

# BC FamilyNet Society

August 11, 2015

Office of the Advocate for Service Quality  
Suite 820 – 999 West Broadway  
Vancouver, BC V5Z 1K5

Attention: Paula Grant, Acting Advocate for Service Quality

Dear Paula:

## **Re: Review of the Advocate for Service Quality Position**

First, we thank you for reaching out to family members and organizations in order to gather feedback on this very important position.

Taking a broad view of advocacy and services in the community living sector, we believe that the plan for service quality should be as follows:

- First, the primary focus for the Advocate should be on identifying root problems with policy, program and service delivery based on individual and group experiences in communities
- Based on this analysis and experience, the Advocate would stimulate the development of solutions through policy and service reform. This would require a commitment on the part of government to address problems identified and seek solutions through policy improvement. Advocacy without a commitment on the part of government to effect change where needed will not result in the best outcomes for individuals and their families.
- In addition, the Advocate would ensure individual issues are addressed in a timely manner and the documentation be used to inform policy and program service delivery
- Finally, the Advocate would promote collaboration with other ministries such as CLBC, Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, Ministry of Children and Family Development, Ministry of Health as well as the Representative for Children and Youth and the Public Guardian and Trustee of BC.

Regarding the successful candidate for the position of Advocate for Service Quality, we believe the following attributes are necessary in order to have a measure of success:

- Independence, reporting directly to Cabinet
- Proven ability to promote positive change.

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- Proven advocacy skills and experience, with a focus on policy and service delivery reform
- A strong connection to families, either as a family member or having a very close relationship with a person with a developmental disability
- Proven policy development, mediation and dispute resolution skills
- Experience working in services or providing support to people with developmental disabilities
- Knowledge and understanding of policy development and service delivery systems.

Regarding the need for a government commitment, just identifying problems will not improve situations without addressing the root cause and seeking solutions. The existence of the position in prior years did not result in fundamental needed change. Key elements in moving forward are the independence of the position, reporting to cabinet, the political will to make necessary changes and the establishment of mechanisms to address policy and service issues. We recognize that this is a shift in the focus of the position, but one that we believe will contribute to positive change for people supported by community living.

One practical solution might be the creation of a Task Force of Cabinet that includes all the stakeholders in a meaningful partnership, meeting as needed to address problems and concerns and to seek solutions.

We wish to affirm that FamilyNet is committed to moving forward in a positive way, recognizing the challenges ahead.

Sincerely,

Linda Derkach, President  
BC FamilyNet Society  
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Cc: Hon. Michelle Stilwell  
Minister of Social Development and Social Innovation