



Better Together

Alberta Human Services Annual Report Highlights | 2011-12

Message from the Minister

As the Minister of Human Services, it has truly been an honour to take part in such amazing work over these past few months. Human Services was established to model a new way for this government to work, and it's been inspiring to see the efforts of the staff in this ministry.

The highlights that follow in the next few pages reflect this Ministry's wide variety of wrap-around services that are provided. From Occupational Health and Safety to Child Care and from Homeless Supports to Career and Employment Services, Human Services aims to be a one-stop shop for services to Albertans.

Since this Ministry was created in October 2011, we have accomplished many things. We have established the Child and Youth Advocate, which is a newly created independent office of the Legislature. I am also proud of the work that has been done on the Social Policy Framework, which is a proactive initiative that focuses on outcomes for people, rather than rules and policy. And this is just to name a few of the many achievements.

The highlights are a testament to the dedication and drive of staff and community partners we have worked with. I would like to thank you all for your extremely hard work over the course of our time together.

(original signed by)

Dave Hancock, QC
Minister of Human Services
MLA, Edmonton – Whitemud





Message from the Deputy Minister

In just a few short months, I continue to be impressed with the work by staff in Human Services. I have been very proud to witness the more than 7,000 staff in the Ministry who work to help Albertans realize their full potential and to seize opportunities as they arise.

In this booklet, you will read just a handful of the many ways Human Services has helped change lives on a daily basis.

I would like to congratulate the staff of Human Services for their endless passion and hard work. The work we have accomplished over this short time is a testament to this government's new focus and I know staff are prepared to help Alberta continue to grow. I would also like to thank our partners and collaborators who have worked closely with us over this time and are helping us reach our targets.

(original signed by)

Steve MacDonald
Deputy Minister of Human Services



**Vulnerable children, individuals
and families are protected and
supported in times of need**

Goal 1

In 2011-12, the Ministry of Human Services continued to work together with Albertans, partners and stakeholders to enhance the ability of families and communities to develop nurturing and safe environments for children, youth and families. In partnership with the contracted agency sector, key stakeholders and community partners, the Ministry improves outcomes for vulnerable Albertans and their families through prevention, preservation and protection.

- The Caribou Child and Youth Centre opened in Grande Prairie and serves to provide a safe environment and expert support to children and youth who are victims of crime, abuse and other trauma. Services include crisis intervention, advocacy and support, specialized medical evaluation and treatment, and specialized mental health services. The facility also offers community education and outreach.
- The Triple P - Positive Parenting Program is an evidence-based parent education and family support program, which helps prevent behavioural and social-emotional development problems in children by enhancing the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents. For more information, and to find resources for parents, please visit the Stay Positive website (www.alberta.triplep-staypositive.net).
- The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Learning Series offers free education opportunities tailored to meet the unique needs of individuals affected by FASD. Lectures consist of seven sessions and are broadcast via live webcast. Participants are provided with the opportunity to interact with the presented during a facilitated question and answer period. In 2011-12, over 1,500 people accessed the webcasts.

- Through the Advancing Futures Bursary Program, Human Services provided support to 600 youth who are or have been in government care. The program covers education and living expenses and provides guidance while the youth attend post-secondary education. In 2011-12, 83 per cent of students completed their program of study.
- *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years* is in its third year of implementation. As a joint effort between Human Services and community partners to provide unique supports to Albertans to reach their highest level of independence, approximately 5,900 homeless people (including 1,200 families) were housed. Of those housed, approximately 80 per cent retained their housing.
- The Alberta Mentoring Partnership's (AMP) vision is to ensure that every child or youth at risk in Alberta who needs a mentor has access to one. Community mentoring programs in Alberta were given access to online training and social marketing tools via AMP's website (www.albertamentors.ca). Since June 2010, 900 individuals have received online training to become mentors, and over 1,000 youth have been trained as mentors through High School Teen Mentoring programs.
- In November 2011, approximately 150 students took a stand against bullying by participating in a flash mob during National Bullying Awareness Week - an event that can be viewed by accessing the *Your Alberta* YouTube channel. Information and support on bullying is available to all walks of life via one of three websites (www.teamheroes.ca, for children; www.b-free.ca, for youth; and www.bullyfreealberta.ca, for adults).
- New public services announcements, such as *Make Your Call* and *Make it Better*, were produced to encourage Albertans to reach out and stand up to family violence and bullying. Albertans are encouraged to reach out and call the toll-free 24-hour Family Violence Information Line (310-1818), which provides help in over 170 languages or visit the website (www.familyviolence.alberta.ca) for more information on supports related to family violence.



