STANDARDS

for

SAFE HOUSE SERVICES

in

British Columbia

Youth Services
Child and Youth Mental Health & Youth Justice Division
Ministry of Children & Family Development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1

SECTION II

A. OPERATIONAL PLANNING

B.   YOUTH ISSUES

C. SERVICE DELIVERY

D. HEALTH AND SECURITY

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the minimum standards for operations and practice for Ministry-funded Safe House services and youth first-stage emergency housing within British Columbia. It is primarily intended for housing staff, but also informs protocol for Ministry staff (e.g., social workers and probation officers) and other community agency involvement.

These standards are based on a review of evidence-based research, comprehensive stakeholder consultations, and review by an advisory committee of youth service professionals.

THE SAFE HOUSE DEFINED

Safe House services that include youth first-stage emergency housing are provided through "Support Services to Youth" under Section 12.1 of the *Child, Family, and Community Services Act ("CF&CSA").*

A Safe House is a voluntary youth-centred service intended to provide short-term protective accommodation on an emergency crisis-intervention basis to primarily high-risk youth. The Ministry of Children and Family Development's (MCFD) *Guidelines for Provision of Youth Services* define high-risk youth as those surrounded by negative environmental factors and demonstrating high personal vulnerability. Safe Houses serve runaway, homeless and street-associated youth; sexually assaulted and exploited youth; youth with mental health and addictions issues; and youth escaping gangs, pimps or anyone who would exploit and/or harm them. Youth who access services must want protection, and must not threaten the safety of others in the Safe House.

A Safe House is a safe and supportive environment where youth can meet their basic physical needs (e.g., food, warmth, shelter, hygiene), and address their social needs to effectively make positive changes in their lives. The purpose of a Safe House is to:

- Protect youth from imminent harm;

- Assist youth to identify immediate and longer term safety, care and support needs; and,

- Connect youth to professionals, agencies and organizations that can assist them with issues and needs such as justice, violence, victim services, mental and physical health, homelessness, poverty, sexual abuse/exploitation, substance dependence, employment, education, and income assistance.

Staff encourage and help youth to connect to the community and promote involvement, integration, connection, and peer support in the Safe House. Given the social network required to meet the wide ranging needs of high-risk youth, the Safe House utilizes and supports an Integrated Case Management approach to service delivery.

A Safe House may be structured in various ways, depending on the community's resources and their youth service needs. British Columbia presently uses two models: the multi-bed facility and the satellite-home model. These standards apply to all models. A multi-bed Safe House is a single home with at least two full bath facilities and communal dining and cooking spaces. This home is staffed 24 hours a day. The satellite home model supports individual youth in a family model and is typically used for youth with issues of sexual exploitation who may require longer-term transitional support.

"Youth" are defined in the *CF&CSA* as a person who is 16 years of age or over but is under 19 years of age. However, services may also be provided to at-risk and high-risk adolescents under 16 years of age with involvement of parents or Ministry social workers.

This may include children-in-care (CIC) or adolescents involved with Youth Justice. However, Safe House services are not intended to be placement resources for CIC or holding facilities for Youth Justice. All youth and adolescents enter services voluntarily and should understand that the Safe House has no mandate or authority to detain them or enforce orders of any kind.

OUTCOMES

These standards are intended to help maximize positive outcomes for youth who access Safe House services and to establish and support equitable and uniform service across the province. These standards promote efficient and effective service across the province, by supporting youth to return to family/extended family and/or to access needed transitional supports to independence. Outcome objectives for youth obtaining Safe House services include the following:

- Youth are safe and/or have increased protection from abuse, neglect and harm or threat of harm.
- Youth short-term, immediate basic needs for shelter, food and clothing have been met.
- Youth have experienced trust and/or positive participation with Safe House staff.
- Youth are more empowered, making their own decisions and/or utilizing community resources more effectively.
- Youth have developed and/or are applying new knowledge and/or skills in their lives.
- Youth have improved connections to community professionals to adequately meet their needs regarding addictions, sexual exploitation, justice, physical health and/or mental health.
- Youth have reconnected or have increased attachment with family/extended family where appropriate.
- Youth have improved linkages with people in community and/or positive peer networks.
- Youth have connected with supports to meet longer-term needs, including housing, education and/or employment.

CONTEXT

The standards are provided within the context of the following higher level documents. All of the documents listed below, with the exception of the *Community Care Facilities Act,* will be provided in a companion binder called *Supplemental Materials for Safe House Practice.* These supplemental materials are intended to support Safe Houses in implementing these standards and training staff:

- ***Child, Family and Community Services Act:*** Of particular importance in the interpretation of these Safe House standards are Sections 2, 3, and 4 of the *Child Family and Community Service Act,* which outline "Guiding Principles", "Service Delivery Principles" and "Best Interests of Youth";
- ***MCFD Guidelines for Provision of Youth Services:*** The purpose of these guidelines is to assist emerging regional authorities to design and deliver effective community-based interventions and supports for vulnerable youth that are appropriate to meet the needs of local youth populations. It provides a vision for youth services where youth faced with significant challenges will move toward a

safer and healthier lifestyle and becoming contributing members of their community and family.

- **MCFD Privacy Charter:** This document provides a guide to the way in which social agency and ministry staff share information about our clients.

- **MCFD Integrated Case Management User's Guide:** This guide informs the practice of integrated case management that supports stronger client outcomes through a collaborative approach to client-centred service.

- **MCFD Complaints Process:** This document informs service providers of the process and protocols by which service complaints should be addressed.

- **Community Care Facility Act and Regulations:** Under the auspices of Ministry of Health Services, this legislation prescribes what is required for the operation and licensing of a Safe House facility that provides services to three or more youth. Requirements enforced by a medical health officer under the Health Act are specific to the following areas of operation: number of youth housed, staffing, supervision, discipline, abuse, medication, illness, nutrition, hygiene/cleanliness, first aid, hazardous substances/objects, smoking, emergency procedures, fire protection, physical layout, sleeping accommodation, telephone, equipment, furniture, and fixtures.

STRUCTURE, ORGANIZATION AND DEFINITIONS OF STANDARDS

These standards are divided into four chapters: Operational Planning; Youth Issues; Service Delivery; and Health and Security. Standards within each chapter describe the overall expectation of the Safe House in each area of practice or operations. They are further supported in each standard by *rationale*, *criteria* and *commentary*.

A standard, by definition, is an established, measurable, achievable statement that serves as a benchmark and describes a minimum acceptable level of performance against which actual performance can be measured, monitored and compared. Standards are subsequently used by service providers to attain and maintain quality of service delivery.

Criteria within each standard elaborate in more detail how service providers and program/service auditors might witness the attainment of performance to a particular overall standard. Commentary sections are intended to provide additional, useful information (e.g., connections between standards, related best practices and other collateral considerations).

APPLICATION, ACCREDITATION AND AUDIT

Some Safe House services may be accredited through either the "Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission" (CARF) or "The Council on Accreditation of Child and Family Services" (COA). These standards apply to all agencies that provide Safe Housing services, whether accredited or not. For those agencies that are not accredited, these standards will be the only ones that apply.

For agencies that are accredited, some standards will be an expansion of the CARF/COA standards, while other standards may be augmented only slightly. When conflict exists between either CARF or COA and the Safe House standards, the Safe House upholds the higher of the two standards set. In the event that such a determination does not resolve the conflicting standards, the MCFD contract manager for the Safe House should be contacted to secure a resolution.

The MCFD funded Safe Houses and youth first-stage emergency housing that employ these standards are subject to audit review by the Ministry, as well as any alternative quality assurance reviews that may be developed through local governance.

SAFE HOUSE STANDARDS

A. OPERATIONAL PLANNING

STANDARD A.1   Philosophy, Vision, and Mission

The development and implementation of Safe House services are guided by Philosophy, Vision and Mission statements that are communicated to clients, families and community youth service providers.

STANDARD A.2   Service Planning

There is a written plan describing how Safe House services are achieved.

STANDARD A.3   Evaluation

A Safe House regularly evaluates its service.

STANDARD A.4   Ensuring Accessibility

The Safe House ensures accessibility for all suitable clients and works to eliminate access barriers.

STANDARD A.5   Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

STANDARD A.6   Staff Training

Staff are well trained according to their role and responsibilities.

B. YOUTH ISSUES & SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

STANDARD B.1   Youth-Centred Services

Safe House service is designed from a perspective and delivered in a way that supports the principle of youth-centred service.

STANDARD B. 2   Diversity

Safe House staff are sensitive to and support all types of diversity, including:

- **cultural or ethnic diversity;**
- **aboriginal heritage; and**
- **diversity of sexual orientation and experience.**

STANDARD B.3   Children-in-Care (CIC's) Children in Care are accepted when assessed as suitable either when:
- self-referring; or,
- referred by the Ministry on an emergency basis when all other placement options have been exhausted.

A Ministry social worker is notified when self-referred CIC's enter the Safe House.

