

SUMMARY: DIRECTOR'S SPECIAL REVIEW

A. INTRODUCTION

This review was initiated as a result of systemic issues and practice concerns involving children, youth and families jointly served by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (the Ministry), the Delegated Aboriginal Agency (the Aboriginal Agency) and the Community Agency.

In response to these concerns, the Provincial Director of Child Welfare (PDCW) commenced a systemic review to examine these issues and the effect of these factors on the Director's ability to fulfill the duties, functions and responsibilities under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA)*. The review focussed on the Ministry's ability to effectively respond to child welfare matters when working with the Aboriginal Agency and the Community Agency (the Agencies), and its ability to work directly with and in the community as required under the *CFCSA*.

This review was conducted under Section 93 (2) of the *CFCSA* which authorizes the Director to conduct a review on any matter related to the provision of a service under the *CFCSA*. The use of the term Director in this review refers to those persons with delegated authority under *the CFCSA*.

The review process included interviews with staff from the Ministry, and the involved Agencies. Relevant documents were also reviewed.

B. TERM(S) OF REFERENCE

The purpose of this review was to ensure that the Director was able to adequately carry out statutory responsibilities under the *CFCSA* to Aboriginal children, youth and families in communities jointly served by the Ministry and the Agencies.

The review examined:

- How do the working relationships between the Ministry, the Aboriginal Agency, the Community Agency and the First Nations in the Communities affect the Director's ability to provide child protection services under the *CFCSA*?
- What is the effect of the protocols, delegation enabling agreements and contracts between the above parties on the Director's ability to respond and intervene in child protection matters in accordance with the *CFCSA*?
- How does the working relationship between the Ministry and the Agencies affect their ability to provide support services to children, youth and families?
- Are roles of the parties sufficiently clear and focused? Are initiatives making best use of current best practice and research?

- How can the Agencies and their staff be supported to work together in their shared vision and purpose of providing meaningful and effective services to children and families in their communities?

C. BACKGROUND SUMMARY

There are a number of Aboriginal agencies that serve the Community. Among these are a Delegated Aboriginal Agency offering delegated on-reserve services to the First Nations in the Community and a Community Agency offering support services to the First Nations and Urban Aboriginal Community in the area.

The Ministry maintains statutory responsibility under the *CFCSA* to assess and investigate child protection concerns in the identified Aboriginal Communities. The Aboriginal Agency is mandated to provide voluntary services to families and guardianship services to children and youth, while the Community Agency has no mandated authority under the *CFCSA*.

D. FINDINGS

The purpose of this review is to ensure that the Director under the *CFCSA* is able to adequately carry out statutory responsibilities to Aboriginal children, youth and families in the communities jointly served by the Ministry and the Agencies.

A number of concerns were identified in this review that lead to the conclusion that the Ministry is not always able to effectively respond to child welfare matters when working with Aboriginal children, youth and families served by the Ministry, and the Agencies.

While the relationship between the Ministry and the Agencies was reported to be improving, it was indicated that there were several areas the working relationship could be enhanced and strengthened. Ministry staff continues to lack confidence in the Aboriginal Agency's ability to carry out their delegated responsibilities under the *CFCSA*. Ministry staff also identified concerns with the quality of the contracted services provided by the Aboriginal Agency.

It was felt that experienced, delegated clinical practitioners at the Aboriginal Agency, with a firm understanding of roles and responsibilities, would assist the parties in working together. Additionally, ensuring supervisors at the Aboriginal Agency have a clear understanding of statutory responsibilities, policies and standards, and experience in clinical supervision and overseeing services under the *CFCSA*, would strengthen service delivery at the Agency.

Signed protocols between the Ministry and all First Nations in the Community outlining the roles and responsibilities of all parties, would also help clarify the roles and responsibilities between the parties. Additionally, a contract review was identified as needed to ensure improved contract language and accountabilities, and to identify gaps in service.

Finally, Ministry staff identified the need for strong support from their senior management regarding their duty to carry out their mandated work on reserve.

E. ACTION PLAN

1. The Agencies and the Ministry will review the findings of this review with staff.
2. The Ministry to meet with the Aboriginal Agency board to share the findings of the review and to review the role of the board and the operational requirements of the Aboriginal Agency.
3. The Ministry to meet with the Community Agency staff to ensure they understand their contractual accountabilities and their role as a non-delegated service provider.
4. The Ministry will plan and provide a series of joint workshops for the Aboriginal Agency and relevant Ministry leadership and staff who work on reserve in the Community to ensure there is consistent knowledge and understanding of associated protocols, agreements and services.

The plan should be inclusive of input from the Ministry program & Aboriginal Agency staff on topics of mutual interest.

5. Ministry leadership to review the findings of this review and develop a plan to address the concerns that have been raised by staff and provide the necessary support to staff to effectively carry out their statutory responsibilities in the communities jointly served by the Ministry and the Aboriginal Agency. This plan will include but not be limited to the establishment of appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms.