

Joint Child and Family File Management Policies Under the Child, Family, and Community Service Act

MCFD Core Policy	Child Protection Response Policies: Chapter 3
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A: Policy

1) When a child/youth and/or family and/or care provider relocates frequently from one Service Delivery Area to another, has inconsistent guardianship and parenting time arrangements, or has family members living in separate service areas, a decision may be made between supervisors to provide joint child and family file management. Joint file management may be between delegated workers in district offices, and/or between Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) and Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSAs) or between ICFSAs. Joint child and family file management responsibility helps to ensure the safety and well-being of the child/youth in a manner that facilitates continuity of services.

a) In consultation with a supervisor, determine whether a transfer of responsibility or joint responsibility is in the best interest of the child/youth as soon as possible and within two days of learning that a child/youth or parent(s) or family relocates to another community and requires support in another community. Document the decision.

b) If a child/youth is Indigenous:

- determine whether Indigenous laws apply to the child/youth (see [policy 1.1 Confirming Whether Indigenous Law Applies to a Child](#)), and
- transfer the file in accordance with policy 1.2 after receiving written confirmation that Indigenous laws apply (see [policy 1.2 Upholding Indigenous Child and Family Services](#)).

c) If there is disagreement between the supervisors of the different service areas involved, about joint child and family file management responsibility, the parties begin the dispute resolution process as soon as possible and the disagreement is resolved no later than 10 working days after the initial request for joint responsibility.

2) When joint child and family file management is being considered, both supervisors agree upon and assign the lead and secondary workers, as well as the roles and responsibilities of each including covering payments such as discretionary costs, using the mandatory Joint Child and Family File Management Roles and Responsibilities form to document the joint child and family file management plan.

- 3) Upon learning that a child/youth and parent(s) have moved or are planning to move to another geographic location and the situation involves intimate partner violence or other significant risk factors that pose an immediate risk of harm to a child/youth, immediately and by no later than 24 hours, contact a delegated worker in the receiving area and provide them with all relevant information regarding the child/youth and family.
- 4) All delegated workers collaboratively work together to ensure the safety and well-being of a child/youth, planning and the support service needs of the family are maintained, regardless of which service area holds primary responsibility.
- 5) Services to families are not delayed due to disputes about joint child and family file management, or administrative reasons.
- 6) When a child/youth or family requires services or supports, the Service Delivery Area or relevant ICFSA where the child/youth or family is currently located is responsible for providing supports, locally available services.
- 7) Obtain supervisory approval to initiate joint child and family file management, document any decisions made and ensure timely flow of information between service delivery areas or ICFSAs.
- 8) Communication to make the child/youth or family aware of the joint child and family file management is done in a timely way.
- 9) Children, youth and families are supported to be connected to their Indigenous traditions, customs and communities.

Note: There are some service areas that have local protocol agreements between the ICFSA and MCFD. This policy does not replace those agreements.

B: Procedures

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C: Policy Visuals

Originating Office: Key Activities Checklist

Originating Worker	Check ✓	Key Activities	Timeframe
Prepare for joint child and family file management		Obtain supervisor's approval; originating supervisor then emails and phones the receiving supervisor to advise of the	Within 2 days of

		request for joint child and family file management.	move to new SDA
		Involve child/youth and family in discussion to have joint responsibility with another service area.	
Contact receiving office		Supervisor at the originating office contacts the supervisor at the receiving office (confirm lead and secondary worker)	Within 2 days of move to new SDA or as soon as possible?
Collaborate with Receiving Worker		Fully brief new worker.	Within 2 days of receiving worker being assigned.
Provide child/youth and family with contact information for workers/service providers in new (additional) service area		Including contact information for receiving worker and any other service providers in new (additional) area.	Prior to child/youth family re-locating, if applicable.
		Individuals who have ongoing roles and responsibilities to the child/youth and family are provided with information regarding the appropriate office in the new/additional service area where they are residing.	
Update electronic and physical file documentation Note: incompleteness of electronic or physical file documentation should not be a hindrance to a file being jointly file managed		Complete assessments as required by policy.	Within 15 days of the decision to jointly manage the file
		Collaborate with receiving worker to ensure a culturally appropriate plan has been reviewed/updated a within the last 3 months for a child in care under the age of 16	
		Collaborate with receiving worker to ensure a culturally appropriate Plan for Independence has been reviewed/updated within the last 3 months for a Youth in Care or in a Youth Agreement	
If the plan is for the new office to accept and maintain the physical file, arrange for transfer		As per Mail-Out Protocol	Within 15 days of the decision to jointly manage the file

