

SUMMARY: DIRECTOR'S SPECIAL REVIEW

A. INTRODUCTION

The Provincial Director of Child Welfare (PDCW) commenced a special review to examine the procedures that were followed for the placement of a child, the approval of a caregiver, and to assess the safety of the other children and youth in care of the Director who are placed in homes contracted by a Community Agency (the Agency).

This review was conducted under Sections 93.2 of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA)* which authorizes the Director to conduct a review on any matter related to the provision of service under the *Act*.

This review included an examination of files at the Agency. This review also included interviews with Agency staff, Delegated Aboriginal Agency (Aboriginal Agency) staff, Ministry of Children and Family Development (Ministry) staff, and staff in another Ministry.

B. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The purpose of this review was to determine the actions taken prior to the placement of the child, and whether the Agency's policies and procedures for the selection, assessment, approval and monitoring of the Agency's caregivers was consistent with Ministry standards, policies and procedures.

Specifically, this review examined:

1. What actions were taken by the Aboriginal Agency in placing the child in a contracted residential resource, and were these actions consistent with Ministry policies, procedures and standards, and *Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI)*?
2. Were the contractor's policies and procedures for selecting, assessing and approving caregivers consistent with applicable Ministry Standards?
3. What steps did the contractor follow to approve the caregiver, and were these consistent with Ministry standards, policies and procedures?
4. Did the contractor screen, assess and approve all other caregivers with whom children in care of the Director were placed, according to Ministry standards, policies and procedures?
5. Are the Ministry's current standards for screening, assessment, approval and oversight of caregivers employed or contracted by staffed residential resources consistent and adequate?

C. BACKGROUND SUMMARY

An Aboriginal child was placed in a resource with the Agency after supports put in place to care for the child in the family home proved unsuccessful. The child continued to have on-going contact with the family after his placement in the resource.

At some point after the child was placed in the resource, concerns regarding the caregiver were identified. The child was immediately removed from the resource, and alternate arrangements were made for the child's care.

Following notification of this incident, the PDCW requested an immediate review of the caregiver's file. Given the seriousness of the situation, the PDCW also requested a review of all caregiver homes for the Agency in which children in the care of the Director were currently placed, to determine whether the caregivers were selected, assessed and approved according to Ministry standards, policies and procedures.

A suspension of further placements with the Agency was put into place pending completion of the Director's special review.

D. FINDINGS

At the time of the child's placement, the Agency had not completed the required screening and assessment. This was contrary to the Agency's policy on the recruitment and approval of family caregivers, and not in compliance with applicable Ministry standards.

The Aboriginal Agency that placed the child also did not ensure the Agency had completed the required documentation prior to the child's placement. This was not in accordance with the applicable Aboriginal Agency standards for contracting with a service provider.

This review found the language in Ministry standards is ambiguous regarding which standards apply to contracted agencies that assess and approve caregivers.

This review also found the Ministry's contracting procedures with the Agency was inconsistent, and the contract language also lacked clarity with regard to which Ministry standards applied to the contractor. This may be in part due to the Ministry's lack of a centralized contracting process and/or a liaison for agencies such as this one, and the varied practices for contracting between Ministry Service Delivery Areas and Aboriginal Agencies.

This review concluded that the Agency's screening process for prospective caregivers is less rigorous than the process required by Ministry standards, policies and procedures. However, based on the review of documents, there was no information that indicated other children were placed at risk.

E. ACTIONS TAKEN TO DATE

Ministry Actions Taken to Date:

1. The PDCW suspended further placements of children and youth in resources with this Agency pending the outcome of this review. The suspension was lifted when the agency had satisfied the conditions for reinstatement.
2. A protocol investigation, conducted by a Ministry child protection social worker, was completed.

Community Agency Actions Taken to Date:

1. The contract of the family caregiver involved in the incident was terminated and the home was closed.
2. All personnel involved with the Agency's residential services were instructed that there is to be absolute adherence to the requirement that placements must never be made before the completion of the family caregiver approval process.
3. The Agency's accreditation body was notified and a report filed with them.
4. Newly appointed staff who support and oversee caregivers in an Agency Program are now limited to working only with experienced family caregivers.

F. ACTION PLAN

1. A directive will be sent to all contracted residential service providers clarifying the ministry requirements for screening, assessing and approving caregivers.
2. To ensure clear and consistent policies for Ministry staff, Delegated Aboriginal Agencies and contracted residential service providers on screening, assessing, approving and monitoring caregivers.
3. Develop a single global contract for residential services that includes reference to the applicable ministry policies, standards and procedures for approving, supporting and monitoring caregivers and requiring contractors to comply with these. Global contract to include definition of services and provision for standard pricing and payment structures.
4. Strengthen monitoring of contracted residential service providers by MCFD and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies by:
 - requiring contractors to submit an annual compliance report containing the names of caregivers and the dates on which screening, approving and monitoring actions, required under ministry policies, standards and procedures, were completed for each caregiver;
 - developing a program of ongoing financial and contract management review of contract deliverables; and,
 - designating a Ministry contact for every contractor to provide ongoing liaison and direction on residential services and associated contract management issues.