

SUMMARY: FILE REVIEW

Of the Death of a Child Known to the Ministry

A. INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (the ministry) conducted the File Review (FR) to examine the case practice provided to the subject child (the child).

For the purposes of the FR, ministry records, and BC Coroners Service documents were reviewed. The focus of the FR was a specific period of ministry involvement prior to the death of the child.

B. TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Was the assessment of the child's safety consistent with the relevant legislation and policy?
2. Was an adequate services plan developed, in collaboration with a ministry program area, to address any risk identified for the child's safety and well-being?

C. BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The child's parent first became involved with the ministry as a child, due to concerns of high-risk behaviours, and criminal issues. The parent engaged in high-risk behaviours from early childhood into adulthood. The child was born with special needs. The parent had difficulty coping with the child's special needs, did not engage in services offered by the ministry; however, agreed to access a community program. The child was Aboriginal, and was not in care at the time of death.

D. FINDINGS

1. The assessment of the child's safety was not consistent with the relevant legislation and policy. The ministry appropriately assessed the initial report of the high-risk issue. The information obtained identified additional high-risk issues and concerns for the parents' ability to meet the child's special needs. These additional issues were not fully assessed or addressed.

The assessment of the child's safety in the three subsequent reports was also not consistent with relevant legislation and policy. The ministry did not address all the information from the reports and did not close the file according to policy.

The decision to assess the family's strengths and needs and provide ongoing services was consistent with policy and provided an appropriate assessment of the family's needs.

2. An adequate service plan was not developed to address the risks identified for the child's safety and well-being, and collaboration did not occur between the social worker from a ministry program and the child protection social worker. A meeting between community service providers and the ministry did not result in the level of support and intervention required to address the child's special needs and the high-risk issues of the parents.

The Family Plan identified the high-risk issues with the family and the child's special needs. A plan was developed to address one parent's identified high-risk issues; however, the parent did not engage in the plan. The remainder of the plan did not clearly articulate the goals, indicators, and strategies to address the risk to the child's safety and well-being.

E. ACTIONS TAKEN TO DATE

1. The necessity of collaboration between a ministry program area and child protection services regarding assessment and planning for the safety and well-being of children was reviewed at a Local Service Area leadership meeting.

F. ACTION PLAN

1. The policies regarding the conclusion of a Family Development Response (FDR) and an Investigation (INV) are revised to ensure that prior to concluding the FDR/INV, all concerns are addressed in:
 - the initial report;
 - any subsequent reports that have been associated as a memo to the same FDR/INV;
 - collateral checks during the course of the FDR/INV; and,
 - disclosures by the children or parents during the course of the FDR/INV.
2. The importance of ensuring all the concerns that have been raised during an FDR and an INV have been assessed and addressed in a plan prior to the conclusion of the FDR/INV is discussed with the staff/team involved.

The ministry completed this review in December 2016. The above action plan is due for full implementation by July 2017.