

SUMMARY: FILE REVIEW
Of a Critical Injury of a Child Known to the Director

Circumstances of the Critical Injury

The review examined the case files of a child who was critically injured while in the care of their parents. The Director was providing services to the child and their family at the time of the critical injury in relation to concerns of abuse.

Findings

The Director had no previous history with the child's family; however, had recently become involved due to concerns of abuse. Least intrusive measures were attempted by using child *Safety Plans* that involved the parents and extended family; however, when those were insufficient to address the child's safety, the child was brought into the Director's care, and placed in the home of extended family that had completed an initial assessment of their ability to provide safe care.

Services and supports from community agencies were implemented to address the child's injuries; however, the majority of the assessments, planning, and services were arranged and monitored by the mother and the child's caregivers. The Director did not obtain critical information to inform their decision-making about returning the child to the parents' care. The child was returned to their parents' care prior to the parents demonstrating they had addressed the concerns that put the child at risk of harm, and further injuries to the child occurred.

Prior to the case review being finalized, the Service Delivery Area (SDA) implemented a process in which the child protection consultant is involved to support practice when a decision is being made to legally return a child to their parents' care, or when a decision is made about ending involvement with a family where there had been child protection concerns. Additionally, all referrals to a local community program are now reviewed by the Director of Operations for the SDA to confirm the appropriateness of the program to meet the needs of the child and address their safety and well-being.

Actions

The Ministry's Quality Assurance Team facilitated a discussion with the involved SDA leadership, resulting in an action plan to: formalize an approach within the SDA to manage complex cases; explore incorporating the practice directive of 'Clinical Consultation and Support in Complex High Risk Child Protection Cases' into policy; and

develop an online course/webinar for staff which supports the development of the unique skills required to investigate unexplained injuries to children.

The review was completed in March 2019. The above action plan is due for full implementation in December 2019.