A black and white photograph of a woman in the foreground, smiling broadly. She is wearing a dark hard hat and a safety vest over a plaid shirt. Her hair is dark and pulled back. In the background, there is a construction site with several large trucks parked on a dirt road under a clear sky.

Alberta has fair, safe, healthy and inclusive workplaces and a skilled labour force that contributes to economic prosperity

Goal 2

A fair, safe, healthy and productive workplace improves the quality of life and well-being for Albertans and helps keep Alberta prosperous and competitive in the global economy. The Ministry of Human Services invests in Alberta's labour supply, skills and workplaces to ensure the long-term sustainability and prosperity of the economy.

- April 2011 marks the launch of CAREERinsite (www.careerinsite.alberta.ca), an online interactive career planning feature on the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website. Through CAREERinsite, people can explore and compare career options based on their unique skills and interests, and then develop their personal action plan. Since the launch, more than 22,000 people have created and saved their personal career plans on ALIS.
- Effective September 1, 2011, Alberta introduced a new minimum wage policy which, amongst other changes, included a differential minimum wage for liquor servers. The new general rate was set to \$9.40 per hour, while the liquor server rate was set to \$9.05. The government has also committed to review the minimum wage on an annual basis.
- An Oil and Gas Virtual Job Expo was hosted to reach job seekers in target international markets and assist Alberta employers to attract and retain international workers with the right skills to address labour shortages. In addition, resources were made available for employers to help with making informed decisions when recruiting skilled international tradespeople.

- The Best Practice Guideline provides practical guidance to help employers fulfill their obligations to protect the health and safety of workers. The guideline was developed based on the minimum standards set out in legislation. The final volume of the five-volume series, *Best Practice Guideline for Occupational Health and Safety in the Healthcare Industry*, was released in November 2011.
- A Certificate of Recognition (COR) is awarded to employers who develop health and safety programs that meet established standards. To ensure that COR certification continues to represent an employer's commitment to a strong and healthy safety program, the employer review process was redesigned with considerably more strict guidelines. Preliminary, and if necessary, formal reviews are now triggered based on criteria directly and immediately relative to an employer's record of compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act, Code and Regulation*.
- The *Targeted Initiative for Older Workers* is a joint federal-provincial funded program that provides employment assistance services and employability improvement activities, such as upgrading and work experience, to assist unemployed workers aged 55 to 64 with their return to work. In 2011-12, 13 programs were provided across the province to address employment and/or training supports for approximately 500 mature workers.
- Albertans now have the option of submitting employment standards complaints online. Of the 7,818 complaints received in 2011-12, 5,650 (72 per cent) were filed electronically. With the addition of an officer in the Employment Standards Contact Centre, claims requiring minimal intervention are resolved more quickly.



A black and white photograph of three young children wearing hockey helmets and jackets, cheering with their arms raised on an ice rink. The child on the left has their mouth wide open in a shout. The child in the middle has their right arm raised high. The child on the right has their left arm raised high. The background shows the ceiling of the rink with several lights.

In collaboration with communities and stakeholders, the conditions and opportunities are created for Albertans to succeed

Goal 3

The Ministry of Human Services works collaboratively with ministries, stakeholders, including First Nation leadership and communities, and federal government departments and other stakeholders to create new approaches to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and families; and assists employers in meeting their workforce requirements.

- In May 2011, the Town of Slave Lake was devastated by a fire that forced the evacuation of many of its' residents. Effective and timely emergency relief benefits to Albertans impacted by the wildfires were distributed. The Alberta Supports Slave Lake Coordinated Intake Pilot provided quick and easy access to program information and referral to families and individuals. The pilot project provided residents with information on social-based services, such as child care subsidies, by visiting one office and working with one staff member.
- The Alberta Supports initiative continued to improve how social-based assistance services are delivered to Albertans. The Alberta Supports website provides information on more than 30 social-based programs, and more than 120 services offered by Human Services and Seniors. Between April 1, 2011 and March 31, 2012, the Alberta Supports Contact Centre received more than 327,244 calls from Albertans for information related to topics such as seniors, employment and training, children and youth, abuse and bullying, homelessness and persons with disabilities.
- Province-wide consultations on the development of enhanced accreditation standards in 2012-13 were held. Quality assurance mechanisms for the monitoring of day care and family day home compliance were strengthened with improvements in documentation and training requirements, consistency of monitoring, enforcement policies and processes, and follow-up practices in enforcing child care program compliance with statutory requirements.