STANDARD B.4   Youth Involved with Youth Justice

The Safe House provides service to suitable high-risk youth involved with the Youth Justice system.

STANDARD B.5   Parenting Youth

The Safe House supports youth with children to connect with support services appropriate to their needs.

STANDARD B.6   Youth with Issues of Sexual Exploitation

For suitable youth, a Safe House provides immediate short-term priority placement as well as longer-term transitional supports for youth with issues of sexual exploitation.

C. SERVICE DELIVERY

STANDARD C.1   Referral to the Safe House

Safe House services maintain an open referral system for youth under 19 years of age.

STANDARD C.2   Suitability Assessment

Prior to any youth receiving Safe House services, a suitability assessment is completed.

STANDARD C.3   Orientation and Safety Plan

Provision of service begins with an orientation and an individualized safety plan.

STANDARD C.4   Contacting a Family Member

For youth who access Safe House services, a family member or a Ministry social worker is contacted.

STANDARD C.5   Safety and Transition Plan

A Safety and Transition Plan is developed with the youth who receives Safe House services.

STANDARD C.6   Length of Stay and Departure

Length of stay is as short as possible but sufficient to implement the Safety and Transition Plan.

STANDARD C.7   Wait Lists

Youth assessed as suitable for Safe House services are placed on a wait list when the Safe House is unable to accommodate them and all other options are exhausted.

STANDARD C.8   Requiring a Youth to Leave

Youth are required to leave the Safe House if they threaten the safety of others, or if they otherwise seriously violate Safe House rules.

STANDARD C.9   Re-Entry to Safe House

Re-entry of a youth into Safe House services is governed by re-assessment of their suitability.

STANDARD C.10 Transfer of Youth between Safe Houses

Depending on the availability of beds, Safe Houses specific to youth with issues of sexual exploitation mutually support each other in the relocation of such youth who require increased protection through another community/region.

D. HEALTH AND SECURITY

STANDARD D.1   Health Care
Safe House services support youth physical and mental health needs.

STANDARD D.2   Alcohol and Drugs
A Safe House provides support to youth coping with substance misuse.

STANDARD D.3   Missing Youth
A "Missing Youth Action Plan" is developed with each youth to guide the Safe House's response if a youth is missing.

STANDARD D.4   Personal Property Issues
The Safe House provides secure storage for personal property but does not store contraband or illegal items.

STANDARD D.5   Anonymity and Confidentiality
A Safe House protects the confidentiality and anonymity of residents.

STANDARD D.6   General Security Measures
A Safe House maintains security measures that ensure the safety and well being of residents and staff.

STANDARD D.7   Sexual Security
A Safe House designs and delivers service with utmost consideration to the "sexual security" of all youth.

STANDARD D.8   Reportable Circumstances
Safe House staff report critical incidents to representatives of the Director of Child Protection as designated within individual regions.

STANDARD D.9   Guests and Partners
Guests and partners are not permitted in the Safe House.

STANDARD D.10 Animals and Pets
Each Safe House develops its own animal and pet policy and procedures that it can manage effectively and that do not jeopardize the health and safety of youth or staff.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF STANDARDS

A. OPERATIONAL PLANNING

Operational Planning standards address operational issues that set the context for service delivery, but occur outside the day-to-day business service stream. Implementation of these standards will support the delivery of well-planned services by an agency and support a service that is guided by a meaningful and well-articulated philosophy, mission and vision.

STANDARD A.1　　　Philosophy, Vision, and Mission

The development and implementation of Safe House services are guided by Philosophy, Vision and Mission statements that are communicated to clients, families and community youth service providers.

Rationale

A clearly articulated philosophy, vision and mission statement ensure that staff, youth, families, and community service providers understand the context and purpose of Safe House services.

Criteria

- Safe House staff, youth and community professionals that work with high-risk youth (e.g., social workers, outreach workers, reconnect workers, after-hours workers, street nurses, and police) can describe target population, service goals, how goals are realized, and some key philosophical principles (e.g., respect, trust, youth-centred, fairness, equity, dignity, free and informed consent).
- Youth report that services received exemplify the key components of the philosophy; that they felt safe and supported; and that staff provided appropriate direction and advocacy.

Commentary

Examples of Philosophy, Mission and Vision statements:

Safe House Philosophy statement

We believe in and respect the basic human dignity and universal rights of all individuals, and provide equal and non-judgemental support to youth. Through a youth-centred practice of mutual respect and trust, we encourage and empower youth to make healthy life choices and transitions.

Mission statement

To provide high-risk youth a safe place and assist them in making successful transitions to healthier circumstances.

Vision statement

The provision of a safe and supportive environment that is responsive to presenting issues of high-risk youth and where integrated services support youth in making positive decisions and healthy transitions for themselves.

STANDARD A.2   Service Planning

There is a written plan describing how Safe House services are achieved.

Rationale

A service plan provides a broad view of a service and a perspective that locates it in the community. The plan reveals the community's need and how that need is met by the service through a description of Safe House operations. The plan continues to change over time to effectively respond to community needs.

Criteria

An effective plan:

- articulates service philosophy, vision, mission, goals and objectives;
- describes service configuration to best meet the needs of youth;
- identifies organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats;
- includes an "environmental scan" to document relevant community demographic and social data to identify need and determine service priorities for planning purposes (e.g., age, gender, unique cultural and community features and services, high-risk youth indicators, etc.);
- identifies routine evaluation activities and provides for the incorporation of evaluation results into future planning;
- incorporates principles and outcomes outlined in the *Guidelines for Provision of Youth Services;*
- incorporates appropriate accreditation requirements, if applicable (i.e., CARF or COA); and,
- is approved by the designated contract manager.

STANDARD A.3   Evaluation

A Safe House regularly evaluates its service.

Rationale

Evaluation information guides future program practice by incorporating results into planning activities to improve service delivery and in order to achieve effective, efficient and responsive delivery of appropriate and relevant service to youth at risk. Evaluation also helps ensure service accountability and an efficient use of resources.

Criteria

A Safe House develops an evaluation plan to guide its evaluation efforts in relation to service objectives and desired client outcomes (Refer to the Outcomes section of the Introduction for sample client outcomes, and below in Commentary for sample service objectives).

The evaluation plan identifies:
- the purpose of the evaluation;
- what will be evaluated;
- the evaluation method(s) used and data/indicators gathered;
- an information system that supports monitoring, reporting and evaluation activities; and
- how evaluation results will be incorporated into ongoing service design and delivery.

Commentary

A key to effective outcome evaluation is ensuring a strong logical connection between service goals and objectives and the indicators measured to assess client outcomes. This is often done by developing a "logic model".

A clearly articulated set of service goals, objectives and indicators will clarify and rationalize service delivery and facilitate evaluation. The following are examples of service goals and objectives for evaluating Safe House services:

- To provide quality youth-centred services;
- To provide a safe, short-term alternative to remaining on the streets;
- To encourage and support healthy lifestyle choices for youth;
- To support access and referral to services that encourage healthy choices;
- To provide crisis intervention, stabilization, assessment and individualized case planning services;
- To reduce the harm experienced by youth;
- To provide service respectful of the youth's gender identity, age, and culture;
- To develop relationships with community partners;
- To make appropriate and effective referrals to community resources;
- To identify barriers to referral services;
- To co-ordinate evaluation activities with requirements of accrediting body, if applicable (i.e., CARF or COA);
- To integrate ongoing service practice into evaluation, e.g., entry and exit interviews as means to assess goal satisfaction; and
- To improve service utilization through analysis of service need indicators (e.g., wait list, length of stay).

In order to make program evaluation more effective and efficient, it is essential to develop an administrative information system from the beginning that captures program and client performance on an ongoing basis. Thus, through the completion of day-to-day client service, information is documented that supports the client outcome measures when it comes time to evaluate the program. In other words, client successes are measured and documented on an ongoing basis.

Refer to *Supplemental Materials for Safe House Practice* for more discussion of service evaluation.

STANDARD A.4   Ensuring Accessibility

The Safe House ensures accessibility for all clients and works to eliminate access barriers.

Rationale

Meeting the safety needs of high-risk youth requires that the Safe House is always accessible.   High-risk youths' attempt to escape abuse, neglect and harm by seeking out Safe House support should be met by a vigilant service that is always ready to help youth in crisis.

Criteria

To ensure access to clients, the Safe House:
- accepts referrals 24 hours a day, 365 days a year;
- provides access information to all referral sources, including: police, RCMP, outreach workers, social workers, probation officers, income assistance offices, hospitals and clinics, schools, cultural agencies, youth drop-in centers, recreational centers, needle exchange programs, HIV/AIDS organizations, drug treatment and rehabilitation programs, and other facilities that youth may frequent;
- attempts to identify and eliminate access barriers; and
- demonstrates its readiness to accept all suitable youth in need.

