



PROVINCIAL ADOPTION PRACTICE EVALUATION

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BRITISH
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Ministry of
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QA

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ADOPTIONS PROVINCIAL PRACTICE EVALUATION

AT A GLANCE

Adoption was last evaluated in 2016/17. As new policy was introduced in 2019 outlining new procedures, increased collaborative planning, and streamlined screening process a review of current practice was launched.



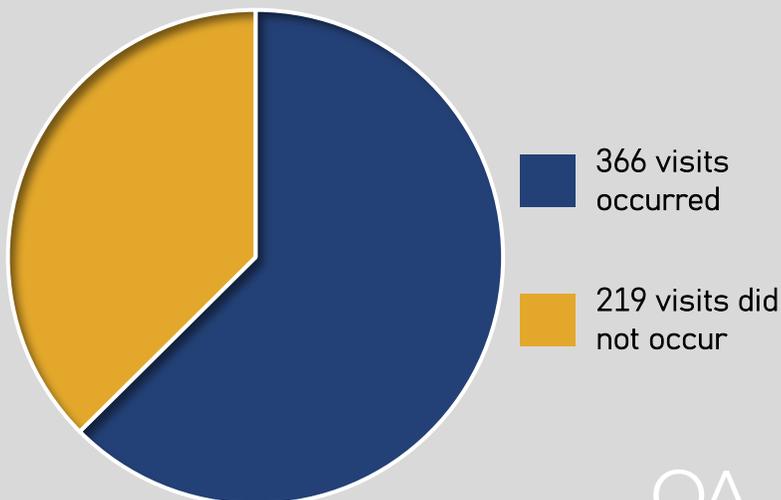
WHAT WE MEASURED:

- Guardianship and Adoption work throughout the preparation, planning and placement process.
- Evaluated the thoroughness and quality of work in addition to adherence to policy.
- Compliance result from 2016/17 were 50%, which signifies a marked compliance increase of 23%.

WHAT WE FOUND:



POST PLACEMENT CONTACT WITH CHILDREN & ADOPTIVE PARENTS:



STRENGTHS:

- Adoption Care Plan (64%)
- Completing the SAFE (94%)
- Adoption Transition (91%)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH:

- Adoption Circle (44%)
- Consent to Adoption (45%)
- Contact with Children after Placement (7%)

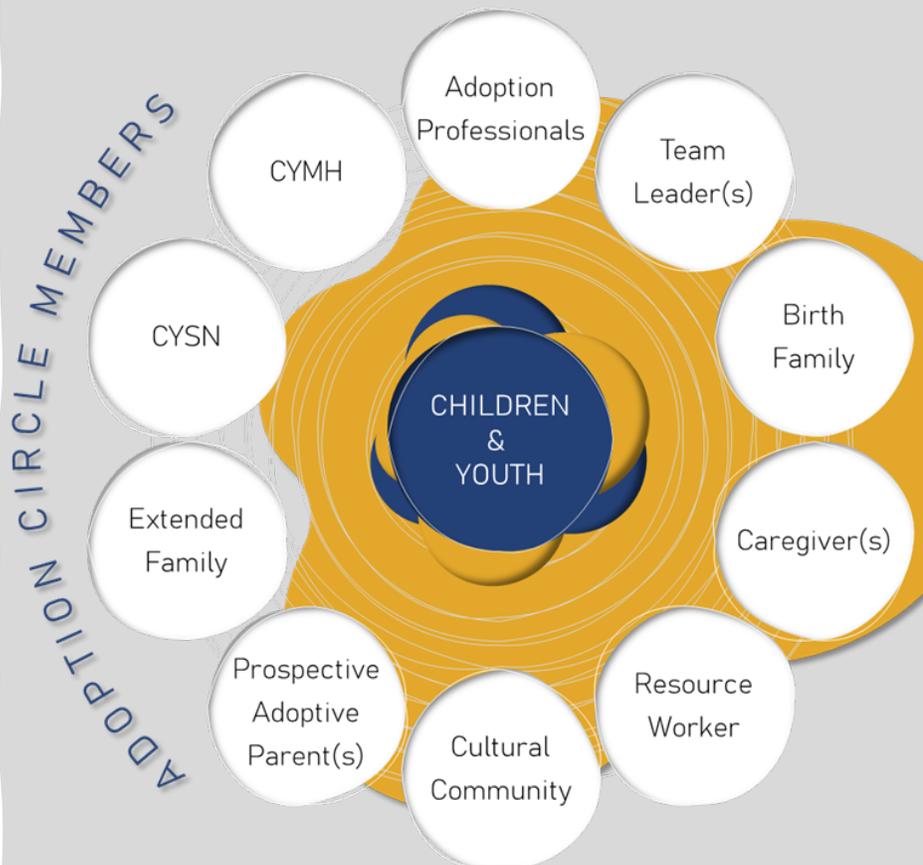
Despite children and adoptive parents being seen regularly on average during the post placement period, Policy's high threshold for post placement visits resulted in low compliance.

BRIGHT SPOTS:

Lifebooks, photo albums and letters from birth family were often utilized to prepare children for adoption.

Notice of Placement was observed to be marked by thoughtful ceremonies and celebrations!

Transition Plans were flexible, nimble, child-centered, transparent, and collaboratively developed.



A new addition to the 2019 policy, the adoption circle is an extension of the child's care circle. It is intended to ensure those closest to the child help guide adoption planning.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

DOCUMENTATION STRATEGY

UPDATE TRAINING WITH FINDINGS

POLICY ADJUSTMENTS

Background and Purpose

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) ensures accountability and quality service provision through a variety of means as administered by the Quality Assurance branch of the Provincial Director and Aboriginal Services division. One such tool, are provincial practice evaluations, which are conducted regularly by analysts on the Audit team across all service streams. Practice evaluations examine compliance with [legislation](#), policy, and operational standards, while providing oversight and public accountability. The results inform continuous improvements in practice, policy, and service delivery.

The intended outcome for practice evaluations is that all children, youth, and families will receive quality, culturally safe, and appropriate services and programs provided by MCFD. This evaluation was launched in response to the release of [Chapter 10: Adoption Policy and Procedures \(2019\)](#) to assess practice compliance for services provided to prospective adoptive parents and children and youth being adopted. Since that time with the development of coordination agreements and jurisdictional legislation, significant updates to this policy are coming which will further embed the principles of the [Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework \(APPF\)](#) as a part of MCFD’s ongoing commitment to reconciliation.

Scope

This evaluation reviews work completed by both guardianship and adoption workers throughout the adoption process. Practice analysts from the Audit team developed an evaluation tool and accompanying guide based on the new policy, and in consultation with the Adoption and Permanency Branch. As the evaluation timeframe included a period impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, MCFD interim guidelines were considered in the guide and informed analysts of policy exceptions during specified timeframes.

