

# Feds cut program funding <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

An in-home program for children with special needs that has been available on reserve for the past three decades will abruptly end this month with nothing to replace it.

Danna Henderson-McCallum, who lives on the Pasqua First Nation with her husband Lee and their two children Dannalee and Antoine, will miss the program.

Three-year-old Dannalee was born with myelomeningocele, also called spina bifida cystica, which is the most severe form of the disease. It causes nerve damage and other disabilities.

Dannalee was referred to the Early Childhood Intervention Program (ECIP) from the hospital.

ECIP is a provincial network of community-based programs that serve children up to age six who are experiencing delays in their development. The ECIP workers provide families not only with knowledge about child development but with information about community supports during each visit.

Dannalee was only two months old when she began receiving in-home services from ECIP.

"This worker would come into our home and do assessments, do activities, teach me what I could do to help her in all areas," she said. "It helped us tremendously. What would I have done if I didn't have the support? What would I have done with Dannalee? She would probably be farther behind than she is now."

Dannalee can crawl, pull herself up along furniture and walk with assistance and is beginning to speak. The bubbly little girl is also quick to give smiles, hugs, kisses and high fives.

Her mother credits much of her progress to the home visits from the ECIP worker whom Dannalee affectionately refers to as "auntie."

ECIP is a non-profit organization funded primarily by the Ministry of Education. It also receives funding from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) for children residing on First Nations communities.

AANDC will not fund the ECIP program after June 30. This means those living on reserve won't be able to access home-based ECIP services unless they move off reserve or place their child in care with the province.

Henderson-McCallum said those options are not acceptable.

She said while the debate on whether it's a provincial or federal responsibility, children like Dannalee will slip through the cracks.

Henderson-McCallum wonders what impact the cancellation of the program will have on her child.

"They pretty much took it away from her," she said. "They took away her chance."

Henderson-McCallum said every parent including herself wants their child to reach their full potential.

It has only been a week since receiving the official notice, but she is determined to fight for Dannalee.

She is not the only one who wants the services available to all people regardless of their place of residence.

Debbie Ross, ECIP executive director for the Regina region, said the funding

either needs to continue or some other viable solution needs to be found.

She said according to the federal government the ECIP program no longer fit the criteria for funding so it is ending it.

Ross said those living on First Nations have had access to the service for more than 30 years and doesn't know why that should have to change.

"We have a very good relationship with First Nation communities," she said.

"Not every community has a child with a disability, but if they did they know and continue to be aware that they can access ECIP services."

Ross hopes alternate funding can be found.

AANDC was contacted and provided no explanation as to why the program was cut.

"Protecting women and children on reserve is a priority for our government," the emailed statement reads. "We continue to invest in programs for First Nations

children and families in Canada like the Enhanced Approach to Child and Family Services Framework in Saskatchewan and the First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies."

Ross does not know if child and family service agencies can fund the program without additional programming dollars.

The Advocate for Children and Youth for Saskatchewan also asked the government to reconsider the cut.

- reprinted from Leader-Post

**Region:** Saskatchewan <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** funding <sup>[3]</sup>

special needs <sup>[4]</sup>

federal programs <sup>[5]</sup>

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/14/06/feds-cut-program-funding> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7858> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/special-needs> [5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federal-programs>