

SUMMARY: FILE REVIEW

Of the Death 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 practice in the case involving the subject youth (the youth) of the FR.

The FR involved examination of Ministry records and BC Coroners Service documents. The FR focussed on the period of time prior to the youth's death.

B. BACKGROUND

The Ministry became involved with the family due to the youth's high risk issues and behaviours. The parent was unable to manage the youth's wellbeing at home resulting in the youth coming into the care of the Ministry by agreement. While in care, the youth maintained a stable placement and developed positive relationships with the caregivers. The youth engaged in support services, however the high risk behaviours continued until the youth's death.

C. CRITICAL ACTIONS AND ANALYSIS

The examination of practice identified areas of both strength and concern. During the time period under review, there were regularly scheduled integrated case management meetings and active collaboration between Ministry practitioners and service providers. At the time of the youth's death, a number of positive elements in the youth's life began to emerge including an increase in the amount of time spent in the foster placement, ongoing expressions of interest in future goals and significant engagement with the support service provider.

With respect to areas where services could have been improved, the family may have benefited from an approach that viewed the youth as part of the larger family system. The youth's Child Service case had been transferred to the Guardianship Team and, as a result, no further efforts were made to involve the youth's parent and siblings and to reassess the protection concerns. Additionally, the documentation kept by the foster placement, including service plans and regular reports, far exceeded the Ministry's documentation. This raised the question of whether there was an over-reliance on the youth's caregivers to fulfill some of the Ministry's guardianship responsibilities.

The Ministry's record identified a significant number of appointments between the youth and the community professionals. The youth was often the only source of information regarding the impact of service supports. There were known to be conflicting opinions between the youth and the community professionals. The case record did not clearly outline what other evidence

was used to assess the youth's compliance with support services, what factors impeded or improved compliance, or whether plans for addressing risks took into account the adverse or positive impact of service involvement. Given the youth's high risk behaviours, it would have been prudent to track and record this information, from multiple sources.

Lastly, the integrated care team was preparing the youth for an alternate plan despite evidence that the youth may not have been ready to consider such a plan. There had been several historical issues that may have impacted the youth's readiness for the alternate plan. Given these factors, the Ministry could have anticipated that the youth would require ongoing supports in the foreseeable future.

The FR found no substantive evidence that the Ministry, or other service providers, could have prevented the youth's death.

D. ACTIONS TAKEN TO DATE

1. Since the time of FR initiation, Ministry social workers and specific community professionals were invited to attend an all day workshop on a particular practice issue. The staff was provided information on how to best respond to youth and were given referral information on the services provided by the Ministry's consultant specializing in the particular practice issue.

E. ACTION PLAN

1. Guardianship services to youth in care by agreement will, when appropriate, be provided in concert with Family Support Services. Guardianship and Family Services will be integrated in the Service Delivery Area.
2. Ministry Programs will have up-to-date information on client's compliance with particular supports from community professionals. An amendment will be made to the working agreement with specific community professionals to make explicit the Ministry's expectations regarding reporting and documenting clients' compliance with particular supports. A template for supervision that includes compliance with supports will be distributed to the team leaders.
3. All active records within specific Ministry Programs will have current Assessments and Plans. The policy related to Assessment and Plans will be redistributed to all team leaders. These team leaders will review all active records to ensure that Assessments and Plans comply with policy.
4. Written Family Plans will, when appropriate, be associated with all youth who are in care by agreement. Team leaders will review all In Care Agreements for youth to ensure that Family Plans comply with standards.

