



# Health Sciences Association condemns cuts to services for kids with special needs

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## Union says 1.5 per cent cut could lead to longer waiting lists

The union that represents pre-school teachers and therapists who work with children with special needs, has added its voice to those who say that cuts by the Ministry for Children and Families could lead to even longer waiting lists for children who require therapy.

"Child development centres and infant development programs are already overextended with hundreds of children waiting to be accepted," says Cindy Stewart, President of the Health Sciences Association of BC (HSA). "While the ministry claims they are targeting administration, this can't possibly be achieved without some impact on service levels."

HSA represents more than 750 care providers who work with children with special needs including: pre-school teachers, speech/language pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, recreation therapists, infant development consultants and family support workers. The majority work in Child Development Centres (CDCs) and Infant Development Programs (IDPs) that are funded by the ministry and subject to the 1.5 per cent cut announced in early May.

"If these services were funded by the BC Ministry of Health, they would be seeing budget increases," Stewart points out. "But because many children with special needs receive health care services through agencies funded by the children and families ministry, their services are not afforded the same protection - in fact they are under threat."

Stewart says this issue was a hot topic at the union's annual convention held in May. Delegates passed a resolution calling on the provincial government to protect health care services for children with special needs, the same way that all other health care services in BC have been protected.

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### **For more information contact:**

*Rebecca Maurer, Director of Communications*  
(604) 439-0994

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