The evaluation reviewed work completed between May 1, 2019, and April 30, 2022, in 146 open and closed adoption records (AH) and in 85 associated child service (CS) records. The AH records comprised of 3 different adoption types: general, foster to adopt and child specific adoptions. All associated guardianship records which had adoption as the permanency plan, were legally available for adoption and in which the child or youth was proposed, placed and/or adopted were reviewed.

Summary of Findings

The evaluative findings are based on 13 measures tied to key components of adoption policy spanning the entire adoption planning process. The new policy differentiates guardianship and adoption tasks; as such, the measures mirror this distinction.



FIGURE 1: Guardianship Measures 1-6 Summary of results and compliance for 85 guardianship records.



FIGURE 2: Adoption Measures 7-13 Summary of results and compliance for 146 adoption records.

Strengths

Compliance ratings for the 13 measures ranged from **7%** to **95%**, however, when identifying strengths, analysts did not just focus on areas of practice with the highest statistical compliance, but rather elevated areas with strong practice and deep relevance to children, youth, and adoptive parents.

- ❖ **ADOPTION CARE PLANS** are a key planning document developed in collaboration with those most important to the child or youth prior to placement with adoptive parents. This document is completed and reviewed by both guardianship and adoption workers. Analysts found that these plans were completed thoughtfully and carefully.
- ❖ **STRUCTURED ANALYSIS FAMILY EVALUATION (SAFE)** which is a fulsome study of the adoptive parents and is used in matching. The SAFE is a large body of work completed by adoption workers in concert with adoptive parents meant to determine strengths, highlight resilience, and allow for compatible matches with children and youth.
- ❖ **ADOPTION TRANSITION PLANS** are a task completed in close collaboration with guardianship and adoption workers, caregivers, and adoptive parents. This mutually agreed upon process is meant to be both pre-determined and flexible, dependant on the child or youth’s needs.

Adoption Care Plans

When reviewing adoption care plans, analysts assessed that the plan is not only reflective of the child or youth’s unique needs, but also considers the child or youth’s views and is developed in collaboration with the adoptive parent(s). Additionally, the plan is reviewed and updated every six months, or if there is a significant change in circumstance until an application for an adoption order is submitted. The compliance rate for this measure was **64%**. Completion of the adoption care plan is a guardianship task, typically done in preparation for the file transfer to the adoption worker, however, the compliance is affected by the review process, which is a task to be completed by the adoption worker. As such, the adjusted compliance rate without factoring in the requirement of reviews increased to **87%**.

MEANINGFUL WORK – PREPARING FOR ADOPTION

The preparation of a child or youth for adoption is a vital piece of guardianship work. Analysts observed that guardianship workers were doing an excellent, thoughtful job of detailing a child’s life story through Lifebooks, photo albums and letters from birth family. Lifebooks were seen in a storybook format explaining that, while their birth parents were unable to care for them in the way the child needed, they will always love them.

Completing the SAFE

Analysts reviewed the physical and electronic records to ensure that the SAFE study was completed and approved by the team leader. The compliance rate for this measure was **94%** demonstrating thorough and thoughtful practice. The average time from the completion of the Adoption Education Program (AEP) to the completion of the SAFE study was 16 months. Analysts noted that SAFE studies related to foster to adopt and child specific applicants were prioritized for completion to expedite adoption planning for children and youth in care. From a review of the provincial adoption statistics from the Corporate Data Warehouse, approximately **80%** of adoption applications received were general applicants and **20%** of the applicants were foster to adopt and child specific.

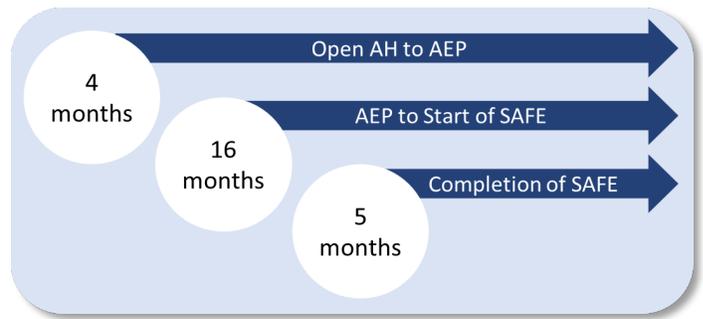


FIGURE 3: Adoptive Parent Approval Average timelines were calculated regarding the key points in the approval process for prospective adoptive parents.

Adoption Transition Plans

An adoption transition plan is developed after a child or youth is matched and proposed to the adoptive parent(s) and the adoption care plan has been completed in collaboration with adoption and guardianship workers, the child or youth’s caregiver(s) and the adoptive parent(s). This plan outlines a process to introduce the child or youth to the adoptive family which supports the child or youth to attach to them and prepares them for adoption. In situations where the child or youth and adoptive parent(s) have an existing relationship, this transition builds on this connection in a measured way to have the child or youth’s circle grow to include their caregivers and adoptive parent(s). Throughout this practice evaluation, a high level of collaboration was demonstrated with everyone involved in the adoption planning process including foster parents, adoptive parents, and both adoption and guardianship teams. Analysts observed excellent documentation pertaining to the transition plans which were adapted and changed in a thoughtful and nimble manner especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. The compliance rate for this measure was **91%**. This measure was applied to 23 records as transition plans are not required for children or youth living in the home prior to placement.

Opportunities for Growth

As with the strengths noted above, analysts wanted to highlight opportunities for growth that were not just practice with low compliance. As such, analysts focussed on areas where changes to policy, training and practice would make meaningful changes for adoptive parents, children and youth, as well as the adoption and guardianship workers that serve them.

- ❖ **ADOPTION CIRCLE** One of the new practice additions included in Chapter 10 (2019) was the creation of the adoption circle. Similar to the care circle outlined in Chapter 5, an adoption circle consists of individuals with a personal or professional connection to the child or youth who are able and ready to support the guardianship worker to make decisions during adoption planning that are in the best interest of the child or youth. Analysts identified that establishing an adoption circle is an area that compliance could be improved on with action planning.

- ❖ **CONSENT FOR ADOPTION** Signed consents for adoption for children and youth over the age of 12 were present on the record. However, there was limited documentation of the conversations and circumstances surrounding how consent was given as outlined in policy.
- ❖ **POST PLACEMENT CONTACT WITH CHILDREN AND ADOPTIVE PARENT(S)** The policy sets out a high threshold for contact with children, youth, and adoptive parents during the post placement period. Analysts found the documentation of visits sparse; as a result, the compliance for this measure was low at **7%**.

Adoption Circle

The guardianship worker must establish an adoption circle within 30 days of adoption becoming the permanency plan for the child or youth. The role of the guardianship worker is to consult with the child or youth’s care circle and to determine who to invite to participate in the adoption circle. The guardianship worker then consults with the adoption circle throughout the adoption process to facilitate an inclusive and collaborative approach to planning the child or youth’s adoption. As per the new policy, an adoption circle should be involved throughout the adoption planning. The compliance rate for this measure was **41%**.

