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CONTINUED UNDERFUNDING OF EARLY INTERVENTION PUTS VULNERABLE NSW KIDS AT RISK

The Minns Government has made significant in-roads in fixing the state’s out-of-home care system, but a continued disparity in funding between early intervention and crisis services is putting more children at risk.

Responding to [reports today](#) that up to **76 per cent of young people reported as vulnerable are not being seen by a case worker**, Fams, the peak body for family and children’s services, said more needs to be done.

Fams Chief Executive Officer Susan Watson said: “Family and Community Minister Kate Washington is rightly focused on solving the current crisis in out-of-home care.”

“The additional \$200 million for these services and redesigning service models to better support Aboriginal children and families are all welcomed investment and policy moves. The Minister is certainly listening and acting.

“But the problem – *the perennial problem* in our sector over many years and consecutive governments – is that you can’t just fund crisis services. We need far greater investment in early intervention and prevention programs.

“Our current NSW child protection system settings are akin to prioritising funding for emergency departments at the expense of primary care and preventative health measures that keep people healthy in the first place.”

“We urgently need to focus efforts on preventing kids from entering out-of-home care at all. This is crucial to stem the tide of children reported – or tragically rereported – as vulnerable and ending up in out-of-home care.”

Less than 9% of the spend on NSW child protection services is spent on early intervention and prevention services.

“As the peak body for NGO early intervention and prevention family and children’s services, we are calling on the Minns Government to increase funding by 25% across early intervention and prevention programs,” Ms Watson said.

“Early intervention programs are highly effective and are key to breaking the cycle of trauma and abuse.

“We particularly want to see more funding for programs that target children in regional and remote areas, Aboriginal children and children from low socio-economic backgrounds, where support is most needed.

Fams said that it is timely for the Minns Government to also undertake a systemic review of the reporting system for children at risk.

“We need the system to be geared more towards supporting and less towards reporting,” she said.

“Part of the challenge in our child protection system is that children and families often need to be re-reported over and over again to access any kind of services. We need to make it easier, not harder for families, to move between the different services offered.

“The frontline workers and not-for-profits in the early intervention and prevention system work incredibly hard and are incredibly talented. They just need more resources and support.

“What we need to stop is continuing to spend billions of dollars on crisis services while more and more vulnerable children fall through the cracks,” Ms Watson said.

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About Fams

Fams is a New South Wales peak body that supports the not-for-profit child protection early intervention and prevention sector to build on capacity and capability. We advocate for improved policies for children, families, communities and services. Fams works collaboratively with Government, Policy and decision-makers, non-government organisations, academic organisations, peak bodies, family and community services sector, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and organisations working with diverse communities. For more information about Fams go to www.fams.asn.au