

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## **N.S social worker stress impacting the care of vulnerable children**

**HALIFAX, NS-** This week, Nova Scotia honours foster parents during Foster Family Appreciation week. These foster families provide care to the most vulnerable children. However, the care of vulnerable children in our province is heavily impacted by the current level of stress facing social worker's working for the Department of Community Services (DCS).

Liz Burton, a foster parent and the President of the Central Region Foster Family Association, sees the burnout firsthand and the impact this stress has on the care of foster children.

"The recent changes to the Access Program, which facilitates visitation between our kids in care and their bio parents, has increased the risk of trauma. Confusion and lack consistency impacts our children. Social workers are doing their best to pick up the pieces," explains Burton

The DCS changes have increased workloads for social workers. This means social workers have less time to do critical work with children.

"Foster parents are frustrated with these changes. We see how the children are affected and we know we are not doing our best to support them. We are all united in our desire to protect children from more trauma. We are also united in our feeling of helplessness, that none of us have the power to make basic changes," Burton adds.

Debbie Reimer, Executive Director of Kids Action Program in Kentville, NS also witnesses the impact these changes have on the children in care,

"Social workers are carrying a heavy workload. This impacts the children who are being removed from their families, and it impacts the foster parents and the support they are provided. We are not doing our children good service when our system is under stress and under resourced," notes Reimer.

In a high stress crisis driven environment the child often becomes invisible. Social workers need time to build relationships and work in solidarity with vulnerable families. This time is lost when they are running from crisis to crisis.

The [Nova Scotia College of Social Workers](#) (NSCSW) continues to be concerned with social worker stress levels which is impacting the overall capacity to keep children safe.

"The burnout rates in our province's Child Protection System are not the result of individual social workers not fitting with the work," says Alec Stratford, NSCSW Executive Director/Registrar.

“Social workers are trained to engage with the most vulnerable in our society. They have knowledge and skills to competently perform assessments, interventions, negotiations, mediations, advocacy, and evaluations. They are well trained in inter-professional practice, community collaboration and team work. **This is an organizational culture issue combined with a lack of support.**”

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*About us: The Nova Scotia College of Social Workers (NSCSW) serves and protects Nova Scotians by effectively regulating the profession of social work. We work in solidarity with Nova Scotians to advocate for policies that improve social conditions, challenge injustice and value diversity.*

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