When establishing an adoption circle, collaborative work was noted, however, not in line with the requirements of the circle and its purpose. Almost half of the records did not contain any documentation confirming the establishment of an adoption circle and/or an establishment of the adoption circle within 30 days of adoption becoming the permanency plan for the child or youth.

The associated ancillary question to this measure also captured data regarding any delays observed in the record when identifying an adoption match. The rationale for the delays varied. Delays were specific to the individual circumstances; however, some common themes were noted. There were instances of court delays related to applications and appeals and lengthy waiting periods for obtaining necessary approvals to proceed with adoption. Other delays included impacts from Covid-19 restrictions, concerns about the adoptive home which were either addressed by Protocol investigations, Quality of Care reviews or complex mitigation approvals and allowing time for families to address unexpected crises such as death or a serious illness. The most common reason delays occurred were due to the length of time spent on ensuring that consideration was given to all possible family members prior to finalizing adoption as a permanency plan for the child.



FIGURE 4: Adoption Circles On average it took 7 months to establish the Adoption Circle and included 4 members, not including MCFD Adoption staff.

MEANINGFUL WORK – NOTICE OF PLACEMENT CEREMONIES

Notice of Placement was often seen to be marked by ceremonies and celebrations! Parties, family photo sessions and sand ceremonies are some examples of the meaningful ways families celebrated the growing of their family.

Consent to Adoption for a Child over 12

Documentation is required confirming the consent of any child or youth over the age of 12 to their adoption, that it was freely given, and that the child or youth were informed of the implications of the adoption prior to obtaining consent. The compliance rate for this measure was **45%** and applicable to 11 records. The remaining records were for a child under the age of 12 or the child was not yet placed with the adoptive parent. While all the records where consent to adoption was required did contain a copy of the child or youth's consent, this measure delved deeper than simply obtaining consent. The current policy outlines obtaining consent to be a reflective, measured process with the child or youth and their supports to ensure that they make a free and informed decision about whether they want to be adopted by the prospective adoptive family. Analysts thoroughly reviewed both adoption and guardianship records for documentation of such discussions; while these were only found on five records, they demonstrated consent obtained with great care and diligence, and free and informed decision making.

Post Placement Contact with Children and Adoptive Parent(s)

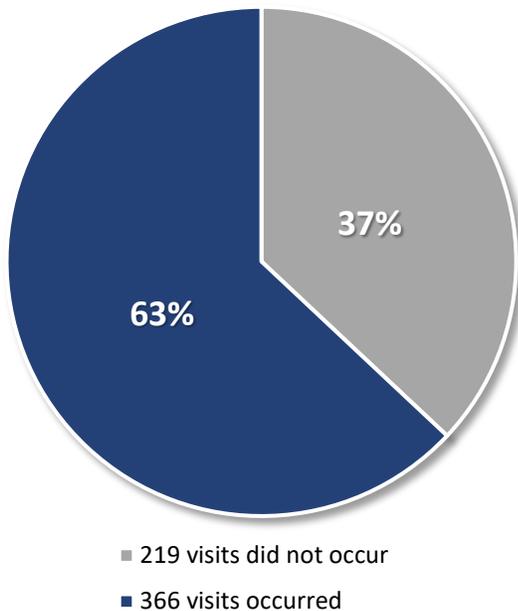


FIGURE 5: Post Placement Contact When considering the number of visits that were required versus the number that did occur, adjusted compliance increases to **63%** when removing the stringent required timelines.

Policy states that an adoption worker is required to contact the child or youth and adoptive family within one day after the placement, seven days after placement and every 30 days thereafter until the end of the court package is submitted. The placement period is typically six months but can be extended. To be achieved, all the above visits need to occur; if one visit is missed or late then the measure is not achieved. The compliance rate for this measure was **7%**.

Given the low compliance, analysts also assessed how many total visits were expected by policy and how many occurred during the post placement period. When examining the expected and actual visits, the number of visits was much higher than the compliance rate of **7%**. Of a required 585 visits from the 60 reviewed records, 366 visits occurred. As such, **63%** of the required visits during the post-placement period occurred but did not occur within the policy timeframes. Compliance to this policy can be bolstered if workers utilized the exceptions to policy and documented these exceptions with rationales in the record.

Documentation of visits often varied. Some visits were documented on the child’s electronic record, while others were documented on the adoption record in recordings or checklists. Developing a province wide tracking system for visits and exceptions to policy could improve compliance, streamline documentation, and support staff.

Other Notable Findings

Following analysis of the data collected, analysts noted findings pertaining to a few different areas listed below which were significant to bring forth and warrant consideration moving forward not only for practice but policy as well.

Generalized Policy – While foster to adopt and child specific placements make up just over half of all placements across the province, policy has a narrow lens focused solely on general adoption, resulting in gaps for these prominent areas of practice. Key areas where analysts saw distinctions in practice were for matching, transition planning and post-placement visits. According to data extracted from the Corporate Data Warehouse, **80%** of adoption applications are general and only **20%** of the applications are for a child specific or foster to adopt placement. Given the high volume of general adoption applications, child specific and foster to adopt applications are prioritized for screening and assessment as there are children and youth in care waiting for these placements.

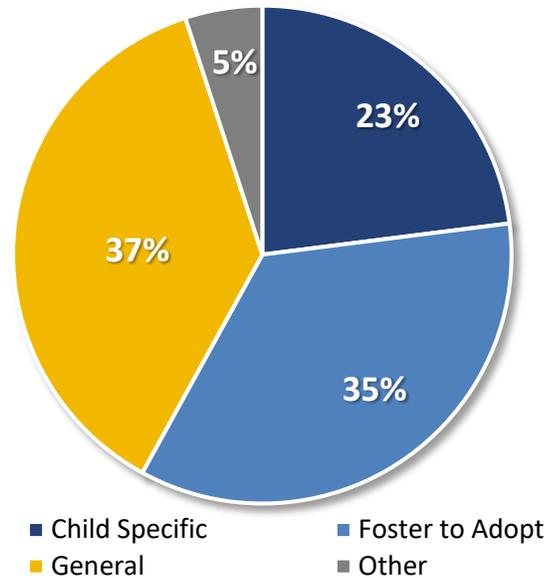


FIGURE 6: Total MCFD Placements Categorized by Type.

Electronic Recording System – Other program areas within MCFD have a dedicated electronic recording system to document assessments, meetings and notes that is easily accessible by other practitioners within the program area. Unfortunately, adoption workers do not have a clear mandate to document in a specified system. Guardianship workers use the Integrated Management System (ICM) to document care plans, visits, notes, and assessments. Adoption workers cannot use ICM at this time to document their ongoing planning and work with adoptive parents and have limited access to ICM for guardianship purposes during the post-placement period. This limits the ease to which workers can document and access information. Adoption workers do have access to the Adoption Management System (AMS) which is used for matching, however, it has limited usefulness for ongoing record keeping.

