

SUMMARY: FILE REVIEW

Of the Critical Injury of a Youth in the Care of the Ministry

A. INTRODUCTION

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

For the purposes of the FR, ministry records regarding the youth were reviewed. The focus of the FR was a specific period of ministry involvement prior to the critical injury of the youth.

B. TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Did the ministry adequately assess a parent to ensure the parent was able to provide for the youth's safety and well-being when the youth was transitioned from one parent to the other parent?
2. Did the ministry's response to the youth's disclosure of a criminal behaviour by one parent and high-risk behaviour by the other parent address the youth's safety and well-being?

C. BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The youth's parents had involvement with the ministry when they were children. Prior to the youth's birth one parent developed special needs after a specific incident. There were previous concerns about high-risk issues with both parents. The youth resided with one parent for an extended period of time. Due to the youth special needs and the parent's ability to address the needs, the youth transitioned to the care of the other parent. The youth's high-risk issues continued and the presenting high-risk issues were addressed by the ministry. The youth requested to live with the other parent.

D. FINDINGS

1. Policy does not require that the parent's ability to care for the youth be assessed when the youth transitioned from one parent to the other. Therefore, an assessment did not occur. The ministry reviewed and discussed the historic

high-risk issues when one parent resumed contact with the youth. The ministry collaboratively developed a plan for the youth to transition from one parent's care to the other. Concerns were raised during this process; however, these concerns did not meet the threshold of requiring a protection assessment. After the youth was transitioned to the parent's care, the parent was advised to contact the local ministry office if support was required.

2. The ministry's response to the youth's disclosures of issues with both parents partially addressed the youth's safety and well-being. The ministry appropriately assessed the issue as requiring a child protection investigation, cooperated with community professionals, and determined that the youth was unsafe in the care of either parent. Through a Voluntary VARE Agreement (VCA), the youth temporarily stayed at a community program resource. The youth remained at the community resource after the ministry was advised through a collateral assessment that the youth required more support than the resource could provide. At that point, the youth would have benefited from being brought into ministry care to in order to provide adequate support for the youth's high-risk issues and special needs; this did not occur. In an effort to decrease the risk to the youth's safety and well-being, the ministry applied for a court order to prevent one parent from contacting the youth. Had the ministry made the application for the court order at the time of the disclosure, the opportunity for contact between the youth and the parent would have been minimized.

After the youth could not return to the foster care placement, the youth was placed with a parent, and high-risk issues with this parent were appropriately addressed through a safety plan. The youth was missing from this parent's home for a period of time. The policy for reporting or locating missing youth was not followed.

E. ACTIONS TAKEN TO DATE

1. A forum for Youth Services staff in the Service Delivery Area occurred to discuss how to effectively manage high-risk youth.

F. ACTION PLAN

1. The Executive Director of Service reviews with the Youth Team currently in place in the Service Delivery Area the appropriate use of a VCA versus taking a youth into ministry care through removal. Youth who are in care via removal are prioritized for placement; this reduces the likelihood of resorting to using community program resources as placements.

The review was completed in March 2017. The above action plan is due for full implementation by June 30, 2017.