

# **A**dvocate for Service Quality

ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18



Ministry of  
Social Development  
and Poverty Reduction

September 2018

Dear Minister Simpson,

It is my pleasure to present the 2017/18 Annual Report of the Office of the Advocate for Service Quality (OASQ); reporting on the period of April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018.

This year, my office connected with and helped more people with an intellectual disability and their families. I visited 12 per cent more communities than in 2016/17; met with 47 per cent more community partners; made 29 per cent more presentations; and handled 7 per cent more cases. While connecting with people across BC, I heard from many self advocates and families about what makes them proud, what keeps them awake at night, and ideas about how life could be better. Many of these stories I've shared with you over this past year. I've chosen to highlight a few in this report that capture some of the more complex and collaborative aspects of my work.

Something that continually stands out in all my conversations is the tenacity of family. Without it, many individuals would not be receiving necessary service. But one case is striking because the young woman, Roxy, does not have an involved family. She is a person with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, a developmental disability, and a mental health diagnosis. It was a paid service provider who used to work with Roxy when she was a child that brought her situation to the OASQ's attention. Roxy does not fit into any of the services boxes and is therefore falling through the cracks. In part because there are few specialized services that meet her needs but also because she cannot afford to pay for services. How can we help Roxy, and those like her, who are unsupported and struggle to be heard? Shining a light on their stories is the first step, but it's through system changes that their situations can really be improved.

Over the coming year I will work to make more connections and listen to more stories, help more people, and, hopefully, bring more voices like Roxy's to the attention of government.

I look forward to our ongoing work together.

Sincerely,



Leanne Dospital



Ministry of  
Social Development  
and Poverty Reduction

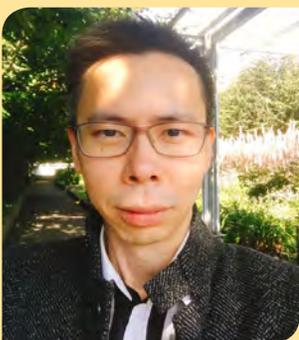
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# Who is the Advocate for Service Quality?



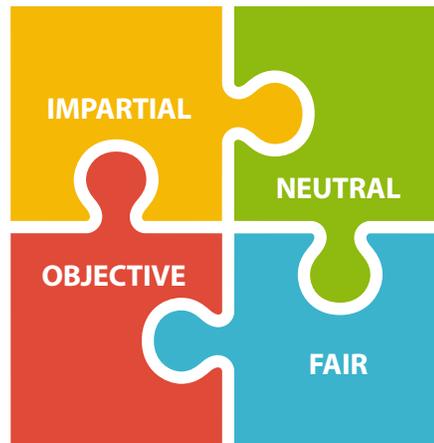
**Leanne Dospital** is British Columbia's Advocate for Service Quality and was appointed by an Order in Council in April 2016. The Advocate reports directly to the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction.



**Peter Do** is the Program Advisor and first point of contact for calls to the Office of the Advocate for Service Quality.

The Office of the Advocate for Service Quality (OASQ) was established in 1992. Since then the OASQ has helped thousands of adults and transitioning youth who have an intellectual disability and their families. The OASQ acts as a neutral third party and steps in to help solve problems and find solutions to concerns and complaints.

The Advocate strives to be:



The Advocate works in cooperation with, but independently from:

- ▶ Government
- ▶ Community Living BC (CLBC)
- ▶ Community agencies

**The Advocate's goal is to encourage fair and quality service from these organizations.**

# What we do

The OASQ helps seek quality service by:

- ▶ Asking questions
- ▶ Listening
- ▶ Empowering people to advocate for themselves
- ▶ Building relationships
- ▶ Being collaborative
- ▶ Finding common ground
- ▶ Influencing decision makers
- ▶ Raising awareness about systemic issues
- ▶ Conducting impartial file reviews

When you work with the OASQ, they will:

- ▶ Give you information and advice
- ▶ Refer you to supports and services
- ▶ Support your ability to work through the system
- ▶ Provide an objective perspective
- ▶ Work with you and other involved parties to help solve problems

“Manjit is an extremely shy, reclusive and vulnerable young woman. Our family is feeling so relieved that we are able to start putting strategies and protections in place for her future. Our sincere appreciation for the guidance, assistance, and perseverance that you provided. Thank-you, thank-you!!”

– email from parent

Problems are sometimes resolved simply by pointing people in the right direction. Other times, the Advocate helps negotiate solutions by leveraging resources and working collaboratively. In all cases the Advocate's focus is quality service for the individual with an intellectual disability.

