

SUMMARY: COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

Of the Death of a Youth Known to the Ministry

A. INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (the Ministry) conducted the Comprehensive Review (CR) to examine the case practice and services provided to the subject youth (the youth) of the CR. The purpose of the CR was to analyze the case practice in relation to legislation, policy, and standards; promote excellence in assessment and planning; and identify barriers to providing adequate services.

For the purposes of the CR, Ministry records and BC Coroner Service documents were reviewed. Ministry staff members were interviewed. The CR focused on the period of Ministry involvement prior to the death of the youth.

B. TERM(S) OF REFERENCE

1. Did the Ministry's response to the child protection concerns and support service requests regarding the youth meet applicable legislation, policies and practice standards?
2. Did Ministry staff utilize appropriate tools and clinical expertise to conduct an adequate assessment of:
 - The parent's ability to care for the youth?
 - The risk of domestic violence in the home?

C. BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The Ministry had longstanding involvement with the youth and family due to concerns about the youth's special needs and parental high risk behaviours. The youth remained with his parent and the family was engaged with Ministry support services. The youth was in parental care at the time of death. The youth was Aboriginal.

D. FINDINGS

1. The Ministry did not utilize the standard assessment tools required by policy to ensure the youth's safety and to determine the necessary supports for the family. The Aboriginal community was not involved in planning as required by Ministry policy.
2. The appropriate assessment and decision making tools were not utilized to assess either the youth's mother's ability to care for him or the risk in the home.

New protection concerns were not assessed separately from previous ones to determine if the risk to the youth had increased.

E. ACTIONS TAKEN TO DATE

1. The legislation was amended to include domestic violence as a child protection concern and to include support services to children who witness domestic violence. Ministry and community partners attended a one day training event on Domestic Violence.
2. The Community Services Manager established monthly community of practice teleconferences with the Ministry program to ensure resources are allocated appropriately.
3. The Practice Consultant presented a review of the assessment tools to the Ministry Program.
4. The Ministry identified the Directors of Practice who are the Domestic Violence leads to provide consultation, training and coordination support to frontline and management staff across the province. They report to the Provincial Director of Child Welfare and have linkages with the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence.
5. The Ministry consultants presented a LiveMeeting for all new staff, or staff who missed earlier presentations. The orientation included: services available; transition planning; roles and responsibilities; working with service partners; collateral contacts; and use of the Integrated Case Management System (ICM).
6. Provincial Community of Practice teleconferences began with the Ministry Program and Provincial Operations to provide opportunities for consult on complex cases.
7. As part of monthly Directors of Practice teleconferences with Team Leaders, the Director of Practice reviewed the use of “previously assessed” and the necessity of taking the appropriate time to assess the information gathered during each incident.
8. The Community Services Manager established regular monthly meetings with the Delegated Aboriginal Agency to discuss cases involving families receiving Ministry services on Reserve; a similar process is planned to support families living off Reserve.
9. The Ministry updated a Practice Directive to include a section on Ministry Case Transfers.

F. ACTION PLAN

1. The Ministry's Domestic Violence policy and guidelines are updated to assist workers in determining when an offending parent can remain in the home, reintegrate with the family, and have safe contact with the children.
2. The Ministry's Domestic Violence training curriculum is updated, and is provided both through on-line and in-person training for relevant staff and community partners.
3. The Ministry's on-line training sessions emphasize collaborative practices between Ministry Programs.
4. The Community Service Manager conducts a review with all local Ministry Programs: The BC Summary of Domestic Violence Risk Factors; Clinical consultations with Directors of Practice and consultants in complex cases; The duty to report; The importance of utilizing the appropriate assessment tools with families; Engaging and supporting parents in high stress circumstances to navigate support services; and Engaging with Aboriginal communities to support safety and long term planning.
5. The Child Service Manager reviews with the Team Leaders the accurate and thorough assessment of new child protection reports, within the context of previous similar reports.
6. Community Professionals provide one day Interagency Case Assessment Team training for the local Ministry Program and Community Partners participation.

This case review was completed in September 2015. The above Action Plan was due for full implementation by May 30, 2016.