

TAKING ACTION *on* DOMESTIC VIOLENCE *in* BRITISH COLUMBIA

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MINISTRY *of* CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

In Response to the 2012 Representative for Children and Youth Report
HONOURING KAITLYNNE, MAX AND CORDON:
MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD NOW

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Ministry of
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INTRODUCTION

Taking Action on Domestic Violence in British Columbia is an action plan developed by the BC government in response to the findings and recommendations made in the Representative for Children and Youth's (RCY) report, *Honouring Kaitlynn, Max and Cordon: Make Their Voices Heard Now* (2012). On March 1, 2012, the RCY released this in-depth investigative report into the lives and deaths of these three children who were affected by exposure to domestic violence and their father's untreated mental illness.

This action plan sets the course towards a coordinated approach to addressing domestic violence across the child and family serving systems in BC. The action plan lays out the key deliverables, actions and timelines that respond to the recommendations in the RCY report and outlines the provincial government's plan in the coming months to improve and strengthen the response to domestic violence in BC with a clear focus on the safety of children, women, families and communities.

The ministries of Children and Family Development, Education, Health, Justice, Social Development and Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation actively participated in the development of this action plan. A committee of deputy ministers from these ministries provided oversight and direction. Input was sought and provided by the Community Coordination for Women's Safety (CCWS) provincial working group that includes senior personnel from government, police and community agencies who are dedicated to addressing domestic violence in BC. The CCWS Program, managed by the Ending Violence Association of B.C. and guided by the CCWS working group, provides assistance to BC communities to strengthen cross-sector coordination in addressing violence against women.

Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV)

On March 1, 2012, as an immediate response to the RCY report and recommendations, the provincial government announced that a new Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV) would be established. The PODV became operational on March 26, 2012 and is the permanent lead for government, responsible and accountable for a coordinated approach to improving and strengthening the services and supports for children, women and families affected by domestic violence.

The PODV is situated in the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and is accountable for making sure all provincial policies, programs and services regarding domestic violence are effective and delivered in a coordinated manner. It is also the responsibility of PODV to monitor, evaluate and report on the responsiveness and effectiveness of domestic violence services, programs, training and initiatives across government.

The PODV led the development of this action plan and will monitor, implement, evaluate and report on the implementation of this plan. Over the fall of 2012, the PODV will conduct a thorough review and analyze the full continuum of domestic violence policies, services and programs to identify the strengths and gaps in the system in order to improve and strengthen supports and services to children, women and families impacted by domestic violence. In collaboration with community partners, a comprehensive three-year plan to address domestic violence will be developed with implementation planned for 2013. This plan will be inclusive of specific approaches to support immigrant and refugee women and women with disabilities. Work will begin immediately to engage with First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal communities and organizations on developing an Aboriginal specific strategy. The Aboriginal strategy will complement and inform the broader three-year plan to address domestic violence with implementation planned for 2013.

Community engagement is critical to building the three-year plan and to sustaining a coordinated and systemic approach to domestic violence. It is important to understand and be responsive to the needs and concerns of service providers and recipients. The PODV will work closely with community stakeholders and build on the important work that continues to be done in this sector across BC.

The PODV will collaborate with professionals, service recipients and partners to organise a major community consultation in the fall that will inform the development of the three-year plan and a comprehensive community engagement strategy. In working closely with community partners, the PODV is committed to listening to the voices of those impacted by domestic violence and demonstrating inclusivity, collaboration, cooperation and respect.

The PODV will lead initiatives, projects, program development, public policy reports and other relevant publications to strengthen and sustain the response to addressing domestic violence in BC. The United Nations, *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC), the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA), the new *Family Law Act*, government's *Families First Agenda* and *New Relationship with Aboriginal people*, and other relevant policy and research will inform the work of the PODV.

BACKGROUND

Domestic violence, also referred to as family violence, spousal abuse, wife assault or intimate partner violence, is a serious global social issue that has a devastating impact on children, women, families and communities just as it did for Kaitlynn, Max, Cordon, and their family and community. The impact of domestic violence when there are children involved compounds the unacceptable and damaging effects. Domestic violence can tear families apart. Families impacted by domestic violence want the violence to stop so each member can feel safe and can live in their homes and communities without fear. Domestic violence is definitely not a private matter.