Commentary

Ensuring accessibility is initiated through the identification of access through various strategies which may include: a "youth suggestion box", asking youth to identify barriers, and making barrier identification a routine part of evaluation and staff meetings. The following is a list of some barriers the Safe House may need to address:

- A belief that youth are not serious about their rehabilitation efforts and are taking advantage of the Safe House. This barrier may apply to youth that have previously accessed the Safe House. Youth with issues of sexual exploitation, for example, may require repeated interventions.
- A policy stating a maximum number of "stays".
- Youth requiring identification (Social Insurance Number, BC ID) to access Safe House services.
- Some high-risk youth are too much trouble (e.g., dual diagnosis or suicidal).
- English as a second language.
- Lack of safe transportation to the Safe House.
- Excessive bureaucracy.
- Youth with children.
- A 72-hour clean and sober policy.
- Youth who have been previously barred.
- The youth has a pet (refer to Standard D.10 for more information).

STANDARD A.5   Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Rationale

In order for staff to effectively support high-risk youth, they require clearly articulated roles and responsibilities. Also, clear roles and responsibilities help to ensure accountability to quality operations and service delivery.

Criteria

- All Safe House staff:
    - facilitate the development of a healthy, safe and effective service environment that promotes the values embodied in Safe House philosophy and supports professional behaviour;
    - deliver services in ways that:
        - promote youth's rights, safety, dignity, respect, self-esteem and privacy;
        - avoid personal/professional conflicts of interest (e.g., exchanging goods and services with clients);
        - reduce youth's exposure to harm or risk of harm; and
        - model pro-social behaviour and communication.
- The role of "keyworker" include the following duties:
    - facilitating the entry and orientation of youth to the Safe House;
    - supporting youth effectively in a one-on-one manner;
    - Safety and Transition Plan development;
    - advocacy and liaison for youth with involved professionals (e.g., Ministry social workers, probation officers, police, Crown counsel) as required;
    - connection and referral to community services and agencies that support the youth's Safety and Transition Plan (e.g., contracted youth outreach/support workers).
- In multi-bed facilities, each staff member is a keyworker to a maximum of three youth.
- The role of "Safe House manager" includes the following duties:
    - supervisory back-up of all Safe House staff;
    - recruiting qualified staff, suitable volunteers and students that includes:
        - a criminal record check; and
        - assigning duties that match staff knowledge and abilities;
    - providing Safe House staff with written copies of the facility's philosophy, goals, program description and policies for on-the-job reference;
    - providing staff a written job description explaining their roles and responsibilities;
    - ensuring the facility is adequately staffed;

- ensuring staff with less than one year of experience are provided with adequate training, supervision and mentorship in their professional development;
- reviewing all incidents requiring a youth to leave the Safe House, and follow-up with the staff members involved to approve their actions or take remedial actions;
- reviewing all critical incident reports required to the Director of the CF&CSA, taking necessary remedial actions, and thoroughly documenting the circumstances leading to the report;
- ensuring that staffing, policy and procedures are in accordance with the Community Care Facilities Act and Regulations;
- ensuring that all necessary policy, procedures, protocols and documentation for effective Safe House service/practice are adhered to; and
- ensuring that administrative and evaluative structures (e.g., client feedback) are in place that facilitate the efficient delivery of high quality services.

Commentary

The Keyworker role is a central component in the delivery of Safe House service. The Keyworker represents a consistent one-on-one relationship between a single staff member and a youth and is the primary vehicle of service delivery.

STANDARD A.6   Staff Training

Staff are well trained according to their role and responsibilities.

Rationale

In order for staff to adequately fulfil their roles and responsibilities, they must receive the proper training. Effective training supports services to high-risk youth by increasing staff knowledge, promoting professionalism, minimizing the risk of unforeseen problems, and supporting workplace health and well being.

Criteria

- All staff participate in training to facilitate the development of a healthy, safe and effective service environment that promotes the values embodied in Safe House philosophy and supports professional behaviour.
- Unless new staff arrive with fully developed competencies to fulfil their roles and responsibilities, staff acquire necessary key competencies within their first year through a combination of training and on-the-job experience.
- As required, staff are provided adequate training to effectively fulfil their roles and responsibilities in regards to (but are not limited to) the following key competency areas:
    - Safe House intake and conducting suitability assessments;
    - youth-centred service through one-to-one support as a keyworker;
    - working with youth's families including assessing situations for contact, involvement and/or mediation;

- solution-focussed family approaches;
- conflict resolution;
- emergency first aid and common communicable disease protocols;
- suicide intervention and responses to other common youth mental health issues;
- youth addictions including response to youth under the influence, overdosing and detoxifying;
- working with youth with street entrenchment, poverty and homelessness issues;
- understanding the dynamics of sexual exploitation and working with youth with issues of sexual exploitation;
- familiarity with the Youth Justice system and working with youth involved in it;
- understanding of and working with cultural, religious, and gender diversity;
- understanding and eliminating harassment and discrimination;
- working with youth of sexual minorities and those with gender issues;
- Integrated Case Management, confidentiality and information sharing;
- Building security and safety management;
- emergency responses and procedures (e.g., earthquake, fire, workplace violence, bomb threats);
- the Ministry's *Complaints Process Policy*; and
- familiarity with following portions of the Child Family and Community Service Act:
  - Section 2: Guiding principles;
  - Section 3: Service delivery principles;
  - Section 4: Best interests of child;
  - Part 2: Family Support Services and Agreements;
  - Part 2.1: Youth and Transitional Support Services and Agreements;
  - Section 13: When protection is needed;
  - Section 14: Duty to report need for protection;
  - Section 20: Family conference;
  - Section 26: Lost or runaway child; and
  - Protective intervention orders and restraining orders under Sections 28 and 98.

Commentary

Additional materials that support staff training are provided in the *Supplemental Materials for Safe House Practice.*

B. YOUTH ISSUES & SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

STANDARD B.1   Youth-Centred Services

Safe House service is designed from a perspective and delivered in a way that supports the principle of youth-centred service.

Rationale

An empowering youth-centred and youth-directed approach to Safe House service is essential given the voluntary nature of the service and the individual needs of youth who use the Safe House. Such an approach promotes an atmosphere of mutual respect and co-operation.

Criteria

- The Safe House uses sections 2, 3 and 4 of the *CF&CSA* and the Ministry's *Guidelines for Provision of Youth Services* to guide its youth-centred service approach.

Commentary

A youth-centred service environment promotes respect for the person and encourages them to feel safe. It recognizes the individual as the "expert" on matters that concern them and respects their judgement to assess their own situation. For example, this means the youth's judgement of who is a threat to them is accepted and their decision regarding parental contact is assessed in terms of the age of the youth and their "best interests" (i.e., presenting risk factors) [Refer to Standard C.4 for more detailed information.] The sanctuary of a Safe House should be an environment that counters negative experiences by supporting all youth equally and from a youth-centred perspective.

STANDARD B. 2   Diversity

Safe House staff are sensitive to and support all types of diversity, including:

- **cultural or ethnic diversity;**
- **aboriginal heritage; and**
- **diversity of sexual orientation and experience.**

Rationale

In order to provide equitable, inclusive, effective and high quality services, Safe House staff are aware and tolerant of the diverse nature of British Columbia's high-risk youth. Services are designed and delivered in a manner that supports this diversity of needs. Section 3(c) of the *CF&CSA* stipulates that service is planned and provided in ways that are sensitive to the diversity needs of British Columbians.

Criteria

A Safe House:
- works to ensure that diversity is not a barrier to access;

- does not permit intolerance, harassment and discrimination amongst staff and youth in residence;
- promotes tolerance of diversity through education and dialogue that encourages understanding, inclusion and empathy;
- is well connected to organizations that support and represent diversity in order to connect youth with such organizations;
- creates opportunities for representatives from diverse communities to engage and support youth; e.g., aboriginal communities;
- has hiring and training practices that acknowledge diversity issues;
- effectively addresses linguistic and other diversity access barriers;
- understands and respects the various concepts of family, community and other significant social groups in ways that support diversity; and
- can support youth with needs that are uniquely determined or defined by virtue of membership in a particular group.

STANDARD B.3   Children-in-Care (CIC's)

Children in Care are accepted when assessed as suitable either when:
- **self-referring; or,**
- **referred by the Ministry on an emergency basis when all other placement options have been exhausted.**

A Ministry social worker is notified when self-referred CIC's enter the Safe House.

Rationale

While all high-risk youth are eligible for service, the Safe House is not expected to routinely support Ministry referred CIC's. A self-referred CIC will likely be considered missing, lost or runaway by their caregiver, who will have reported the youth's absence to the youth's social worker. In circumstances when a self-referred CIC enters the Safe House, it is incumbent upon staff to contact the youth's social worker, and tell the youth of the Safe House's obligation to inform the social worker or caregiver of their whereabouts.