Receiving Worker	Check ✓	Key Activities	Timeframe
Receive Joint Child and Family File Management Proposal		Confirm approval with supervisor, along with lead and secondary worker; receiving supervisor responds to request for joint child and family file management from originating supervisor within 2 days and assigns receiving worker.	As soon as possible and within 2 days of originating supervisor initiating contact
Collaborate with Originating Worker		Receive full briefing from originating worker.	As soon as possible and within 2 days of originating worker initiating contact
		Reach agreement on roles and responsibilities with the originating worker.	
		Review all available and relevant file documentation.	
Provide Services		Provide necessary services immediately if required as determined by the plan with the originating worker.	Immediately upon learning of family's relocation
		Collaborate with originating worker, family, available service providers, and whenever possible with the Indigenous Community to ensure that an adequate service plan is developed.	
If your office is to maintain the physical file		As per Mail-Out Protocol	Within 15 days of the child/youth or family relocating
Update Electronic Records		Update with current information, including the child/youth or family's new location if applicable, and the lead office/worker responsible for the child/youth and family.	Within 15 days of the child/youth or family relocating or decision to jointly manage the file

D: Procedures | Detailed

Determining Whether to Transfer or use Joint Child and Family File Management

- a) Consider the following circumstances and determine whether joint child and family file management is in the child/youth's or family's best interest:
 - i) Frequent moves mean that continuity of services would be strengthened by delegated workers having joint child and family file management (e.g. family is

moving every few months between service areas or ICFSA's and repeated file transfers may create disruptions in planning and/or jeopardize the safety of the child/youth);

- ii) Parents reside in different communities;
 - iii) Child/youth is reported to have run away or is visiting an area/region other than where their parent(s) or guardians reside;
 - iv) Repatriation of a child/youth;
 - v) Planning for out of care options;
 - vi) Child/youth and family relocates to another service area before a Family Development Response or Investigation is completed;
 - vii) Child/youth in care or under a youth agreement (YAG) moves to, is placed, or temporarily resides in another service area and it is in their best interest for the originating worker to remain involved;
 - viii) A child/youth in care or under a YAG is Indigenous and the ICFSA that serves the child's Indigenous Band and/or community is geographically removed from the ICFSA or MCFD office nearest the child. In these circumstances the lead worker must be located in the ICFSA or MCFD office in the service area where the child resides;
 - ix) An agreement with a young adult (AYA), where the young adult is receiving financial support from one geographic location but participating in post-secondary education, vocational training, or rehabilitation program in another geographic location.
 - x) If there is a CFCSA Hearing set in the jurisdiction of the originating office, joint child and family file management, as negotiated by the two supervisors, may be best utilized until the matter is heard.
- a) If a decision is made, based on a child/youth's and family's best interest, not to have joint child and family file management, transfer the file to the new service area within 15 days – See Child and Family File Transfer Policy: 1.8 for more details. Resolve any disagreements through the Dispute Resolution process.

Determining Lead and Secondary Workers

- a) As discussed and agreed upon, supervisors will assign a lead worker and secondary worker, based on the child and family's best interest, when agreement is reached to provide joint child and family file management. Document lead and secondary workers on ICM and/or Best Practices.
- b) Supervisors will additionally discuss and determine roles and responsibilities of the lead and secondary workers. Document the lead and secondary workers, their roles and responsibilities using Joint Child and Family File Management Roles and Responsibilities form and attached to ICM case, or electronic equivalent, using the following naming convention: JFT LASTNAME YYYYMMDD.
- c) Overall management of the family's file is the responsibility of the lead worker until agreement has been reached, based on the child and family's best interest, between delegated workers and supervisors from both offices that:

- i) The family is maintaining a residence of any type *and* is intending to remain in the community and the file can be transferred. See Child and Family File Transfer Policies for more information on child and family file transfer; or
 - ii) The safety concerns have been addressed and the family no longer requires services.
- d) When planning to jointly manage files between MCFD and an ICFSA, the initiating office supervisor notifies the receiving office supervisor in writing of:
 - i) Request to have joint responsibility; and
 - ii) Whether the file is considered complex and high-risk. [See Practice Directive: Clinical Consultation and Support in Complex High risk Child Protection Cases](#) for further information.
- e) The worker in the office initiating the joint child and family file management contacts the new worker within two days of the supervisors' decision to:
 - i) Ask if there are any local protocol agreements with the SDA if the joint child and family file management will be between MCFD and an ICFSA;
 - ii) Share relevant information regarding the risks to the child and collaborate;
 - iii) Discuss the provision of service to the family and the plan to keep the child/youth safe including culturally safe;
 - iv) Discuss how to involve the child/youth and family in planning;
 - v) Discuss and organize collaborative meetings to review the family/support plan – see [Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework](#) and [Policy 1.1 Restorative Practice Guide](#) for more information regarding working in circle together with Indigenous communities
 - vi) Where the child is Indigenous, plan how to involve the child's extended family and Indigenous community;
 - vii) Discuss and document how regular communication occurs between the two workers; and
 - viii) Contact the applicable After Hours (AH) Emergency Response Team if immediate safety concerns becomes evident over a weekend/evening, unless otherwise determined in discussion with the secondary worker. In those areas that do not have AH Emergency Response Team(s), a call out worker is requested to respond to the immediate safety concerns, via an AH Action Memo to Provincial Centralized Screening (PCS).

Responsibilities of the Lead Worker

- a) Services provided by the lead worker with joint child and family file management responsibility may include but not be limited to:

- i) Liaison with the secondary worker to agree upon a plan and respective roles and responsibilities in keeping the child safe and providing supports to the family;
 - ii) Assess and take steps to address the safety of children/youth when necessary. The worker where the child/youth and family is located is responsible for taking actions necessary to keep the child safe. Wherever possible, this is done in consultation with the worker sharing joint child and family file management, however, the consultation must not delay the provision of the necessary services or actions necessary to address the safety concerns;
 - iii) Overall management of the file including all decisions, supervisory consultations and file management;
 - iv) Holding the physical file for documentation purposes;
 - v) Planning how regular communication will occur between the two workers;
 - vi) Overall collaboration including involving a child, youth, or family's Indigenous community;
 - vii) Making the family aware of joint child and family file management responsibilities and discussing how best to involve them;
 - viii) Taking the lead to collaboratively develop a family or care plan which include a review date, roles and responsibilities and the goals and strategies to meet the family's goals. The family plan is attached to ICM; and
 - ix) When the family relocates, remaining involved to the extent necessary to complete a Child Protection Response (CPR) and to ensure seamless transition to service in the new community.
- b) If it is in the best interest of the child/youth and/or family, the lead worker's file management responsibilities can be transferred to another file worker subject to approval by supervisors.
 - c) The lead worker retains the physical file and the case on ICM whereas the secondary worker is listed as a secondary owner of the case on ICM and sends any records generated or received to the office of the lead worker.
 - d) If a decision is made, based on a child's and family's best interest, not to have joint child and family file management, transfer the file to the new service area within 15 days. Resolve any disagreements through the [Dispute Resolution](#) process.

Responsibilities of the Secondary Worker

- a) Services provided by the secondary worker may include but not be limited to:
 - i) Assess and take steps to address the safety of children/youth. The worker where the child/youth and family is located is responsible for taking actions necessary to keep the child safe. Wherever possible this is done in consultation with the worker sharing joint child and family file management, however, the consultation must not delay the provision of the necessary services or action necessary to address the safety concerns;

- ii) Provide the family with information about services available in the community and complete referrals as necessary;
 - iii) Provide services to promote continuity of the child/youth's plan;
 - iv) Serve court documents;
 - v) Conduct interviews;
 - vi) Conduct placement reviews;
 - vii) Complete care plans and cultural plans;
 - viii) Conduct home-studies or assess families for out of care options;
 - ix) Meet children/youth, guardians and/or individuals that are being transported through the area by public transportation;
 - x) Supervise contacts or visits between children/youth and family members;
 - xi) Send records generated or received to the office of the lead worker;
 - xii) Provide other services as agreed to by the workers involved in joint child and family file management responsibility; and
 - xiii) Contact the applicable After Hours Emergency Response Team if immediate safety becomes evident over a weekend/evening, unless otherwise determined in discussion with the lead worker.
- b) Reciprocal services (e.g. serving court documents, or witnessing consents) provided by a worker at the request of a worker in another Service Delivery Area who has file management responsibility are short-term services and do not imply a transfer or joint responsibility.