Notification to an Indigenous Child’s Cultural Community for Adoption Planning – Indigenous families and communities share responsibility for the upbringing and wellbeing of Indigenous children and youth. As such, guardianship and adoption workers must consult and cooperate with the child or youth’s cultural community. The Adoption Policy and Procedures (2019) made changes to include notification to Indigenous communities to align with the Federal Act: An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth, and families. The policy notes that guardianship workers must consider the intergenerational trauma of colonization and residential schools on Indigenous communities. This includes recognizing and responding to the fact that Continuing Custody Orders (CCOs) and adoption have historically been viewed as tools of colonization used in Indigenous communities.

Past policies have included notification but outlined providing notice whereas this policy is meant to invite continued collaboration in planning. This evaluation contained 21 records whereby the child or youth identified as Indigenous and Métis. Seventeen of these 21 had a representative from the child or youth’s community within the adoption circle generating a compliance rate of **85%**. Of the four records where a representative was not involved in the adoption circle, two records contained documentation of efforts to include representatives, while two records did not. While the sample was small the findings were positive.

Initial Screening Process – Initial screening encompasses completing a medical reference check, three SAFE personal references, prior contact check (both an initial and detailed records review), a criminal record check and an out of province prior contact check, if applicable, for each prospective adoptive parent. If concerns arise from these checks, mitigation consults are also required. Compliance to this practice was **95%**. In the past audit most of the applications were screened at the local office, however, the HUB, a centralized team where adoption applications are screened prior to being assigned to an adoption worker in their community was developed. During this evaluation, analysts found that most applications were screened by the HUB. The screening documents were noted to contain thorough and concise information including mitigation consults when required.

MEANINGFUL WORK – MATCHING

When matching children with general adoption applicants, analysts observed that the process was thoroughly documented and had the child’s best interest at heart.

Assessing a Potential Match for a Child – Assessing a potential match for a child or youth is a key guardianship task and includes reviewing the SAFE, involving the adoption circle in the selection process and involving the adoption worker who supports to adoptive parent(s). The compliance rate for this measure was **54%**. Analysts observed that the matching process for children and youth who were placed with family or in a foster to adopt home was very different than those exploring placements with general adoptive applicants. Often child specific and foster to adopt placements were years in the making. As such, documenting that the guardianship worker read the SAFE, while necessary in policy, was often missed in practice. Conversely, the matching of children and youth with general adoption applicants was observed to be a thorough, thoughtful, reflective, and rigorous process which was meticulously documented.

Timelines – This evaluation took baseline data on timeframes for phases of guardianship and adoption work which can inform future practice. As noted earlier there were delays observed in identifying adoption as the permanency plan and establishing the adoption circle. Additionally, general adoptive applicants experienced delays in completing their SAFE study.

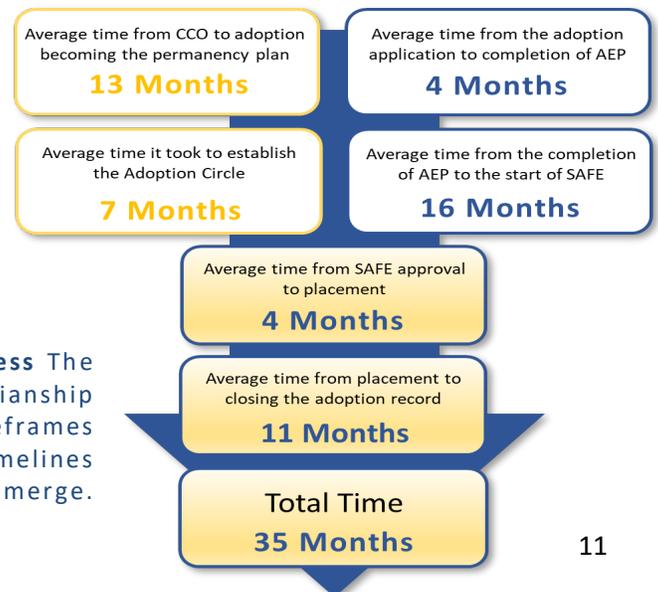


FIGURE 7: Average Timelines of the Adoption Process The left column highlights average timeframes in guardianship planning. The right column highlights average timeframes for adoption applicants. The yellow boxes indicate timelines that occur when guardianship and adoptions practice merge.

Action Plan

The action plan was developed in collaboration with leadership and various branches such as the Adoption Permanency Branch, Learning and Development Branch, Provincial Practice Branch and Policy and Strategic Integration. There was further engagement with Executive Directors of Service (EDSs), Directors of Operation (DOO), team leaders and front-line staff throughout the province. A plan was developed following recommendations in 3 main areas: policy, documentation, and practice with respect to adoption circles.

Action Item / Program Area	Action Item	Person Responsible	Date to be Completed by	Anticipated Outcome
Policy and Documentation Training 1. Strategic Initiatives Branch	Strategic Initiatives will review all documentation requirements outlined in policy and provide clarity to Service Delivery staff as to where to document work pertaining to proposing and assessing a match, consent for adoption for a child over 12 years and contact with the child/ youth and prospective adoptive parent during residency.	Catherine Talbott, Executive Director Strategic Initiatives Supported by Renaa Bacy, Executive Director Adoption and Permanency Branch	March 31, 2024	Adoption and guardianship workers have a clear understanding of the documentation requirements under key Adoption Policy and Procedures, as well as the correct system with which to document (ICM or AMS). Ongoing interactions and communications with prospective adoptive parents, children and youth are better reflected in documentation.
Post Placement Contact 2. Adoption and Permanency Branch	The branch will develop a standardized documentation tool on which workers will document post-placement visits. This could include documenting TL exceptions to either extend the time between visits or to contact by video call.	Renaa Bacy, Executive Director Adoption and Permanency Branch	March 31, 2024	Adoption and guardianship workers will have a standardized means of documenting visits with children, youth and adoptive parents while noting TL exceptions to policy. Visits with children, youth and adoptive parents can be more easily tracked and documented creating transparency and accountability.