Criteria

The Safe House:

- determines suitability based on risk and safety, not on CIC status;
- is not used as a routine "placement option" for ministry referred CIC's, but as a "last resort" for an emergency placement only;
- informs self-referred CIC's at time of assessment that the Ministry will be notified, and consulted while the CIC is in the Safe House;
- collaborates with the Ministry when deciding if the CIC is suitable for entry as soon as possible; and
- appropriately integrates the CIC's "Plan of Care" with the Safety and Transition Plan.

Where a youth be placed on an emergency basis, a plan is in place with a Ministry worker for transfer of the youth to an alternate Ministry placement as soon as possible.

Commentary

Safe House staff must strive to meet the unique challenges, circumstances, and needs presented by self-referred CIC's.

STANDARD B.4   Youth Involved with Youth Justice

The Safe House provides service to suitable high-risk youth involved with the Youth Justice system.

Rationale

Many youth accessing the Safe House may have been or are currently involved with the criminal justice system. The Safe House respects the privacy and dignity of incoming youth but must also protect current youth in residence. Therefore, the keyworker must ask youth to disclose their involvement in the criminal justice system. While this may be seen as an infringement of the youth's privacy, it is necessary to ensure the safety of residents.

Criteria

The Safe House:

- does not act as a holding facility for Youth Justice (i.e., a remand centre or bail bed facility);
- has a social service, rather than a policing focus;
- asks youth if they have a probation officer (PO) and consults with PO's regarding the youth's risk and safety factors to assess suitability. If staff are unable to connect with a PO, the nature of the youth's involvement with criminal justice is discussed and an interim decision is made to provide or not provide services;
- contacts the police if knowledge of an arrest warrant exists, and it cannot be addressed through a liaison PO;
- addresses a youth's justice issues in the Safety and Transition Plan; and
- helps youth connect with resources to address justice issues.

STANDARD B.5   Parenting Youth

The Safe House supports youth with children to connect with support services appropriate to their needs.

Rationale

A youth with a child (or children) is arguably more vulnerable, at greater risk, and in greater need of support than youth without children. A parenting youth who seeks the protection of the Safe House is considered to be taking positive steps and responsible action to care for and protect themselves and her child. However, a Safe House for high-risk youth is not designed to support the needs of young children of parenting youth. Nor will it likely have the resource capacity to meet the additional needs of the parenting youth. Therefore, it is essential that parenting youth, who present with their children, are connected to services that better meet the needs of both the youth and their children. Special consideration also needs to be given regarding section 13 and 14 of the *CF&CSA* regarding the well-being and safety of the children of parenting youth who approach Safe Houses for service.

Criteria

- Youth who present with their children are supported in securing more appropriate accommodation (e.g., adult women's transition house) as soon as possible.
- When requested by the youth, the Safe House assists the youth in making contact with Ministry social workers and other community services to support the needs of her child.
- The Safe House reports to Child Protection when they believe the youth's child may be at risk and in need of protection.
- When it is necessary to make a report to Child Protection and it does not jeopardize the safety of the youth's child(ren) (e.g., youth runs with child), the staff explain their "duty to report" with the youth to promote a trusting and open relationship.
- For youth who present without their children, the youth's Safety and Transition plan addresses the special needs of the parenting youth (e.g., child care supports).

Commentary

In virtually all cases a "youth with a child" will be an adolescent female. Without intention to minimize the negative experiences of high-risk males and their genuine need for help, it is acknowledged that the additional risks and responsibility of caring for a dependent child within a high-risk environment necessitates an emphasis for referrals to more appropriate accommodation and services.

STANDARD B.6   Youth with Issues of Sexual Exploitation

For suitable youth, a Safe House provides immediate short-term priority placement as well as longer-term transitional supports for youth with issues of sexual exploitation.

Rationale

Youth with issues of sexual exploitation are given special consideration in these standards because of the extreme nature of their experience. These youth are often forced, coerced, manipulated or inveigled into commercial sexual exploitation in exchange for food, shelter or survival in a wide variety of ways. Many youth with issues of sexual exploitation will have concurrent issues of substance abuse/addiction and often have long-term histories of sexual abuse/exploitation within or outside of the familial context. It is also extremely likely these youth will have experienced violence within the context of the sexual exploitation. Thus, youth faced with serious and formidable pressures related to sexual exploitation may require substantially longer time to implement an effective transition plan.

Compounding these realities, some youth who have become entrenched in the sex trade may pose safety risks through potentially recruiting other youth in the Safe House. Thus caution must be exercised when assessing such youth for suitability for service.

Criteria

A Safe House supports youth with issues of sexual exploitation by:

- providing short-term safe accommodation and longer term transitional support;

- providing priority placement when possible;
- providing for medical & mental health needs;
- referring and connecting youth with issues of sexual exploitation to community resources that support "exiting" this lifestyle;
- assisting with relocation to a new community to facilitate "exiting" if agreed upon by the youth;
- providing for special safety needs of youth with issues of sexual exploitation (e.g., use of Criminal Code or *CF&CSA* protective intervention or restraining orders);
- working closely with involved sexually exploited youth support workers;
- promoting risk management and harm reduction strategies; and
- utilizing effective emergency and crisis intervention responses.

Staff monitor situations carefully involving youth who are known to be exploited in the sex trade to ensure recruitment does not occur in or around the Safe House.

Commentary

Youth with issues of sexual exploitation may need the opportunity to repeatedly access the Safe House in order to successfully escape this lifestyle.

C. SERVICE DELIVERY

This section describes Safe House activities that directly involve youth. These activities begin when a youth makes contact with the Safe House, either by phone, in person or through a third person referral.

After a youth contacts the service, their suitability is assessed. This assessment is done primarily to establish that the youth is at risk and in need of the service, and that the youth poses no threat to others in the Safe House. When this assessment is complete, the youth enters the Safe House and is given an orientation. This orientation includes the discussion of policies that significantly impact the youth, such as informing MCFD or family of their presence in the Safe House. The youth's needs are assessed and a Safety and Transition Plan is developed to address these identified needs. Other standards in this chapter consider issues around length of stay, wait lists, youth re-entry, and transfer of youth to another community.

STANDARD C.1   Referral to the Safe House

Safe House services maintain an open referral system for youth under 19 years of age.

Rationale

The safety needs of high-risk youth are best served through an open referral system, in which self-referrals are welcomed as well as referrals from a comprehensive, wide-ranging network of service access points. Restricting referral sources limits access, which undermines the Safe House's primary goal to protect high-risk youth in crisis.

The effective implementation of this standard will support youth in their attempt to contact the Safe House. Referral practice supports and encourages the Safe House to create a cohesive, broad, informed and effective referral network that maximizes positive outcomes for youth. Effective and appropriate referrals depend on the dissemination of relevant information to key agencies and individuals.

Criteria

The Safe House:

- receives self-referring youth and referrals by community sources for youth under 19 years of age;
- establishes procedures which delineate the minimum information required in a referral to complete a suitability assessment;
- establishes protocols and procedures describing how telephone and in-person referrals are received and conducted;
- establishes a comprehensive referral network of individuals and organizations in the community and across the province, including but not limited to the following: youth; family and friends of youth; social workers; outreach and street workers; police; street nurses; MCFD; After-Hours programs; health services (including hospitals and clinics); mental health services; income assistance offices; HIV/AIDS organizations; cultural organizations; youth service organizations; peer support organizations; and other youth services;

- ensures that referral sources are aware of suitability criteria for Safe House services, along with the required supporting information, protocols and procedures involved in a referral;
- maintains current information with and about referral sources; and
- identifies and provides contingencies for situations where a suitability assessment cannot be done (e.g., lack of capacity and/or staff resources).

STANDARD C.2   Suitability Assessment

Prior to any youth receiving Safe House services, a suitability assessment is completed.

Rationale

As a voluntary, residential support facility for high-risk youth in crisis, the Safe House assesses the suitability of all referred youth. The assessment is completed to ensure that the program can support the safety and needs of the presenting youth, to protect youth already staying in the facility, and to ensure the appropriate and responsible use of the resource. Respect for the dignity and privacy of the presenting youth is reflected in the suitability assessment tool, which provides the foundation for a healthy, respectful, trusting relationship that promotes effective work with the youth.

Criteria

To help determine a youth's suitability to enter the Safe House, the Safe House conducts a "suitability assessment" to determine:

- whether a youth's immediate and short-term needs can reasonably be met within the Safe House; and
- the extent of any threat the presenting youth may pose to other youth in the Safe House.

Information gathered for the suitability assessment includes, but is not limited to:
- age;
- in-care status;
- safety needs (self-reported and those received by third party reports);
- risk factors, including criminal record, to help gauge the youth's threat to other residents (e.g., convicted arsonist or sex offender);
- risk of sexual exploitation;
- mental health risk factors, including suicide risk;
- health risk factors, (e.g., STD's, AIDS, Hepatitis-C and other communicable diseases); and
- street involvement and extent of marginalization.