Joint Child and Family File Management between Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSAs) and MCFD or between ICFSAs

- a) When the decision is made to use joint child and family file management involving MCFD and an ICFSA, consider the following:
 - i) ICFSA's level and service area of delegation,
 - ii) Electronic case management systems used by both and how this may impact information sharing and how this will impact file documentation and management, and
 - iii) Local protocols between the ICFSA and MCFD that provide additional information on how the two workers collaborate to meet the family's needs.
 - iv) Local protocols or agreements between ICFSAs that may apply regarding joint child and family file management.
- b) Within two days of receiving the request, the supervisor from the receiving office notifies the supervisor from the originating office of the decision.
- c) The supervisor from the initiating office, initiates the joint child and family file management process and facilitates the resolution of conflicts – see [Dispute Resolution Process](#) for more details.

Note: There are some service areas that have local protocol agreements between the ICFSA and MCFD. This policy does not replace those agreements.

Domestic Violence or Other Situations of Immediate Risk

- b) As soon as possible and no later than 24 hours after the family has relocated, the initiating worker provides the receiving worker with all relevant information regarding the child/youth and family, including identified risk factors from the [Domestic Violence Risk Factors: Wallet Card](#), safety plans and resources, and guardianship and parenting time arrangements.
- c) In all situations involving domestic violence, the receiving worker must address any immediate safety concerns. See [Best Practices Approaches: Child Protection and Violence Against Women](#) for further information on working with families experiencing intimate partner violence.
- d) In situations where there are other significant risk factors that pose an immediate risk of harm to a child, the initiating worker must contact the receiving worker and provide them with all the relevant information regarding the child/youth and family.
- e) The initiating worker provides the receiving office written terms and conditions from the CFCSA, and Family/Criminal Court orders relating to the safety of the child, youth or parent(s).
- f) Where no-contact orders exist, the initiating office will notify the police detachment where the family has moved to provide updated address and contact information for the family.
- g) In situations where there is a planned move to another geographical area, the supervisor in the initiating office contacts the supervisor in the receiving office to advise them of the move for planning purposes and proceeds with providing information as above.

Ending Joint Child and Family File Management

- a) Consider ending joint child and family file management when the supervisors from both offices and the workers managing the file reach agreement that the child/youth or family who had been in an inconsistent living environment is maintaining a residence and is intending to remain in the community.
- b) If ending joint child and family file management and the identified safety concerns have not been addressed and/or the family no longer requires support services, transfer responsibility and the file, including the physical file, to the office and worker where the child/youth or family is residing - see Child and Family File Transfer Policy for more details.
- c) A decision to end joint child and family file management:
 - i) Is made jointly by the supervisors from both offices and workers managing the file;
 - ii) Involves the child, youth, family, and community, with a parent's consent or under a s. 92.1(2) agreement, to the fullest extent possible.
- d) Upon deciding to end joint child and family file management, the initiating worker:
 - i) Advises the child, youth or family of the decision to end joint child and family file management;
 - ii) Provides the contact information of the worker who will have ongoing responsibility for the file to the child, youth or family.

Dispute Resolution

- a) If there is a disagreement about joint child and family file management, the parties begin the dispute resolution process as soon as possible. The dispute is resolved within 10 days from the initial proposal for joint child and family file management.

- b) During the dispute resolution process, the initiating worker remains the lead during the dispute resolution process. Services are provided to the child/youth or family by the worker where the child/youth or family are currently residing.
- c) In the event that disputes cannot be resolved at the local level, the supervisor, Executive Director of Service, and/or the ICFSA Agency Director, and/or Deputy Director of Child Welfare/Aboriginal Services Branch may be involved to resolve disagreements, consistent with policy regarding supervisory consultation and approval. If they cannot agree, the matter will be forwarded to the office of the Provincial Director of Child Welfare where a final decision will be made.

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