Violence in relationships can be broadly defined as, "A pattern of intentionally coercive and violent behaviour toward an individual with whom there is or has been an intimate relationship. These behaviours can be used to establish control of an individual and can include physical and sexual abuse; psychological abuse with verbal intimidation, progressive social isolation, or deprivation; and economic control" (El-Bayoumi, Borum & Haywood, 1998).

According to the 2012 Statistics Canada report *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2010*, in 2010, there were 16,259 police-reported victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) in BC. The rate of 427 victims per 100,000 people in British Columbia compares to a Canada-wide rate of 363 victims per 100,000. While BC's rate is lower than other Western Canadian provinces (including Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba), it is higher than Ontario, Quebec and most of Atlantic Canada. It is important to note that national data from the General Social Survey (GSS) indicates only 22% of IPV cases came to the attention of police in 2009.

Women

Violence against women is a particular concern in and of itself. The increased vulnerability of harm to women, including Aboriginal, refugee, immigrant, visible minority and women with disabilities is a major concern. In order to address the complexities of domestic violence effectively, efforts must focus on addressing the issue without further marginalizing the victims and adding to the barriers they already face across systems.

In BC, the provincial *Violence Against Women in Relationships* (VAWIR) policy was developed in 1993 and updated in 2010. This policy defines violence against women and sets out the protocols, roles and responsibilities of service providers across the child welfare, justice and other systems that respond to domestic violence. The policy emphasises cross agency collaboration as critical for ensuring comprehensive responses to domestic violence situations.

According to the VAWIR policy (2010), “violence against women in relationships” and alternative terms used when referring to “domestic violence” (including “spousal violence”, “spousal abuse”, “spouse assault”, “intimate partner violence” and “relationship violence”) is defined as, “physical or sexual assault, or the threat of physical or sexual assault against a current or former intimate partner whether or not they are legally married or living together at the time of the assault or threat. Domestic violence includes offences other than physical or sexual assault, such as criminal harassment, threatening, or mischief, where there is a reasonable basis to conclude that the act was done to cause, or did in fact cause, fear, trauma, suffering or loss to the intimate partner. Intimate partner relationships include heterosexual and same-sex relationships.”

The 2012 Statistics Canada report, *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2010*, found that women were more vulnerable than men to intimate partner violence, with a rate of intimate partner violence nearly four times higher than that for men in 2010 (574 per 100,000 versus 147 per 100,000). Women also continue to report more serious forms of spousal violence than men. In the 2009 *General Social Survey* (GSS) on *Victimization*, women who reported spousal violence were about three times more likely than males (34% versus 10%) to report that they had been sexually assaulted, beaten, choked or threatened with a gun or a knife by their partner or ex-partner in the previous five years.

Women continue to be more likely than men to be victims of spousal homicide. According to Statistics Canada, in 2009, the rate of spousal homicide against women was about three times higher than that for men. While males are more likely to be victims of homicide in general, domestic violence homicide victims are more likely to be female than male (BC Coroner’s Service, 2010).

According to the BC Coroner’s Service 2012 report, *Intimate Partner Violence in British Columbia, 2003–2011* there were a total of 147 IPV deaths in BC. There was significant gender disparity in IPV and non-IPV homicide victims in BC during the period 2003–2011. During this period, 72% of IPV homicide victims were female. Male assailants were responsible for 83.7% of all IPV deaths, including 100% of incidents resulting in more than one death.

Children

Domestic violence is harmful to children and adversely impacts their safety. The UNCRC recognizes a child's right to be protected from violence and that "governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and mistreatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them."

In BC, the CFCSA provides the legal authority for child protection services. The CFCSA clearly articulates that the safety and well-being of children are the paramount considerations in interpreting and administering the CFCSA and that children are entitled to be protected from abuse, neglect and harm or threat of harm.

It is estimated that every year in Canada nearly 800,000 children will witness a woman being abused (Jaffe, Poisson & Cunningham, 2001). Even when children are not direct targets of the violence in the home, they can be harmed by being exposed to domestic violence.