<p>Adoption Circles Training</p> <p>3. Learning and Development</p>	<p>Embed in training information on establishing, maintaining, and collaborating with the Adoption Circle for both adoption and guardianship workers.</p> <p>Training will review documentation strategies and requirements.</p>	<p>Anita Misri, Director Learning and Development</p> <p>Supported by Renaa Bacy, Executive Director Adoption and Permanency Branch</p>	<p>September 30, 2024</p>	<p>Adoption and guardianship workers utilize Adoption Circles to guide and child/ youth's adoption plan throughout the entire process.</p> <p>Improved documentation and use of Adoption Circles throughout the planning process may lead to better outcomes for children and youth.</p>
<p>Policy Updates and Directives</p> <p>4. Adoption and Permanency Branch and Strategic Initiatives Branch</p>	<p>The branch in consultation with policy, will develop practice directives to provide clarity where needed and specificity for practice guiding foster to adopt and child specific adoptions. Particular attention to be paid a working definition of foster to adopt and child specific adoptions, assessing and documenting a match in foster to adopt and child specific adoptions and completing the SAFE for experienced adoptive parents, foster parents and restricted foster parents.</p>	<p>Renaa Bacy, Executive Director Adoption and Permanency Branch</p> <p>Supported by Catherine Talbott, Executive Director Strategic Initiatives</p>	<p>December 31, 2023</p>	<p>Policy guiding adoption and guardianship workers will be clear and reflect the specific definition and practices guiding planning for foster to adopt and child specific placements.</p>

APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY

I. TOOL DEVELOPMENT & NOTIFICATION

The development of the evaluation tool was a rigorous process whereby analysts developed adoption measures through ongoing consultation and collaboration with the Adoption Practice Branch. These measures were based on the new Adoption Policy and Procedures (2019) and reflected policy changes. To support role clarity, this policy defined distinct responsibilities pertaining to the roles of the guardianship and adoption worker. To reflect this, the tool was divided into two sections: the evaluation of guardianship practice within child service (CS) Records and adoption practice within adoptive home (AH) records. This is the first adoption service evaluation to make this distinction.

This tool was also developed to understand how changes to the Federal Act (An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth, and families), specifically in relation to Notification of Significant Measures, impacted adoptions for Indigenous children. As the timeframe of this evaluation included a period impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, MCFD's interim Covid-19 guidelines were incorporated in the tool. These guidelines were developed to accommodate practice directly impacted by the pandemic such as face-to-face contact with the adoptive parents and or the children and youth throughout the adoption process, for example post placement visits.

The practice evaluation tool consisted of 13 compliance-based adoption measures which were separated into two categories. Corresponding ancillary questions were also developed to provide contextual data and highlight strong practice. The ancillary questions did not impact the rating of the measures.

A corresponding Rating Guide was developed. Utilizing this guide, the tool was tested on a select number of records to determine inter-rater reliability amongst the analysts. Inter-rater reliability ensures that there is consistent interpretation of the measures and the associated criteria amongst the analysts. Adjustments to the tool were made before it was finalized based on the test results.

The tool used a scale of achieved, not achieved and not applicable as rating options. For an achieved rating, the analyst considers whether all the policy requirements related to the measure were completed. A not applicable option was added as certain measures were contingent upon the stage of the adoption process.

Once the tool was finalized, notification of the Provincial Adoption Practice Evaluation was sent to the Executive Directors of Service (EDSs) on May 24, 2022. The identified timeframe for the evaluation was from May 1st, 2019, through April 30th, 2022. The EDSs further informed their staff, who in turn prepared the requested records to be reviewed in advance of the commencement of this evaluation.

II. SAMPLE

The sampling method was developed and produced with the support of the Analytics Branch (formerly MAIM). A census sample was used for all closed adoption records wherein all records that met the selection criteria were selected and reviewed. The open adoption records included a representative number of records from all service delivery areas (SDAs) with a status of approved, completed, holding, offered, placed, proposed, and

under study with a file start date of prior to May 1st, 2020. As this was the first Provincial Adoption Practice Evaluation, the findings and analysis provided results for the province, and not for individual SDAs.

The record samples were drawn from populations with different parameters: all closed or completed adoption records with a file start date after May 1st, 2019, and a file stop date between December 31st, 2020, and April 30th, 2022, were reviewed. These records had no margin of error and a confidence level of 100%. All open adoption records with a file start date after May 1st, 2019, and were still open on April 30th, 2022, were reviewed. These records had a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of +/-8.4%. Last, all associated guardianship records for children and youth that were proposed, placed and/or those records in which adoption was completed and whose legal status was identified as a CCO were reviewed. For adoption records, all volumes were reviewed for practice. For guardianship records, only volumes from May 1st, 2018, to April 30th, 2022, were reviewed as some adoption measures were applicable to practice prior to 2019 such as preparing the child or youth for adoption, notifying the Indigenous community, and using an adoption circle or collaborative family planning.

Both physical and electronic guardianship and adoption records were reviewed during the data collection phase from July 2022 to December 2022. Electronic records were reviewed in Integrated Case Management (ICM) System and Adoption Management System (AMS). The ratings and the responses to the ancillary questions were entered into a SharePoint site designed by data specialists on the Monitoring team in the Child Welfare Branch. The information was then aggregated and synthesized into compliance tables for adoption and guardianship measures (see Findings and Analysis Section). In total, 146 adoption and 85 guardianship records were reviewed between five analysts.

A small number of records where the child or youth or adoptive parent(s) were residing outside BC were removed from the sample as the Adoption Policy and Procedures (2019) is only applicable to those residing in BC. CS records that were served by Indigenous Child and Family Services (ICFS) agencies were also excluded from the sample. Analysts recognized that for certain records, despite being managed by an adoption office in ICM, were being managed by ICFS agencies. Practice by guardianship workers at ICFS agencies was exempt as notification was not provided to them for preparation of records. The associated adoption records, however, were evaluated. In total, 12 guardianship records were removed.

Quality assurance policy and procedures require that analysts identify for action any record that suggests a child may need protection under section 13 of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*. During this Provincial Adoption Practice Evaluation, the analyst watched for situations in which the information in the records suggested that a child may have been left in need of protection. When identified, these records are brought to the attention of the appropriate team leader (TL) and director of operations (DOO), as well as the executive director of service (EDS), for follow-up as appropriate. During this evaluation, no records were identified for action.

APPENDIX B

DETAILED FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The below tables contain findings for measures that correspond with specific components of the Adoption Policy and Procedures (2019). Each table is followed by an analysis of the findings for each of the measures. Included are also highlights of practice noted from the data collected through the ancillaries associated with the measures. The measures include a breakdown of the rationale for why some records were rated achieved and some not achieved. Note that some records received ratings of not achieved for more than one reason.

The overall compliance for guardianship practice was 60% and for adoption practice was 81%. The overall combined average for the province was 73%.

Table 1 provides compliance rates for measures one through six which relate to preparing the child for adoption. These measures correspond to policy 10.1: Adoption Planning, 10.3 Proposing a Match, and 10.5 The Child’s Consent to Adoption

Table 1: Preparing the Child for Adoption

Measure	# of Not Applicable Records	# of Applicable Records	# Rated Not Achieved	% Rated Not Achieved	# Rated Achieved	% Rated Achieved
A 1: An Adoption Circle is Established and Involved in Adoption Planning	0	85	48	56%	37	44%
A 2: Notification to an Indigenous Child’s Cultural Community in Adoption Planning	64	21	3	14%	18	86%
A 3: Preparing the Child for Adoption	35	50	9	18%	41	82%
A 4: Assessing a Potential Match for Child in Continuing Custody	0	85	39	46%	46	54%
A 5: Consent to Adoption for Child over 12	74	11	6	55%	5	45%
A 6: Adoption Care Plan	1	84	30	36%	54	64%

*Measure A2: 64 records were not applicable as the child or youth was not identified as Indigenous.

