

Mother told to go to U.S. to get help for son

Agency later sent out letter of apology

CHRISTINA TOTH
CToth@abbottfordtimes.com

A social worker's letter warning a Mission mother that she won't get any more services for her 22-year-old autistic son may lead to her getting the behavioural therapy she wants.

On July 8, Linda Cucek received an e-mail from a Ministry of Children and Families social worker who said Cucek had exhausted all ser-

vices available for son James and suggested if she doesn't like it here, she should try to get treatment in the United States.

"Linda, the end has come. There are no further services available for you to access. As you continue to go through one psychiatrist after another, eventually there will be nobody to use. Services have been offered and provided to your family over the past several years and you have taken exception to every single service, health care support and agency that has been involved with James. So, if you don't want [the group home] HOMES, you don't want certain psychiatrists or health related services in B.C., than I suggest you try and

move to the United States to try your luck at services in another country," the social worker wrote.

Cucek took the letter to Maple Ridge-Mission MLA Randy Hawes, who shared it with Minister of Child, Family and Community Services Stan Hagen and Linda Reid, minister of state for child care.

"Hagen and Minister Reid have personally read the e-mail and they were shocked by what they read. They both agree it was totally inappropriate and action was taken. I know that social worker is no longer working on [Cucek's] file as of last week," Hawes said last week.

On Monday, Cucek received a letter apologizing for the earlier e-mail

from Community Living B.C. the Crown agency that has administered care for James.

"This is to assure you that Community Living B.C. will continue to offer services to your son James with best practice principles, budget availability and policy guidelines in mind," wrote Fraser Region manager Wayne Doane.

Hawes said Ministry of Child and Families staff are now reviewing a plan to offer the Cucek's a treatment that would include applied behavioural analysis, a modified version of the \$60,000 a year Lovaas therapy the family wanted.

"They said they'll be calling [the Cuceks] this week or by early next

week," Hawes said.

Hagen was not available for comment on Friday, and his staff said he is prohibited by law from discussing specific cases and is not likely to comment on this situation.

Cucek is thrilled to have some hope for James' treatment. James takes medication to control his behavioural problems, but does not receive appropriate therapy for his Asperger's, a form of autism, she said. Due to his behaviour and the side-effects of his medications, James has been in and out of regional hospitals.

"If they carry through with this, it'll provide a huge relief for the family," Stan Cucek said last week.