Exposure can include seeing, hearing or being aware of violence in the home by one parent against another. Children who live in circumstances of domestic violence can suffer physical and emotional harm, even death. They can also experience emotional, behavioural and developmental problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder.

In recent years there has been an increase in children witnessing domestic violence. In 2009, 52% of spousal victims with children reported that their children heard or saw assaults on them in the previous five years, up from 43% in 2004 (Statistics Canada, 2012). According to the 2008 *Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect* (CIS), 34% of substantiated child maltreatment cases involve exposure to domestic violence (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2010).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INITIATIVES

The BC government took renewed action to protect and support victims of domestic violence and ensure offender accountability when it launched its *Domestic Violence Action Plan* in 2010. The plan was government's response to the 2009 RCY report *Honouring Christian Lee – No Private Matter: Protecting Children Living with Domestic Violence* and the inquest into the 2007 deaths of six-year-old Christian Lee and his family members. Recommendations from the RCY report and the inquest pointed to the need for multi-agency collaboration, sharing of information across the systems, as well as the need for provincial resources. As part of the 2010 plan a number of initiatives were implemented including:

- ▶ convening the first domestic violence death review panel in the BC Coroner's Service to examine domestic violence cases
- ▶ enhancing linkages between the PRIME and JUSTIN information systems for better tracking of domestic violence files between the police and Crown counsel
- ▶ establishing a standard set of bail conditions to be requested for accused in order to better protect victims
- ▶ establishing the new Capital Regional District Domestic Violence Unit
- ▶ updating the provincial VAWIR policy, including developing a Highest Risk Protocol

- ▶ selecting B-SAFER as the standardized provincial risk-assessment tool for police to use in highest-risk domestic violence cases
- ▶ completing a domestic violence investigation policy guide to inform police agencies' operational policies
- ▶ updating and publishing the MCFD *Best Practices Approaches: Child Protection and Violence Against Women (2010)* policy
- ▶ launching the new domestic violence website (www.domesticviolencebc.ca) that brings together all of the province's information related to domestic violence

Although a considerable amount of work was undertaken, the BC government recognizes that more work, including monitoring and evaluating systems, is required to continue to strengthen and improve the system of supports and services for those impacted by domestic violence.

CURRENT JUSTICE INITIATIVES

Family Law Act

BC's new *Family Law Act* will be implemented on March 18, 2013. While the primary goal of the *Family Law Act* is to help families resolve their post-separation concerns, the new act also promotes a better response to family violence, particularly with respect to parenting after separation and providing protection orders.

This act will replace the current *Family Relations Act* and explicitly defines family violence. According to the *Family Law Act*, "Family Violence" includes:

- a. physical abuse of a family member, including forced confinement or deprivation of the necessities of life, but not including the use of reasonable force to protect oneself or others from harm,
- b. sexual abuse of a family member,
- c. attempts to physically or sexually abuse a family member,
- d. psychological or emotional abuse of a family member, including
 - i. intimidation, harassment, coercion or threats, including threats respecting other persons, pets or property,
 - ii. unreasonable restrictions on, or prevention of, a family member's financial or personal autonomy,
 - iii. stalking or following of the family member, and
 - iv. intentional damage to property, and
- e. in the case of a child, direct or indirect exposure to family violence.

The *Family Law Act* will increase the ability of the courts to deal with family violence by:

- ▶ defining family violence
- ▶ legislating risk factors considered in parenting cases involving violence
- ▶ making the safety of children a key goal of the best interests of the child test and making the best interests of the child the only consideration when decisions affecting the child are made. The new act provides an expanded list of factors to consider when determining what is in a child's best interest including family violence and any relevant prior civil or criminal proceedings as factors
- ▶ requiring family dispute resolution practitioners, such as lawyers and mediators, to screen for violence to ensure the processes used are appropriate
- ▶ creating a new type of order – a protection order – to replace the existing *Family Relations Act* restraining orders. Protection orders will limit contact and communication between family members where there is a safety risk. To enhance safety and promote timely, effective enforcement, the new protection orders will be enforced through the *Criminal Code* rather than through the civil justice system. Breaches of protection orders under the *Family Law Act* will be a criminal offence via s. 127 of the *Criminal Code*

