ministry is developing PDD core training and implementing a training tracking process for all department PDD workers that will aid with standardization and accountability.

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In addition, the Minister of Community and Social Services has appointed a panel to review the PDD program, tasked with “evaluating access to training and supports to enable a skilled and well-trained workforce” as one of five key areas of focus. Issues related to training and core competencies are being looked at in consultation with self-advocates, families, workers, agencies and the broader disability community. It is anticipated additional actions will be taken, informed by the findings of the review.

### **Recommendation 2**

PDD (with the assistance of accreditation agencies) review intake questionnaires and procedures, forms, charting and record keeping for respite and related client care. Comprehensive communication among stakeholders is critical for client protection and safety, transparency and accountability. Forms and questionnaires are functional tools to understand and assess the client's most current health status (medical/physical, emotional), demands and needs. They also serve to inform consent, to manage expectation and to foster trust.

### **Response**

We accept this recommendation. Updates have been made to the Service Design and Planning policy to include the PDD Outcome Plan which provides a description of the individual's identified support needs and the individual's desired outcome, and the Information Sharing policy to include a Health and Safety Document Summary to ensure all relevant health and safety information is consistently tracked and shared with community services providers during the service planning process. The PDD program is developing an Integrated Transition Planning policy that mirrors the Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) Integrated Transition Planning policy. It will clarify the required processes and the roles and responsibilities of PDD staff when supporting a youth who is transitioning to adulthood and the PDD program.

### **Recommendation 3**

PDD review "sleep shift" practises and "bed check" procedures to ensure that staff is attentive and responsive to occurrences regardless of the hour having regard to their vulnerable clients.

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**Response**

We accept this recommendation. While this recommendation chiefly affects processes that are developed and implemented by PDD service providers, we will collaborate with disability service provider accreditation bodies, such as the Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS), to explore options that will support best practices for overnight care. Additionally, we will review the PDD Service Design and Planning policy and its associated practices to identify opportunities to strengthen risk assessment and risk management processes and how information related to risk is communicated to service providers during planning. File reviews completed as part of the PDD program's quality assurance and continuous improvement activities have been updated to include questions to ensure relevant health and safety information has been shared with service providers during service planning.

**Recommendation 4 – Lifesaving Resources and Technique**

PDD consider refresher CPR instruction and related essential resources given the unpredictable life altering emergencies, which their disability support staff may encounter.

**Response**

We accept this recommendation. We have worked with ACDS to increase individual health and safety standards for service provider accreditation. Additionally, we have updated PDD contracts to require that all service provider staff have the necessary qualifications and expertise to perform their duties, including lifesaving procedures. Regular monitoring and quality assurance of these standards is part of the accreditation process.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response. If you require anything further, please contact my office.

Sincerely,

Original signed

Shannon Marchand  
Deputy Minister