A suitability assessment includes a collaborative exchange of relevant information from pertinent/involved professionals (e.g., police, outreach workers, social workers, probation officers). The assessment process:

- is conducted with the youth's free and informed consent; and
- informs youth of the need to exchange important information with pertinent professionals, including social workers where a statutory obligation to report exists

around harm to self or harm to others (e.g., public safety, or *CF&CSA* Section 13 and 14 duty to report).

When youth request services under circumstances that require immediate intervention prior to an opportunity to complete a full assessment, staff may use discretion in providing services to the youth on an interim basis. In doing so, staff, at a minimum, assess and determine that this will not jeopardize the safety of other youth in the Safe House.

Where youth cannot avail themselves of Safe House services, regardless of suitability, staff will endeavour to support the youth in finding appropriate alternative supports.

When youth under age 16 present themselves at a Safe House, a child protection social worker is notified of their presence the same day (through Help-line for Children and/or After Hours on evenings and weekends) if:

- the youth's parent or guardian cannot be contacted; or
- protection concerns exist with or without contacting a parent or guardian.

Information gathered through the intake process is treated confidentially, recorded and kept on file.

If the Safe House is at full capacity, suitable youth who require services are placed on a wait list (refer to Standard C.7 "Wait lists" for more information).

STANDARD C.3   Orientation and Safety Plan

Provision of service begins with an orientation and an individualized safety plan.

Rationale

Following a youth's referral and suitability assessment, orientation and development of an immediate safety plan are the final steps a youth takes in the admission process. Orientation is a welcoming process structured as an information exchange that lays the foundation for the relationship between the youth and Safe House staff. This information exchange facilitates mutual understanding that allows the youth and Safe House staff to effectively work together in a partnership to meet the youth's safety and support needs.

The youth's immediate needs will be identified either during the suitability assessment or at orientation, depending on the nature and severity of those needs. As a voluntary service, the Safe House depends on the youth to identify their immediate needs. However, in cases where safety is at stake and the youth is reticent to act, the Safe House may take the initiative and provide a greater degree of direction to youth. Meeting significant mental and physical health and safety needs of youth will be a priority.

Criteria

The orientation process:

- introduces the youth to their keyworker, other staff and to residents;
- confirms the voluntary nature of Safe House services and the principle of free and informed consent to all Safe House activity;

- gathers information from youth and answers the youth's questions and concerns [Refer to Standard B. 1 for supporting information on *Youth-Centred Services*.];
- provides youth with information on Safe House services, principles and values, significant policy, procedures and rules including:
    - ➤ complaint policy;
    - ➤ reportable incidents;
    - ➤ circumstances that may require youth to leave the facility (e.g., harassment, violence, contraband or illegal activities/items on or about premises); and
- confirms the youth's responsibilities, rights and obligations as a member of the Safe House community, including:
    - ➤ respecting other's dignity, privacy, and property;
    - ➤ protecting the safety and security of others by maintaining Safe House anonymity and resident confidentiality, as appropriate;
    - ➤ providing the youth with an opportunity to dispose of illegal materials; and
    - ➤ the opportunity to secure personal property (e.g., medicine or valuables, but not contraband).

The Safety Plan:

- During or following orientation, the youth's keyworker works with the youth to develop an immediate safety plan that addresses the youth's immediate needs. These needs may include food, hygiene, sleep, clothing, physical and mental health, and safety/security issues.

- As part of the youth's immediate safety plan, youth are given an opportunity to be photographed, should they consent. These photos are to be kept secure to protect the youth's confidentiality but may be used by authorities to help locate them should they go missing.

- In situations where the youth may be at risk from a parent or other person, in consultation with a Ministry Social Worker, an application for a Section 28 Protective Intervention Order or a Section 98 Restraining Order may be considered.

Commentary

Orientation is a critical and comprehensive process. There are many important issues the keyworker describes and discusses with the youth, as well as questions and issues the youth may bring which should be addressed. Assessing and providing for the youth's immediate needs may be all that can be accomplished for the first 24 or 36 hours. The primary objective at this stage is to welcome and orient the youth to the Safe House and to provide them with immediate, critical information.

It is important to remember that a youth's long-term view of service is often set by their experience at the beginning of service.

STANDARD C.4   Contacting a Family Member

For youth who access Safe House services, a family member or a Ministry social worker is contacted.

Rationale

For the purpose of this standard a family member includes biological parents, foster parents, older siblings or members of the extended family with whom the youth has a close kinship tie (as defined by the youth's cultural group). Out of consideration for the family members' concern for the youth's safety, it is important to consider contacting family/kin. Where such information cannot be passed on directly or indirectly to guardians of the youth, it is incumbent upon staff to consider notifying a Ministry social worker, who can sanction services in the absence of the youth's guardians.

Criteria

- Safe House staff:

  - ➤ consider the best interests and paramount safety of the youth when making determinations around family contact;

  - ➤ contact and consult with a Child Protection social worker prior to family contact, if protection concerns are suspected; and,

  - ➤ document decisions made around the appropriateness of family contact.

- For adolescents under 16 years of age accessing services, either the adolescent's guardian or a Ministry social worker are contacted the same calendar day to give permission for the adolescent to stay in the Safe House.

- For youth 16 to 18 years of age accessing services, if contact is determined as appropriate, the youth's family is contacted within 48 hours to notify them that they are safe and are receiving support.

- If family contact is deemed appropriate, the keyworker and youth discuss:

  - ➤ the importance and/or appropriateness of informing a family member that the youth is safe;

  - ➤ which family member should be contacted;

  - ➤ how and when contact would be made and by whom (e.g., youth, keyworker, social worker, etc.); and,

  - ➤ what information will be provided to the family member.

- In consultation with other involved professionals (e.g., outreach workers, police, social workers, a mediator or mental health counsellor), Safe House staff facilitate family contact and involvement in a context with which the youth is comfortable.

- Should a family member present a safety and security risk to the Safe House, police are notified to ensure the safety of youth and staff.

In some cases, particularly where a youth is under 16 years of age, a Child Protection social worker (or another designated professional) may take the lead in arranging and facilitating family contact.

As a voluntary, youth-centred service, the Safe House respects the rights and self-determination of youth. As is the case for many of these standards, when a conflict between competing interests arises, the resolution strives toward moderation and balance. Ensuring the youth's safety must always be of primary importance and overrides the preference for family contact. Finding a desirable middle ground between the extremes of "contact" versus "no contact" is at the heart of resolution to this conflict of interests, and represents the challenge of the keyworker's task in this regard.

STANDARD C.5   Safety and Transition Plan

A Safety and Transition Plan is developed with the youth who receives Safe House services.

Rationale

The conditions that lead the youth to the Safe House are eliminated, minimized or mitigated to the greatest degree possible. The steps and activities to achieve this are outlined in the Safety and Transition Plan. This Plan guides a youth's activity while in the Safe House and identifies the conditions necessary for their transition to a safer, more stable situation. The plan facilitates the youth and staff to identify the safety and care needs as well as the services required to meet those needs. For some youth, the process of developing a Safety and Transition Plan may be equally or more important than realizing its goals. Simply having the chance to consider their safety is a measure of success in itself. The development of a Safety and Transition Plan using a youth-centred approach is a key component of youth empowerment through taking ownership and responsibility for the direction of their lives.

Criteria

- A youth is actively engaged in the development of the Safety and Transition Plan:
    - ➢ After three nights of continuous stay in Safe House facilities; or
    - ➢ After seven cumulative days in a given month.
- The immediate intake safety plans are incorporated into the Safety and Transition Plan.
- The Safety and Transition Plan **:**
    - ➢ identifies and addresses the youth's immediate and transitional needs;
    - ➢ is supported through Integrated Case Management, acknowledging the central role of youth outreach/support workers already involved with the youth;
    - ➢ identifies what the youth will do to engage these supports and respects how the youth prefers to operationalize this;
    - ➢ considers the length of stay at the Safe House;

- ➢ considers the linkages to other longer term service plans (e.g., Youth Agreement, Supported Independent Living);
- ➢ identifies links to supports, services, agencies and individuals that the youth might rely on after exiting the Safe House (e.g., family members, community and peer support groups, employment programs, police, social workers, outreach workers, reconnect workers, mental health workers and other support professionals); and
- ➢ considers family repatriation.

- If a youth is in the care of the Ministry, the youth's social worker is involved with development of the Safety and Transition Plan and the youth's Plan of Care is properly considered.

- If a youth is involved with Youth Justice, the youth's probation officer is involved with development of the Safety and Transition Plan to ensure that it is congruent with any existing court orders.

- The Safety and Transition Plan considers:
  - ➢ basic needs (i.e., housing, food, and clothing);
  - ➢ personal safety and security, including protective intervention orders and police involvement;
  - ➢ justice issues;
  - ➢ mental and medical health issues, including harm reduction and substance use, counselling/therapy, life skills and parenting training;
  - ➢ education, employment and income assistance;
  - ➢ maintaining or re-establishing connections to friends, family and community; and,
  - ➢ peer group support network and activities.