*Measure A3: 35 records were not applicable as the child was not developmentally able to participate in a discussion about their permanency plan.

*Measure A5: 74 records were not applicable because the child was less than 12 years old, or the child or youth was not placed in the adoptive home or the placement period was not yet complete (68, 3, 3).

*Measure A6: 1 record was not applicable as the child or youth was not yet placed with the adoptive parents.

A 1: An Adoption Circle is established and involved in the Adoption Planning

The compliance rate for this measure was 44%. The measure was applied to all 85 records in the sample; 37 of the records were rated achieved and 48 were rated not achieved. To receive a rating of achieved, the guardianship record contained documentation confirming that:

- the worker established an adoption circle within 30 days of adoption becoming the permanency plan, OR
- if the CCO was granted prior to 2019, the CS record contained documentation confirming the worker established an adoption circle at any time before or after the policy came into effect.

Of the 48 records rated not achieved, 23 records did not contain documentation confirming the child or youth's social worker established an adoption circle, 14 records contained documentation confirming the establishment of an adoption circle however not within 30 days of adoption becoming the permanency plan for the child or youth, 12 records had the CCO granted prior to 2019 but did not have documentation that the adoption circle was created before or after the policy came into effect. The total number is greater than 48 as one record had more than one reason for being not achieved.

This measure also captured data about any delays observed in the record in identifying an adoption match. On average it took 13 months from the time the CCO was granted to adoption becoming the permanency plan, with a range of zero to 131 months. It took on average of seven months from the time the permanency plan was created to establish the adoption circle, with a range of zero to 42 months.

This measure also provided information on the number of Indigenous children and youth proposed, placed and or adopted and whether there was collaboration with the Indigenous community during adoption planning. Of the 85 guardianship records, 21 were identified as Indigenous or Métis. Of those records, 17 of them had a representative from the child or youth's Indigenous community within the adoption circle. Of the four records where a representative was not involved in the adoption circle, two contained documentation of efforts to include representatives, while two records did not.

This measure also determined the number of people, excluding MCFD adoption and guardianship staff, involved in the adoption circle. On average, four non-MCFD individuals were included in the adoption circle, with the range being from zero to 12 participants. Of adoption circles reviewed, the participants included adoption professionals, birth family, caregiver(s), Resource and Child and Youth with Support Needs social workers, members of the child or youth's cultural community, prospective adoptive parent(s), extended family and the subject child or youth.

A 2: Notification to an Indigenous Child's Cultural Community in Adoption Planning

The compliance rate for this measure was 86%. The measure was applied to 21 records in the sample; 18 were rated achieved and three were rated not achieved. To receive a rating of achieved, the guardianship record contained documentation confirming that:

- the Indigenous community was notified within 30 days of adoption, OR
- the Indigenous community was not notified within 30 days but reasonable efforts to notify were made.
- the identified representative was notified within 30 days.
- the identified representative was notified within 30 days but reasonable efforts to notify were made, OR
- if the CCO was granted prior to 2019, the notification to the child or youth's Indigenous community and their identified representative, if applicable, occurred before or after the policy was published.

Of the three records rated not achieved, two records did not confirm notification to the Indigenous communities within 30 days, and one record did not confirm notification to the Indigenous community and no reasonable efforts were documented. The range of time it took to notify the Indigenous community was from 293 to 363 days.

A 3: Preparing the Child for Adoption

The compliance rate for this measure was 82%. The measure was applied to 50 records in the sample; 41 of the records were rated achieved and nine records were rated not achieved. To receive a rating of achieved the guardianship record contained documentation confirming:

- the child or youth's guardianship worker met with the child or youth to discuss their permanency plan in a developmentally appropriate manner, AND
- ensured that the child or youth was prepared for their adoption prior to their placement.

Of the nine records rated not achieved, seven records did not contain documentation that the guardianship worker met with the child or youth who was developmentally able to discuss their permanency plan, four records did not contain documentation that the guardianship worker ensured that the child or youth was prepared for their adoption prior to their placement and two records had both above reasons apply.

This measure also assessed whether there was documentation on the record of team leader approval indicating that the child or youth had been sufficiently prepared for their adoption prior to placement. The analyst observed that the approval was mainly documented in the in the adoption care plan. Of the applicable records, 31 did contain team leader approvals and 19 did not.

A 4: Assessing a Potential Match for a Child in Continuing Custody

The compliance rate for this measure was 54%. The measure was applied to all 85 records in the sample; 46 of the records were rated achieved and 39 records were rated not achieved. To receive a rating of achieved, the records contained documentation confirming the child's guardianship worker:

- reviewed the written SAFE, AND
- conducted a selection process involving the adoption circle, AND
- involved the adoption worker local to the adoptive parent(s) in the selection process.

Of the 39 records rated not achieved, 24 records did not contain documentation confirming that the selection process followed the required processes and involved the adoption circle, and 21 records did not contain documentation confirming that the child or youth's worker reviewed the written SAFE study. The total is greater than the number of records rated not achieved as six records had more than one rationale.

A 5: Consent to Adoption for Child Over 12

The compliance rate for this measure was 45%. This measure was applied to 11 records in the sample; five of the records were rated achieved and six of the records were rated not achieved. To receive a rating of achieved:

- the social worker explained the implications of giving consent to adoption, AND/OR
- provided an interpreter or other required services when appropriate, AND/OR
- took consent in a quiet and private location, AND/OR
- did not take consent when the child appeared unwell, under duress, or emotional.

All the 11 records reviewed had the child or youth’s consent on the record, but only five of the records contained a narrative describing the context surrounding how consent was obtained.

A 6: Adoption Care Plan

The compliance rate for this measure was 64%. The measure was applied to 84 records in the sample; 54 of the records were rated achieved and 30 of the records were rated not achieved. To receive a rating of achieved, the adoption care plan on the record is:

- reflective of the child or youth’s unique needs, AND
- considers the child or youth’s views, AND
- is completed in collaboration with the prospective adoptive parents, AND
- is reviewed and updated every six months, OR
- if any circumstances significantly change, until an adoption order is applied for.

Of the 30 records rated not achieved, 22 records were not reviewed or updated every six months, on four records the adoption care plan was completed prior to the Acknowledgement Letter, three records did not have an adoption care plan on the record and one record’s adoption care pan did not consider the child or youth’s views. The adoption care plan is a guardianship task, completed in preparation for the transfer of the child or youth’s record to the adoption social worker. The compliance is affected by the review process, which is an adoption task and as such when the plan is not reviewed it impacts the compliance rate. The adjusted compliance rating unaffected by the care plan review is 87% when the requirement of reviews is removed from this measure.