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- The *Transition from Child Disability Programs to Adult Pilot* looks at new ways to help vulnerable Albertans navigate available services and tries out a new model to support youth with disabilities and their families during the critical period of transition planning to adult independence. The pilot is one of the first initiatives under Alberta Supports to be completed where support was provided to 23 families from Central Alberta who have youth with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 17.
 - Ongoing community conversations create a shared understanding of the complex issues which contribute to over-representation of Aboriginal children in the Child Intervention System and work towards identifying collective actions and best practices. In 2011-12, over 250 people were engaged in community conversations held in Edmonton, Lethbridge and Fort MacLeod.
 - The Premier mandated Social Policy Framework, will guide the alignment and potential redesign of social policy and programs in order to achieve better outcomes for children, families, individuals and communities. Extensive jurisdictional and academic research and community engagement feedback supported the development of a discussion paper and Cabinet document for government on the proposed scope, expected outcomes and engagement approach for a social policy framework.

Since 2011, Human Services has engaged approximately 10,000 stakeholders, citizens and staff to collect input on what a social policy framework could look like and mean in Alberta.





Seniors

On May 8, 2012, the government announced cabinet restructuring. As a result, the Office of the Public Guardian and disability support programs, including Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) and Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), were transferred from the former Ministry of Seniors to the Ministry of Human Services. The former Ministry of Seniors introduced a number of initiatives in 2011-12 that made a difference in the lives of seniors, persons with disabilities, their families and their communities.

- This year, under the Assured Income for Severely Handicapped (AISH) program, the Ministry provided financial assistance and health benefits to about 45,000 Albertans with a severe and permanent disability that substantially limits their ability to earn a livelihood. As part of government's commitment to support Albertans with disabilities, the Ministry increased the maximum monthly financial benefit for AISH clients by \$400 per month to \$1,588, effective April 1, 2012. In addition, the thresholds for the AISH employment income exemption were doubled, allowing people receiving AISH who work, or their co-habiting partner, to retain more of the earnings from their employment.
- Staff in contracted agencies play a pivotal role in supporting adults with disabilities in community and home-like settings. As part of a commitment to helping agencies attract and retain staff who provide quality care, the Ministry developed a long-term strategy for staff retention and provided supplementary funding equivalent to a five per cent wage increase.

- The *Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act (AGTA)* and *Personal Directives Act (PDA)* offer a variety of options to support adult Albertans who need assistance making personal and/or financial decisions. By ensuring the least restrictive and least intrusive forms of substitute decision-making are utilized, the Office of the Public Guardian, through the AGTA and PDA, strives to balance independence and autonomy with safety.

The Ministry promoted awareness of the AGTA and personal directives by distributing over 77,000 brochures, pamphlets, forms and information packages to over five hundred partners, facilities, organizations and individual Albertans. Over 2,100 personal directive documents were provided in languages other than English (i.e. French, German, Spanish, Punjabi, Tagalog and Ukrainian).

- As our population ages, a range of accommodation options will help seniors and persons with disabilities age in the right place. This past year, \$67 million in grants were made to municipalities, not-for-profit organizations, community groups and private sector organizations throughout Alberta to help develop 665 new or upgraded affordable supportive living spaces and 30 additional long-term care spaces. These units will increase choice and availability of accommodations for seniors and persons with disabilities who require support to live in their communities.*
- The new *Seniors' Property Tax Deferral Act*, passed in March 2012, provides the basis for developing a program that will assist seniors with some of the costs of home ownership by providing them with the option of deferring part or all of their residential property taxes, leaving them with more funds to use for other financial priorities. This new law, which takes effect in 2013, further supports seniors' independence by helping seniors to age in place as appropriate.*

For the full version of the former Alberta Seniors' Annual Report 2011-12, please visit www.health.alberta.ca/documents/Seniors-Annual-Report-12.pdf.

* As of May 8, 2012, responsibility for affordable supportive living and the Seniors Property Tax Deferral were transferred to the Ministry of Health.



Please refer to our website for a full version of Alberta
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www.humanservices.alberta.ca

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