Commentary

When developing a transition plan, it is important to include any individual (e.g. outreach worker, counsellor) that may have longer-term contact with the youth. Studies have shown that a long-term relationship with a significant adult increases the likelihood of successful transitions.

When developing a Safety and Transition Plan with a youth, it can be useful to consider where a youth may be in the "stages and process of change" as outlined in the *Transtheoretical Model of Change* (Prochaska and DiClemente). It is all too easy to develop a plan that is far too ambitious for the youth's current capacity, level of function and readiness to change.

STANDARD C.6   Length of Stay and Departure

Length of stay is as short as possible but sufficient to implement the Safety and Transition Plan.

Rationale

A Safe House shelters youth and helps them access other services to meet their safety and transition needs. Therefore, a youth's length of stay in the Safe House needs to be as long as necessary to meet their immediate safety needs but as short as possible to ensure space for new youth. Addressing the unsafe conditions that lead a youth to the Safe House should be a primary service goal, and length of stay is sufficient to achieve this goal.

Criteria

- Youth staying in Safe Housing services longer than seven cumulative days in any given month are actively participating in their identified goals in their Safety and Transition Plan.

- Youth faced with serious and formidable pressures related to sexual exploitation may require substantially longer time to implement an effective transition plan.

- Youth preparing to leave a Safe House report that the unsafe conditions that lead to their entry to Safe Housing services have been mitigated sufficiently to implement their transition plan.

- Upon the departure:

  ➢ youth have been referred to and accessed the programs and services intended to meet their transitional and longer term needs (e.g., Youth with issues of sexual exploitation have transitioned to safe longer term residential services with supports and a protective intervention order is in place against the youth's pimp); and

  ➢ Youth are provided with a copy of their Safety and Transition Plan, a copy of which is kept on file and distributed to pertinent members of the youth's Integrated Case Management ("ICM") team.

Commentary

The success of the Safe House's mission cannot be measured by the number of days a youth is in the Safe House, by the number of times a youth re-enters the Safe House, or by the length of time between re-entries; it must be measured in youth outcomes. Length of stay is therefore determined by outcomes, which are dependent upon achieving the goals identified in the youth's Safety and Transition Plan. A typical length of stay may be five to seven days, but must provide sufficient time to support the youth's immediate needs and to develop and implement their Safety and Transition Plan. This may include establishing a longer-term service plan such as Youth Agreements, and connecting the youth with housing, income, education, health, mental health and other supports.

While length of stay in the Safe House will vary and will be primarily governed by ensuring the ongoing safety of the youth and achieving youth outcomes, the Safe House strives to continually create space for those in need.

STANDARD C.7   Wait Lists

Youth assessed as suitable for Safe House services are placed on a wait list when the Safe House is unable to accommodate them and all other options are exhausted.

Rationale

Once a youth has been assessed as suitable for Safe House services, it is incumbent upon staff to ensure that the youth has an opportunity to access these services at a future date. Although placement on the wait list should be on a first-come-first-served basis, the Safe House must consider multiple factors in determining priority service to youth, including age, and extraordinary safety needs (e.g., Youth with issues of sexual exploitation).

Criteria

- Placement on the wait list is on a first-come-first-served basis, unless the youth has exceptional safety needs.
- The priority of service to youth is primarily based on the suitability assessment, including risk level, safety needs and age.
- For youth in care of the Ministry, placement priority is determined through consultation with Ministry social workers in the context of other available placement resources.
- The wait list contains youth contact information, dates of contact, age, and priority placement information.

Commentary

The need to waitlist youth and the size of the wait list are indicators of program need. In order to reduce wait lists, the Safe House connects youth to community resources, supports, programs and services that help youth leave the Safe House.

STANDARD C.8   Requiring a Youth to Leave

Youth are required to leave the Safe House if they threaten the safety of others, or if they otherwise seriously violate Safe House rules.

Rationale

To ensure the safety of all residents, Safe House staff should identify conditions that justify requiring a youth to leave the Safe House. These conditions should include actions that jeopardize the safety of others or are a significant violation of those Safe House rules designed to promote and support the safety, health and well being of all youth.

Criteria

- Youth are informed at orientation of actions and circumstances that would require a youth to leave the facility.

- Depending on the seriousness and immediacy of presenting circumstances, staff use their discretionary judgement in issuing warnings prior to requiring a youth to leave and use as a last resort where less disruptive measures have been tried or would be insufficient to address the seriousness of the circumstances.
- Staff consider if the youth's unacceptable behaviour is indicative of a need for other services (e.g., alcohol and drug or mental health services).
- The following conditions may present grounds for requiring a youth to leave:
  - ➢ engaging in criminal behaviour (police will be notified);
  - ➢ risking the safety of others in any way, including possession of contraband or illegal items following intake and orientation (see also: C.3 and D.5);
  - ➢ verbal or physical abuse of residents or staff;
  - ➢ threats of physical abuse;
  - ➢ sexually or racially harassing language or behaviour;
  - ➢ stealing from Safe House or residents;
  - ➢ vandalising the Safe House;
  - ➢ recruiting other residents into sexual exploitation;
  - ➢ repeatedly breaking Safe House rules; and,
  - ➢ disruptive, out-of-control behaviour that presents a risk to others.
- When a youth is asked to leave:
  - ➢ re-entry conditions are discussed with youth;
  - ➢ the incident is documented for review and approval by the Safe House manager;
  - ➢ relevant family and professionals are informed;
  - ➢ they are informed of their right to use the Ministry's *Complaints Process;* and,
  - ➢ a critical incident report is filed when it is considered a reportable circumstance (refer to D.9 for more information).
- In highly dangerous or volatile situations, staff request police support, and if necessary, vacate the premises with other residents until police arrive and the premises have been secured.

Commentary

When considering asking a youth to leave, the staff and manager review events to ensure that this is justified and the most appropriate option available. In cases of less serious behaviour (e.g., imminent harm), staff may wish to confirm that the youth has been given opportunities to cease and desist, and that all possible remedial steps were attempted.

STANDARD C.9   Re-Entry to Safe House

Re-entry of a youth into Safe House services is governed by re-assessment of their suitability.

Rationale

A youth's entitlement to Safe House services is based on their safety needs, not on the number of times they have accessed the service. The needs of high-risk youth, their willingness to make changes and their readiness to accept help can change. It is

important to support positive changes whenever the opportunity arises. Research indicates that one of the strongest opportunities to support change in street youth is linked to traumatic incidents. A fresh perspective is essential in re-assessing youth suitability; however, the conditions under which they left are relevant re-entry considerations in determining their suitability. Re-enforcing rules and expectations are also important in supporting positive change and promoting responsible behaviour.

Criteria

- All youth seeking re-entry to Safe House services are re-assessed for suitability in which the following are considered:
  - ➢ their current circumstances leading to re-entry; and
  - ➢ the conditions surrounding their previous departure.
- Youth previously determined as "unsuitable" for Safe House services are re-assessed if significant time passes from their previous assessment (e.g., a month) or if their circumstances significantly change (e.g., major event). In addition, re-entry of a youth previously asked to leave the Safe House requires:
  - ➢ a review of the "re-entry criteria" discussed with the youth at the time of their previous departure(s) (see also Standard D.4); and
  - ➢ reconsideration of the conditions which prompted their departure and any changes in those conditions.

Commentary

"Re-entry" would refer to those youth who have had a significant break in their use of services that is not part of their service plan. Examples include youth that have gone missing, those who were asked to leave, and those who simply decided to end service.

A decision to re-admit a youth can be relative to individual circumstances, which may be uncomplicated or very complicated.   Re-entry may be a simple matter of assessing any change in the youth's suitability and reviewing their Safety and Transition Plan. However, the process may be complicated by the circumstances under which the youth previously departed the Safe House, particularly if the youth was dismissed. These circumstances must be carefully considered and reviewed upon re-referral.

When assessing for re-admission, it can be useful to consider where a youth may be in the "stages and process of change" as outlined in the *Transtheoretical Model of Change* (Prochaska and DiClemente).

STANDARD C.10 Transfer of Youth between Safe Houses

Depending on the availability of beds, Safe Houses specific to youth with issues of sexual exploitation mutually support each other in the relocation of such youth who require increased protection through another community/region.

Rationale

Safe houses specific to sexually exploited youth have historically been considered provincial resources, and will require inter-regional protocols within the context of regional governance. These Safe Houses are located in Victoria, Prince George, Kelowna and New Westminster/Burnaby. This standard is intended to promote the development of an informal provincial network of Safe House facilities specific to youth with issues of sexual exploitation. The intent is to provide for youth who need relocation because of safety concerns in their present community. This may necessitate transfer to an alternate

community if youth cannot be adequately protected in their current community. Such a transfer may also locate the youth closer to family or other integral supports.

In most cases, this support network is supported by the availability of surplus beds. However, where a youth needs witness protection from an individual (e.g., youth testifying against their pimp), the youth may need to be made a priority on the waitlist of another community's safe house.