This measure was not applied to one record as the child or youth had not yet been placed with adoptive parent(s).

The adoption care plans were observed to be completed in a timely, comprehensive, and collaborative manner. Aside from the adoptive parents, adoption social worker, adoption team leader, guardianship social worker and guardianship team leader, collaborative practice was evident through documentation of involvement with a range of other members including Behavioral Consultants, Resource social workers, Infant Development workers, the subject child or youth, birth family, caregivers and community adoption support workers such as Wendy’s Wonderful Kids and private counsellors.

Table 2 provides compliance rates for measures seven through 13, which relate to supporting prospective adoptive parents. These measures correspond to Policy 10.7: Approving Prospective Adoptive Parents, 10.3: Proposing a Match and 10.4: Transition, Placement and Residency.

Table 2: Supporting Prospective Adoptive Parents

Measure	# of Not Applicable Records	# of Applicable Records	# Rated Not Achieved	% Rated Not Achieved	# Rated Achieved	% Rated Achieved
A 7: Complete Initial Screening Process	0	146	7	5%	139	95%
A 8: Completing the Adoption Education Program (AEP)	7	139	8	6%	131	94%

A 9: Completing the SAFE Study	35	111	8	7%	103	93%
A 10: Keeping the SAFE Study Current	125	21	14	67%	7	33%
A 11: Proposing the Adoption Placement of Child(ren) to Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)	62	84	17	20%	67	80%
A 12: Adoption Transition	123	23	2	9%	21	91%
A 13: Contact with the Child(ren) and Prospective Adoptive Parent(s) during Residency	86	60	56	93%	4	7%

*Measure A8: 7 records were not applicable as the AEP was still in process during this audit timeframe.

*Measure A9: 35 records were not applicable as the SAFE study was still in progress, or the SAFE study had not yet commenced as the AEP was not completed or the application to adopt was withdrawn before the commencement of the SAFE study component (25, 8, 2).

*Measure A10: 125 records were not applicable because the SAFE study was completed within the last year or adoption occurred within the one year of the SAFE study being approved or the SAFE study had yet to be fully completed or approved or the application to adopt was withdrawn before an update to the SAFE study was required (88, 34, 3).

*Measure A11: 62 record was not applicable as the child or youth was not yet proposed or the application to adopt was withdrawn before proposal or had a direct placement/voluntary relinquishment (58, 3, 1).

*Measure A12: 123 records were not applicable as the child or youth lived in the home prior to the Notice of Placement (NOP) or the adoptive parents had not been selected for a child or the application to adopt was withdrawn before placement or there was a direct placement/voluntary relinquishment (62, 56, 3, 2).

*Measure A13: 86 records were not applicable as the child or youth had not yet been proposed to the adoptive parents, or the post-placement period had not yet concluded, or the child or youth had not been placed with the adoptive parents or the application to adopt was withdrawn before placement (58, 19, 6,3).

A 7: Complete Initial Screening Process

The compliance rate for completing the initial screening process was 95%. This measure was applied to all 146 records in the sample; 139 of the 146 records were rated achieved and seven were rated not achieved. To receive a rating of achieved, the adoption record contained documentation confirming that:

- the initial screening process was complete, AND
- appropriate approvals were obtained when risk had been identified.

Of the seven records rated not achieved, four had Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) studies in which the references were either absent or incomplete, two of the records had absent or incomplete medical reference checks, two of the records did not have mitigation consults documented, two records did not contain out of province checks, and one did not have a detailed record review (DRR) documented. The total is greater than the seven records rated not achieved as three records had more than one reason for being not achieved.

When assessing this measure, analysts noted that the Adoption Policy and Procedures (2019) stipulated that a criminal record check was required if the adoptive applicant or household member lived outside the province for a period of six months or longer in the last 10 years or since their 18th birthday (whichever is lesser). However, a policy update in September of 2021 eliminated the 10-year rule and was updated to include the requirement of a criminal record check for any applicant who may have resided outside the province at any point since their 18th birthday. In two records, the updated policy was not applied and required checks were inadvertently missed.

A 8: Completing the Adoption Education Program (AEP)

The compliance rate for completing the Adoption Education Program (AEP) was 94%. This measure was applied to 139 records in the sample; 131 of the records were rated achieved and eight were rated not achieved. To receive a rating of achieved:

- the record confirmed that the adoptive parent(s) completed the AEP prior the SAFE study being completed, OR
- the adoptive parent(s) were exempt from completing the AEP and there was documentation confirming this exemption.

Of the eight records rated not achieved, five records did not contain documentation confirming the from completion of the AEP when applicable, two records did not have documentation confirming completion of AEP and one record did not have documentation confirming that the adoptive parents completed the AEP prior to completion of the SAFE study.

Throughout the evaluation, analysts gathered information about timelines pertaining to phases of work to determine how long the adoption process took for adoptive parents, children and youth. On average it took four months from the adoption application to the completion of the AEP. The range was from one to 21 months.

A 9: Completing the SAFE Study

The compliance rate for this measure was 93%. This measure was applied to 111 records in the sample; 103 records were rated achieved and eight were rated not achieved. To receive a rating of achieved, the adoption record contained:

- a written SAFE study, AND
- team leader approval of its completion

Of the eight records rated not achieved, four records did not contain a SAFE study and four records did not contain documentation confirming team leader approval.

This measure also captured data about the approval process and timelines for finishing the SAFE study. Fifty-six records were approved within four months of starting the SAFE study and 44 records were not. Eight records had the completion of the SAFE study contracted out and were not applicable to this question. Of the records not approved within four months of starting the SAFE study, on average it took 115 additional days to complete the study. Of the 44 records not completed within four months, only five records documented an exception to the timeline approved by the team leader. Of the 103 records rated achieved, 43 were approved within 30 days of the last completed interview and 33 were approved within four months of starting the process.

This measure also reviewed which SAFE template was used as analysts observed that practice varied when completing the SAFE study with experienced adoptive parents and with foster parents in a foster to adopt situation. Practice ranged from updating the SAFE used for fostering or a previous adoption to having a new SAFE study that references past studies. Additionally, when an updated SAFE referenced past studies and the mitigation previously completed, the past studies were not always on the record. This led analysts to an overall observation that the use of the Adoption Management System (AMS) to upload current and past SAFE studies was not consistent but would assist in alleviating this documentation issue.

