

## **CASW Releases Child Welfare Research Report**

On August 16, 2018, the Canadian Association of Social Workers, in collaboration with federation partners including the Manitoba College of Social Workers (the College), released its research on the social work profession in child welfare across Canada. The report, *Understanding Social Work and Child Welfare: Canadian Survey and Interviews with Child Welfare Experts*, reflects both the positive and difficult realities of the current field of social work child welfare practice.

This comprehensive research report confirmed that social workers across Canada are dedicated practitioners in child welfare. The report described child welfare practitioners as having a professional identity with child welfare and commitment to helping clients. Those working in child welfare also reported that they found job satisfaction from making a difference in the lives of children and families.

The following statistics related to child welfare practitioners provide awareness for areas of future advocacy and change:

- 75% of child welfare practitioners report that unmanageable workloads are a critical issue
- 44% have experienced threats or violence on the job
- 72% report they do not have enough time to spend with clients
- 45% of child welfare practitioners who left the field did so due to stress and vicarious trauma

This report comes at an opportune time as the Government of Manitoba continues its Child Welfare Legislative Review. As this report concluded, critical systems issues are clearly contributing to increased expectations and administrative requirements, staff turnover, vicarious trauma, large caseloads and an overrepresentation of indigenous children in care.

The College is hopeful that the results of this research will be carefully considered as part of the government's commitment to ensure better outcomes for children and families in our province. The College was pleased that the report confirmed that professionally educated staff who are competent and well-trained are more likely to remain in child welfare but disappointed by the reported de-professionalism in child welfare. The recommendation to improve child welfare in Canada by raising the value organizations and all levels of government place on social work knowledge and methods is consistent with recommendations of the College. In our response to the Child Welfare Legislative Review Committee in February 2018, the College highlighted the importance of services being delivered by educated, skilled and accountable registered social workers as one of the key components to strengthening child welfare services in Manitoba.

CASW identified the following recommendations made by child welfare practitioners to improve child welfare in Canada:

1. Address the disproportionality of Indigenous families and other visible minorities, such as Black Canadian families, involved with the child welfare system
2. Improve working conditions for social workers by addressing workload
3. Support organizations to improve staff retention and reduce turnover
4. Support organizations to develop strategies to promote mental health and wellness and address post-traumatic stress experienced by social workers

5. Raise the value organizations place of social work knowledge and methods and the importance that social workers have adequate time to spend with clients

The College is encouraged by this report as a significant step forward for future advocacy, research and action to support social workers in the field of child welfare in the important work they are doing on behalf of children and families across Canada. Members are encouraged to review and share the findings of this report by visiting the [CASW website](#). The College welcomes your feedback and discussion as we continue to advocate for positive change for social workers and the children and families we serve.



Barb Temmerman, MSW, RSW  
Executive Director/Registrar



Vicki Verge Burgess, MSW, RSW  
MCSW President