Criteria

- Any plan to relocate the youth to another community is developed with the informed consent of the youth and in consultation with Ministry social workers.
- In situations of "witness protection", consultation also occurs with police and Crown counsel.
- Prior to developing a transfer plan, alternative resources in the youth's current community have been examined to see if the youth's safety needs can be appropriately met there.
- When considering transfer to a Safe House in another community, the youth's community of origin and the location of family, extended family and or significant others are taken into a account.
- The decision to relocate a youth to another Safe Housing facility depends on:
    - ➢ surplus space or wait list priority in the receiving Safe House;
    - ➢ the capacity of the receiving community to support the youth (short and longer term;
    - ➢ where appropriate, consultation with parents or guardians; and
    - ➢ the suitability assessment of the transferring youth being reviewed and agreed upon by the receiving Safe House.
- When a youth is transferred, the receiving Safe House conducts an orientation and assigns a keyworker to support the youth in the further development and implementation of their Safety and Transition Plan.
- The youth's file is transferred with them.

D. HEALTH AND SECURITY

Health and Security standards consider issues that support youth health and safety in the Safe House. They address the referral of youth to physical and mental health services, the need to follow communicable disease protocols, the provision of emergency intervention to help suicidal or overdosed youth and other health issues. Security standards consider how to ensure the safety of all youth in the Safe House without violating an individual's privacy or personal freedoms. Security standards address the overall security of the physical site through measures aimed to control access and eliminate the threat of harm from outside and within the Safe House.

STANDARD D.1   Health Care

Safe House services support youth physical and mental health needs.

Rationale

Supporting youth health includes attention to immediate and emergency physical and mental health needs as well as longer-term needs identified by the youth. As a voluntary service, the use of health care services should be youth-directed. Staff support youth when developing the Safety and Transition Plan by discussing health care needs and by promoting harm reduction strategies that include accessing health care professionals. Staff also provide ongoing monitoring and take necessary actions to identify and support health issues not realized by youth (e.g., suicide, communicable disease infection, etc.)

Criteria

To support youth health, Safe House staff:

- endeavour to ensure the safe consumption of both prescription and non-prescription drugs by youth clients;
- consult with parents or social workers about use of prescription and non-prescription drugs when they are actively involved with youth (which they will be if under 16);
- help youth identify short and long term health care needs;
- provide referrals and support access to physical and mental health care services upon youth request, or with the youth's informed consent;
- use harm reduction strategies and initiatives and engages health professionals (e.g., street nurses or clinics) in harm reduction and health promotion strategies and procedures;
- provide health care reference and educational materials, as well as essential health care supplies (e.g. condoms);
- ensure communicable diseases are appropriately identified, and maintain a connection with the Public Health through the Regional Health Authority to minimize the threat of harm from communicable disease infection by following appropriate communicable disease control protocols;
- monitor for youth who are suicidal, violent, victims of assault, have overdosed, or in any other crisis, and in accordance with an "in-house" crisis intervention protocol, obtain necessary crisis intervention support;

- have adequate first aid training as prescribed under the *Worker's Compensation Act and Regulations*; and
- facilitate access to gender-sensitive health services as required.

Commentary

Staff are not crisis intervention specialists and are not expected to perform the role of a physical or mental health professional. Consequently, staff make appropriate referrals to health professionals to meet youth's specific health needs.

In some circumstances, a youth's behaviour may be severe enough to place themselves or others at risk. In these situations, staff may contact emergency personnel without the youth's informed consent. However, staff should use their discretion in such referrals in order to promote a youth-centred approach.

STANDARD D.2   Alcohol and Drugs

A Safe House provides support to youth coping with substance misuse.

Rationale

High-risk youth are in part defined as youth who misuse substances. Consequently, the Safe House is mandated to provide service to youth with current substance abuse issues, as long as they are otherwise assessed as suitable for service.

It should be expected that youth in crisis may seek entry, or return to the Safe House under the influence of substances, having overdosed, or having taken a dangerous amount or combination of medication. Thus the Safe House should be able to provide appropriate short-term support for youth "under-the-influence", including crisis intervention in the event of an overdose.

While the Safe House is not a substance rehabilitation program, it can support substance-using youth in crisis, and follow-up with advocacy for and referrals to alcohol and drug treatment and support services.

Criteria

The Safe House staff:
- provide crisis intervention and first aid support to stabilize youth who have overdosed until emergency personnel arrive in accordance with established protocols;
- support youth coping with substance abuse issues;
- provide referrals to alcohol and drug services when requested by youth, including detox;
- support harm reduction strategies including needle exchange referrals, drug use education, and program referrals;
- exercise discretionary judgement in providing services to youth under the influence of drugs or alcohol; and
- provide an environment free of alcohol, drugs, and influences that enable addictive behaviour.

During orientation the youth is informed that alcohol, drugs and "gear" are contraband and not allowed in the Safe House. They are also advised that using alcohol/drugs on-site will result in asking the youth to leave.

Commentary

When assessing suitability of youth who may be "under the influence" of drugs or alcohol, the youth's safety needs are considered, as well as the risks they may present to other residents. These risks should be carefully weighed, and strategies considered to mitigate or eliminate the risk before a final decision is made with regards to admittance.

Youth with addiction issues who are abstaining while at the Safe House may begin to experience detoxification. The Safe House may move the youth to a facility that can provide adequate care (e.g., a hospital or detox) or support the youth to remain in the Safe House. In the latter situation, the Safe House will need health care professionals on-call to provide care for the youth and support Safe House staff.

STANDARD D.3   Missing Youth

A "Missing Youth Action Plan" is developed with each youth to guide the Safe House's response if a youth is missing.

Rationale

The unexpected absence of a youth may be interpreted in few ways: they have succumbed to the threat(s) that lead them to the Safe House (e.g., were abducted or assaulted); or have been attracted back to the street; or they are no longer at risk. To protect youth and err on the side of safety, the Safe House responds to unexpected absences with the assumption that the youth is at risk. If it is determined that the youth is not at risk yet remains absent, this may indicate a readiness on the part of the youth to leave the Safe House.

Criteria

At orientation, the youth and keyworker discuss:

- the significance and implications of this standard; and
- the importance of youth informing the Safe House of unintended and/or unplanned absences/lateness.

The youth and keyworker develop a "Missing Youth Action Plan" as part of the Safety and Transition Plan. The Missing Youth Action Plan:

- identifies the conditions which will trigger operationalization of the Missing Youth Action Plan;
- identifies who will be contacted and when (e.g. friends, parents, social/outreach workers, police);
- notes if the youth's photograph will be circulated;
- identifies the conditions under which a reportable circumstance report will be made (NB all missing youth under age 16 are a reportable circumstance); and
- considers the youth's specific safety needs and risk factors.

If a missing youth's safety and risk factors are deemed severe enough, (i.e., if staff believe the youth is likely in imminent harm), the following steps are taken and documented:

- file a reportable circumstance report;
- notify relevant professionals, e.g. police, outreach & social workers; and
- notify parent/guardian and significant others identified in the Missing Youth Action Plan.

In determining if a youth's absence constitutes a reportable circumstance, staff review all available relevant information pertaining to the youth including:

- current file information; and
- consultation with contracted youth workers and other involved professionals (e.g., social workers, police and Crown counsel).

Commentary

Beyond an established curfew or other timelines established by the Safe House, youth are indeed free to enter or leave the Safe House. However, the Safe House strongly encourages youth to stay in close proximity and communication with staff during their stay to promote safety and security. It also minimizes disruptions and creates opportunities to work on developing and achieving their Safety and Transition Plan.

The following risk factors might be considered when assessing the unexpected absence of a youth:

- the youth's level of involvement or former involvement in the sex and/or drug trade;
- current court action against a youth's former pimp where the youth may be subpoenaed to witness;
- a drug case currently before the court where the youth may be subpoenaed to witness;
- the youth's involvement in domestic violence with a violent former partner or spouse;
- history of violent or abusive family members; and
- involvement with violent crime, including gangs, severe indebtedness, and others seeking revenge.

STANDARD D.4   Personal Property Issues

The Safe House provides secure storage for personal property but does not store contraband or illegal items.

Rationale

To protect all youth, contraband (i.e. weapons, alcohol, drugs, "gear", etc.) is not permitted in the Safe House. All youth are provided with an opportunity to secure their personal property in a "lock-up" accessible only through staff (e.g. medication, wallet/purse, valuables, etc.) Respecting youth's personal property demonstrates an active respect for the youth.

Criteria

- Staff may not search a youth or their property except under extreme circumstances, which would necessitate a critical incident report.
- Following intake orientation, contraband found in or around the Safe House is confiscated.
- Where confiscated contraband is an illegal substance (e.g., drug or alcohol) or item (e.g., handgun, unregistered firearm), police are notified (or consulted if uncertainty exists).