With the OASQ's involvement, outcomes might be:

- ▶ Improved services for individuals
- ▶ Better communication amongst parties
- ▶ Modelling a good response
- ▶ Identifying systemic issues

## Finding Common Ground and Promoting Better Communication Leads to an Improved Relationship

Oliver\* and his parents started planning for his transition from childhood to adult services when he was 16 years old. It was important for the family to start transition planning early due to Oliver's complex medical and disability needs.

Oliver is dependent on care 24/7 and, with two other children at home and both parents working, the family decided that Oliver's needs would be best served in a staffed residential setting. During the planning process this was the primary goal: to find Oliver a new home.

*\*Details in all stories have been changed to protect people's privacy.*

When Oliver turned 19, however, there were no staffed residential options available in his community. While CLBC was able to fund some supports in the family home, the services were not sufficient to meet Oliver's needs and his family found themselves providing most of the care for Oliver. This resulted in significant stress in the family and they contacted the OASQ for help.

Oliver's parents described feeling in the dark and unsettled by not knowing what the future would hold or how long they would be expected to provide care for their son. Like many parents in this situation, they love their son and want him to live a full life that includes them, but they did not feel equipped to be his caregiver.

The OASQ helped the family to work through the system and to better understand why, despite years of planning, Oliver's needs were not being met. The Advocate highlighted the urgency and lack of clear communication with CLBC. The Program Advisor met with CLBC staff and the family several times to help find common ground and a way to move forward. This included helping the family understand the difficulties of finding a specialized home in a small community.

The OASQ helped rebuild some trust between the family and CLBC and supported CLBC's efforts for improved communication.

# Who we help

**20%** Community agencies

**16%** CLBC staff

**36%** Family members

**15%** Government staff

**13%** Individuals

The ASQ  
received  
271  
enquiries

**24%** Fraser

**18%** Interior

**27%** Island

**12%** North

**16%** Vancouver

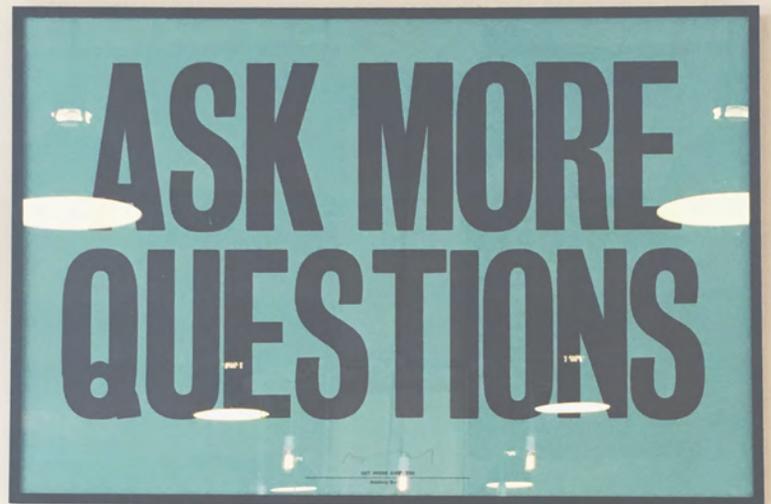
“ Thank you very much for working so hard to find a solution for our child. I am so pleased that you understood our issues and captured our needs in all the communication. ”

– email from parent



# Problem Solving

About 25 per cent of calls to the OASQ involve a disagreement about who should make decisions for or about a person with an intellectual disability. BC's adult guardianship laws state that there is a presumption of capability once a person becomes an adult and they have the right to self-determination. This means that the best person to talk to is the individual themselves. However, this quickly becomes complicated in cases where a person may need support making a decision and there are different views about what's in that person's best interests.



## Understanding the Whole Story Leads to a Good Decision

Karim had always lived in a small community on Vancouver Island. His mother's compromised health required her to move to Vancouver where a specialist was located. Karim's mother wanted him to move with her. The service provider contacted the OASQ saying that Karim did not wish to move from the residence where he had lived for the past 5 years.

Karim's mother explained to the Advocate that she was his representative under the Representation Agreement Act and wanted him to live close to her and his extended

family. She described a close relationship with her son and said he was excited to learn he would be moving closer to his cousins. Karim's facilitator at CLBC met with Karim and asked him if he wanted to continue living at the staffed residence or move to Vancouver. Karim said he wanted to stay, and CLBC supported the reports from the service provider that Karim did not wish to move.

Through many conversations with all involved parties, the Advocate found they did not have all the information needed to

support Karim. For example, CLBC and the service provider did not know that Karim would be closer to his extended family, specifically his cousins whom he loved and who visited Karim and his mother every year. The Advocate discussed the importance of understanding power dynamics and how that may influence an individual's choice. The Advocate also explained the role and responsibilities of a representative and the importance of good communication. While Karim liked where he lived, his wish was to be close to his mother and family. CLBC then assisted Karim to move his services from the Island to Vancouver.