When assessing foster parents or experienced adoptive parents a variety of SAFE templates were used. Analysts observed four main variations:

- SAFE study
- SAFE study update
- Original Adoption SAFE with updates
- Original Fostering SAFE with updates

Those studies with updates had new information differentiated by bolded or italicized text. While policy 10.7 (procedure 90 and 91) of the Adoption Policy and Procedures (2019) outlines when to complete a SAFE update versus a new SAFE study when working with experienced adoptive parents and foster parents applying to adopt a child or youth in their home, analysts observed that the practice varied, and further clarity may assist practitioners.

A 10: Keeping the SAFE Study Current

The compliance rate for this measure was 33%. This measure was applied to 21 records; seven of the records were rated achieved and 14 were rated not achieved. To receive a rating of achieved the record contained:

- the required update to the written SAFE study, AND
- the update included the required information, AND
- the update documented supervisory approval.

Of the 14 records rated not achieved, 11 records did not have documentation confirming that the written SAFE study was updated annually, two records did not have supervisory approval as required and one record did not have a new SAFE study completed when required.

This measure also determined the length of time a SAFE update took outside of the required timeframe. The range was from 12 to 216 days for completion with the average additional time being 86 days.

A 11: Proposing the Adoption Placement of Child(ren) to Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

The compliance rate for this measure was **80%**. This measure was applied to 84 records; 67 records were rated achieved and 17 were rated not achieved. To receive a rating of achieved, the AH record contained:

- a proposal package, AND
- an Acknowledgement Letter signed by the adoptive parent(s), confirming the adoptive parent(s) have received and agreed to the adoption proposal.

Of the 17 records rated not achieved, in 10 records the proposal package was absent, in five records the Acknowledgement Letter present was unsigned by the adoptive parent(s), and two records did not contain the Acknowledgment Letter.

When reviewing the proposal packages and Acknowledgement Letters, analysts looked at both the adoption and guardianship records. Often when these documents were missing in either of the record, there was supplementary documentation, such as the Summary Recording and adoption care plan, that referenced completion of these pieces of work. However, the measure could not be rated achieved due to the lack of documentation.

This measure also assessed whether a Cultural Safety Assessment was completed, if required. Of the 25 required Cultural Safety Plans, 24 were completed.

Additionally, this measure also captured data regarding the length of time it took from the opening of the adoption report to submitting the court package. The average length of time it took was 645 days with the range from 37 to 1232 days.

A 12: Adoption Transition

The compliance rate for this measure was 91%. This measure was applied to 23 records; 21 records were rated achieved and two records were rated not achieved. To receive a rating of achieved, there was documentation that when developing the transition plan, the guardianship worker collaborated with:

- adoption worker, AND
- prospective adoptive parent(s), AND
- current caregiver

Of the two records rated not achieved, neither one had a transition plan.

While a transition plan is not required if the child or youth is being adopted by their foster parent(s) and the child or youth is already living with the prospective adoptive parent, the Adoption Policy and Procedures (10.4 Transition, Placement and Residency), specifically notes that consideration should be given to how the dynamic within the family can be changed following placement. As such, this measure was not applied to

A 13: Contact with the Child(ren) and Prospective Adoptive Parent during Residency

The compliance rate for this measure was 7%. This measure was applied to 60 records; four records were rated achieved and 56 were rated not achieved. To receive a rating of achieved, the adoption record contained documentation confirming the adoption worker contacted the child or youth and the adoptive parent(s):

- Within one day after the adoption placement or had a video call, AND
- Visited the adoptive family home within seven days after the adoption placement, AND
- Every 30 days thereafter, AND
- If a reportable circumstance occurred, AND
- If the child or youth considered revoking their consent, AND
- If the adoptive parent(s) indicated that they wanted to end the residency, AND
- The visits were completed in accordance with the visitation schedule (no more than 90 days) as approved by the team leader, AND
- The visits took place in person (or virtually as determined by Covid-19 Interim guidelines when applicable).

Of the 56 records rated not achieved, 51 records did not have a visit every 30 days or within 90 days with team leader approval, 38 records did not have a visit or a video call within one day of the placement, 23 records did not have a visit within seven days of the placement, one record did not arrange a visit when the adoptive parent indicated that they wanted to end the residency, and one record did not arrange a visit when a Reportable Circumstance occurred.

This measure also assessed how many total visits were expected by policy and how many occurred during the residency period. When examining the expected and actual visits, the number of visits was much higher than the compliance rate of 7%. Of the required 585 visits from the 60 reviewed, 366 visits occurred. As such, 63% of the required visits during post-placement residency occurred but did not occur within the policy timeframe.

APPENDIX C

Data Tables

Table 1: Time from CCO to the Adoption became the Permanency Plan

Number of Days	Number of Months	All
<0	<0	5
0-30	Within 1	38
31-90	>1 to 3	8
91-180	>3 to 6	5
181-270	>6 to 9	2
271-365	>9 to 12	3
366-730	>12 to 24	12
730+	24+	8
All	All	81

Table 2: Time from CCO to placement

Number of Days	Number of Months	Foster to Adopt	Child Specific	General Adoption*	Total
0-30	Within 1	0	0	0	0
31-90	>1 to 3	0	2	2	4
91-180	>3 to 6	0	2	0	2
181-270	>6 to 9	3	3	0	6
271-365	>9 to 12	1	3	1	5
366-730	>12 to 24	9	14	5	28
731-1095	>24 to 36	5	6	4	15
1095+	36+	9	3	2	14
All	All	27	33	14	74

Table 3: Time from File Start Date to the Completion of the Adoption Education Program (AEP)

Number of Days	Number of Months	Proposed/ Placed/ In Progress	Completed/ Closed/ Order Granted	Holding/ Understudy/ Approved/ Offered	Breakdown	All
<0	<0	7	6	10	1	24
0-30	Within 1	0	3	0	0	3
31-90	>1 to 3	3	8	4	0	15
91-180	>3 to 6	7	15	6	0	28
181-270	>6 to 9	7	9	8	0	24
271-365	>9 to 12	1	3	13	0	17
366-730	>12 to 24	2	1	7	0	10
730+	24+	0	0	0	0	0
All	All	27	45	48	1	121

Table 4: Time from First Interview to date approved

Number of Days	Number of Months	Foster to Adopt	Child Specific	General Adoption*
0-120	0-4	10	29	14
121-180	>4 to 6	4	3	4
181-270	>6 to 9	8	10	8
271-365	>9 to 12	3	3	1
366-455	>12 to 15	0	1	0
456-550	>15 to 18	0	1	1
All	All	25	47	28

Table 5: Time from File Start Date to the Closed Date

Number of Days	Number of Months	Foster to Adopt	Child Specific	General Adoption*
0-365	0-12 months	0	0	0
366-455	>12 to 15	2	1	1
456-545	>15 to 18	3	3	0
546-635	>18 to 21	4	6	0
636-730	>21 to 24	5	3	1
731-820	>24 to 27	3	2	1
821-910	>27 to 30	2	3	5
911-1000	>30 to 33	0	3	1
1001-1095	>33 to 36	0	1	2
All	All	19	22	11