- If staff suspect a youth has contraband, they may require the youth to leave the Safe House.
- Staff exercise necessary security measures to ensure that personal property does not jeopardize safety in Safe House facilities.
- If a youth goes missing, staff may search a youth's property in accordance with terms established in the Missing Youth Action Plan.
- Youth may use the "lock-up" to secure their valuables.

Commentary

While this standard is intended to protect youth, it is recognized that an individual determined to harm another will have ready access to many common objects in the Safe House that could be used as a weapon. The safety and security of youth is achieved through the efforts of thoughtful, caring, sensitive and vigilant staff who promote security, trust, tolerance and respect.

STANDARD D.5   Anonymity and Confidentiality

A Safe House protects the confidentiality and anonymity of residents.

Rationale

Anonymity and confidentiality are two important principles of Safe House service. A youth is safe from an individual or group intent on harming them if they cannot be found and if their presence in the Safe House is not revealed. Thus, in some circumstances (e.g. Youth with issues of sexual exploitation) the Safe House does all it can to protect the whereabouts of its location and the confidentiality of its residents.

Anonymity depends on the silence of every person who knows the Safe House location, including current and past residents, and service providers. Residents learn that their safety and the safety of future residents depends on keeping the location anonymous. Staff help youth develop this appreciation.

Criteria

- Staff ask youth to:
    - ➤ use discretion and judgement when telling other youth of the Safe House location and refrain from telling anyone over the age of 18 years old;
    - ➤ respect the confidentiality of all residents in the Safe House by not disclosing the names of any residents; and
    - ➤ not to disclose Safe House security measures to anyone.
- Safe House staff:
    - ➤ use discretionary judgement when disclosing their location to callers;
    - ➤ are governed by the MCFD Privacy Charter;
    - ➤ do not reveal the youth's presence in the Safe House to anyone except those that are confidants of the youth;
    - ➤ protect the youth's right to access and keep a copy of their records;
    - ➤ disclose personal information to others with the written consent of the youth; and
    - ➤ establish policy and procedure to protect youth confidentiality.

The issues of anonymity and accessibility are seemingly at odds, yet the security of youth depends on supporting both. Anonymity supports security yet can impair access, which in turn may impair the safety of a youth in need. A balance must be achieved and maintained.

In order to support both anonymity and access, staff encourage youth to use their judgement and discretion when revealing the location of the Safe House to other youth in need.

STANDARD D.6   General Security Measures

A Safe House maintains security measures that ensure the safety and well being of residents and staff.

Rationale

Depending on the organizational structure of the Safe House (i.e., satellite homes or multi-bed facilities) the following security measures may be appropriate. The protocol for youth entering or leaving the Safe House will differ between single and multi-bed facilities, but regardless of this difference, it is essential to take all reasonable steps to protect youth and staff.

Criteria

- All entryways, including doors and windows, are securable and controlled to prevent unwanted entries to the facility.
- Kitchen has special safeguards to prevent access to equipment and utensils that could cause a safety concern.
- Cell phones and pagers are turned in when youth enter or return to the Safe House.
- A curfew is established to control times for returning to the Safe House at night and for evening inside activities.
- Staff:
  - ➢ establish and maintain protocols and strong working relationships with the police;
  - ➢ maintain a dedicated line for Safe House business and develop procedures to ensure secure and safe telephone use by youth; and
  - ➢ monitor all common living spaces.
- In case of emergencies, staff are well versed in emergency procedures and evacuation plans (e.g., earthquake, fire, workplace violence, bomb threats), and business continuance/contingency plans are in place as required through *Worker's Compensation Act* and *Regulations*.

Commentary

Examples of physical security measures include the following:
- Doors are locked, and entry is controlled by staff.

- Windows that can provide entry are locked or barred to prevent entry.
- A security camera is installed to monitor the entry.
- Motion sensor lights are installed on the exterior.
- An intercom is installed at the entry.
- There is a door "peephole" or other means to see those seeking entry.

STANDARD D.7   Sexual Security

A Safe House designs and delivers service with utmost consideration to the "sexual security" of all youth.

Rationale

High-risk youth requiring the protection of the Safe House are likely to have experienced individual and/or systemic sexual discrimination, harassment, abuse or assault. In order to provide a safe, nurturing and healthy environment, the Safe House designs and delivers its service in a way that is appropriate and sensitive to this experience.

Criteria

- The Safe House:
    - protects youth, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, from all sources of sexual harassment, aggression, abuse and exploitation;
    - provides individual beds for youth in secure, gender-separate sleeping arrangements;
    - ensures that sleeping quarters and gender specific washrooms cannot be accessed by members of the opposite sex;
    - monitors sleeping arrangements; and
    - protects youth from all sources of sexualized violence and exploitation within the Safe House environment, including sexually harassing language or behaviour.

Commentary

Gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgendered, questioning, two-spirited and youth with issues of sexual exploitation face significant amounts of violence, discrimination, harassment, abuse and marginalization. When violence and discrimination are couched or embedded in gender and sexual issues it becomes insidious and all the more difficult to redress. The Safe House provides all youth with respite from these forms of violence and the damaging physical and psychological effects it can have.

STANDARD D.8   Reportable Circumstances

Safe House staff report critical incidents to representatives of the Director of Child Protection as designated within individual regions.

Rationale

It is incumbent on staff to notify MCFD management of any critical incidents involving a youth that has received Safe House services.

Criteria

- Where a youth is currently receiving services, Safe House staff make a report to the Director located in the region within 24 hours in the following circumstances:
  - ➢ Youth dies or is critically injured;
  - ➢ Suicide attempts;
  - ➢ A serious injury or condition that may result in the youth's death or may cause serious or permanent impairment of the youth's health;
  - ➢ Serious incidents including the youth's involvement or exposure to life threatening circumstances, crimes of violence, robbery or major property damage; and
  - ➢ The youth is missing and in imminent danger.

- Copies of Reportable Circumstance Reports are sent to regional MCFD management.

- Each Safe House has policy and procedures guiding reportable incidents.

STANDARD D.9   Guests and Partners

Guests and partners are not permitted in the Safe House.

Rationale

Allowing guests and partners to visit could jeopardize security and places an additional demand on staff to manage these visits. Staff time is limited and most appropriately directed to direct client services, such as suitability assessment, orientation and Safety and Transition Plan (Safety and Transition Plan) development and implementation. The logistics of screening and managing visitors could become very demanding, if permitted. Additionally, the opportunity for youth to take advantage of a quiet respite and recovery, and to develop and implement their Safety and Transition Plan could be compromised.

Criteria

- The Safe House provides reasonable supports to allow youth to safely engage with friends and significant others "off-site".

- Youth are advised that while guests are not permitted at the Safe House, professionals that come to the Safe House are not "guests."

Supporting youth recovery includes promoting recreational and social activities with appropriate friends and significant others. While the Safe House cannot provide for these activities in the facility, it can support them occurring outside the Safe House. As with all Safe House practices, the security of the youth and other residents takes primary consideration.

STANDARD D.10 Animals and Pets

Each Safe House develops its own animal and pet policy and procedures that it can manage effectively and that do not jeopardize the health and safety of youth or staff.

Rationale

Facilitating pets can be complex, depending on the type of animal, its individual behaviour, and the capacity of the facility.

Hygiene and health issues can arise, such as disease and allergies specific to a certain type of animal, particularly when animals are introduced to the internal environment. As well, animals that are even slightly aggressive can introduce safety issues (e.g., biting or scratching). Therefore, the health and safety of youth and staff are paramount considerations in the development of any policy and procedures regarding the pets of youth.

On the other hand, facilitating access to safe housing to a high-risk youth with a pet can be removing one of the youth's greatest barriers to seeking the help. A well-behaved and well-cared-for pet, such as a dog or cat that can be kept in separate areas of the facility or outside, can actually deliver additional benefits in a social context through facilitating relatedness and personal healing.

Each safe house facility will be unique in its location, building and surrounding environment, and therefore its capacity to accommodate the various pets of youth. Thus, it is important that Safe Houses make individual decisions on policy on this matter to reflect their own unique capacity.

Criteria

- Safe House animal/pet policy and procedures do not jeopardize or throw into question the health and safety of youth or staff.

- In facilities governed by the Community Care Facilities Act (three or more beds), animal/pet policy or procedures that stipulate "on site" arrangements at the Safe House have been developed in consultation with the area Medical Health Officer.

Commentary

When arrangements are not viable on site, sometimes temporary arrangements can be developed with community partners, such as a local animal shelter.

Appendix A

INTERNET LINKS:

Child Family and Community Service Act: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/legislation.htm

Community Care Facilities Act and Regulations: http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/list_statreg_c.htm

Youth Policy Framework: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/youth/policy_framework.pdf

MCFD Privacy Charter: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/publications/privacy_charter/final_guide.htm

MCFD Integrated Case Management Guide: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/pubs/integ_manage.htm

MCFD Complaints Process: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/complaints/complaints_process_youth.htm