# Advising

When identifying a systems issue, the Advocate may:

- ▶ Research the issue to better understand the underlying issues and impacts
- ▶ Discuss with community and government partners
- ▶ Help identify possible solutions
- ▶ Make recommendations for improvements or change



“Thank you for being such a clear and affirming voice amongst the background clatter. I appreciate your work and the support it provides to the people we serve and also to us as clinicians. You’ve made a difference for Karen that will have immediate rewards and also support her going forward with a greater confidence.”

– email from community partner

## Looking to History for Answers

Between 1985 and 1996 institutions in BC were closing but there were some people with complex needs that could not move into the community without the necessary health services being provided. Families and the community living sector advocated for all health services to continue in the community. In response to this need, funding was provided to ensure that this specialized and necessary care would continue outside of the institutions and new roles were created in the community:

- ▶ Health Services for Community Living (HSCL)
- ▶ Developmental Disability Mental Health Services (DDMHS)
- ▶ Provincial Medical Consultant Services (PMCS)
- ▶ Dental hygienist and nursing consultant

### Community Living BC (CLBC) reports

an increasing demand for services with an annual increase of 5.4 per cent in 2017/18, and 35.7 per cent growth over five years. However, health, mental health, and dental services for people with an intellectual disability are not growing to meet their need.

An example of this is the PMCS. This service provides expert medical and consultative clinical and ethical support to HSCL clinicians, CLBC staff and their contracted service providers, community health care professionals, the Public Guardian and Trustee (PGT), and the Coroner’s Service for complex cases involving people with an intellectual disability. The PMCS advocates for high quality care and provides education to physicians and HSCL clinicians. An important part of the PMCS’s role is

to review and track deaths and serious hospitalizations. Due to staffing changes and uncertainty about which agency should be leading the PMCS it has not been active for two years.

The Advocate played a convening and educating role in ensuring that these important services continue. She chaired three meetings with the five health authorities, the Ministry of Health, CLBC, and the PGT in order to determine how and in what form the PMCS should continue. Recommendations were made to a health committee resulting in a commitment from the Ministry of Health to hire a contractor to further review the PMCS. The research and conversations about PMCS revealed other health care issues that the Advocate continues to follow.

# Connecting

44

stakeholder meetings

40

presentations

19

conferences, committees, and events

19

communities visited



The Advocate maintains working relationships with:

- ▶ Community organizations, such as the Family Support Institute and Inclusion BC
- ▶ Community Living BC
- ▶ Service providers
- ▶ The ministries of Health, Children and Family Development, and Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- ▶ Health Authorities
- ▶ The Office of the Representative for Children and Youth
- ▶ The Office of the Ombudsperson
- ▶ The Public Guardian and Trustee

## It's Hard Work Finding a Good Solution

The Advocate held town hall meetings in Cranbrook and Dawson Creek. These were opportunities to connect with parents and individuals about their experiences and observations. The Advocate explained her role and how the OASQ can help, but the focus of the meetings was to listen and learn about the unique issues in these communities. The Advocate also spent time meeting with parents who needed support with their specific situations.

An individual in Cranbrook with complex and changing health needs had to move to a more supported environment. But this plan would impact other people, creating a domino of problems. With many conversations over many months, the collaboration and hard work of the Interior Health Authority, CLBC, and community agencies resulted in a complicated but positive plan. The Advocate was engaged at a particularly tricky time in the discussions and helped broker a solution that met everyone's needs.



# Operations



	Annual Budget	2017/18 Actuals
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$211,000	\$221,481
TOTAL SALARIES & BENEFITS	\$200,000	\$207,698
TOTAL OPERATING COSTS	\$11,000	\$13,783



## Advisory Committee

The Advocate explored implementing an advisory committee that would serve as a sounding board and inform her about local issues. After considering feedback from across BC and learning more about the number and role of existing advisory committees the Advocate made the decision not to convene another provincial advisory committee. Instead, she will focus on building relationships and gathering information while visiting people in their own communities.



## System

The Advocate wants to implement more rigorous accountability measures and asked the Program Advisor to update and enhance the OASQ's data collection and reporting. The Program Advisor worked with the relevant SDPR departments to finalize the OASQ's business requirements. The goal is to have a new system in place for the start of fiscal year 2019/2020.



## Social media

The OASQ has presence on social media through their Twitter handle: [@ASQ\\_BC](https://twitter.com/ASQ_BC). While the two-person office currently does not have the capacity to manage the more comprehensive and better utilized platform of Facebook, it is a goal to use this platform in the future.

# Contact



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