To support the implementation of the *Family Law Act*, changes to the court rules are underway and will be implemented on March 18, 2013. These changes align the rules, court procedures and forms with the new legislation. In addition, resource materials to support the legal community and the public in preparing for the transition to the new legislation are being developed. These resources include:

1. a section-by-section explanation of the *Family Law Act*
2. a table of Concordance
3. questions and answers about the *Family Law Act*, including practical questions to help transition from the *Family Relations Act* to the *Family Law Act*
4. training is being developed by organizations such as Continuing Legal Education Society of BC (CLEBC) and the Justice Institute of BC (JIBC) for lawyers and other family practitioners
5. family justice counsellors are receiving training through JIBC
6. police will receive training on the new protection orders and how to enforce them

BC's Justice Reform Initiative

A well-functioning criminal justice system is essential to British Columbians. The Ministry of Justice launched a Justice Reform Initiative in February 2012 to propose practical mechanisms with a view to promoting improvements within BC's justice system. The BC Justice Reform Initiative report, *A Criminal Justice System for the 21st Century*, was released in August 2012.

Government is reviewing the report and its recommendations to determine what actions can be taken to create a timely, accessible, and fiscally responsible justice system. A white paper, delivered in two stages this fall, will outline a plan for justice reform. It will set out the key areas of reform aimed at making BC's justice system more open, timely and accessible. Initiatives such as specialized courts including domestic violence courts will be discussed in the white paper.

BUILDING A COMPREHENSIVE AND COORDINATED SYSTEMIC APPROACH

The complexities of domestic violence and the interconnectedness between prevention, intervention and support, point to the need to address domestic violence in a coordinated and collaborative manner.

Although there is valuable work being done across government to protect and support those impacted by domestic violence, the system of supports and services is fragmented. It is clear more work is needed to ensure there is coordination and, where appropriate, collaboration across these systems in order to better support and protect children, families, and victims of domestic violence. The system of supports and services must also address the needs of offenders.

In BC, the government has recognized that a plan that ensures a coordinated systemic approach to domestic violence is needed and has committed to developing and implementing a comprehensive three-year plan in 2013. A comprehensive and coordinated approach to addressing domestic violence requires extensive collaboration across many sectors including justice, child welfare, health, social development, education and the community. Policy and legislation must be coordinated and supported by implementation plans that include training, supervision, monitoring and evaluation.

Implementation must be well planned, well resourced, monitored and evaluated in order to successfully achieve the desired outcomes. It is crucial that front line workers across the systems have the necessary support, time and training to adapt to new policies, practices and approaches including case management systems.

A comprehensive and coordinated approach to domestic violence also requires a thorough cost-analysis so that there is clear understanding of what the needs, resources and gaps are. Public leadership and commitment by government to building a comprehensive and coordinated approach is critical. This leadership and commitment translates into better supports, services and outcomes for those impacted by domestic violence, when identified gaps are responded to with adequate resources and a long term vision to strengthen and sustain this important work.

The development of such an approach requires consultation with community partners, service providers and service recipients and a thoughtfully developed community engagement strategy. To address domestic violence in our society, it takes more than government, organizations, services and supports to generate and sustain real change. Families and individuals impacted by domestic violence often turn first to those closest to them — extended family, friends and neighbours — and so it is critical that discussions about addressing domestic violence include community partners, service providers, service recipients, families and individuals in a meaningful way.

Aboriginal Strategy

The increased risk and vulnerability of Aboriginal women and children to domestic violence is a serious concern. The PODV will work closely with the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR), First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal communities and organizations, to build a BC Aboriginal specific strategy that focuses on addressing domestic violence in relation to Aboriginal women, children and communities that will be ready for implementation in 2013.

The BC government and the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) co-hosted the *Collaboration to End Violence: National Aboriginal Women's Forum* in 2011. As an outcome of the Forum, the BC government established a Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women (MACAW) to provide advice to government on how to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal women across British Columbia. The province is committed to working with Aboriginal women and key informants to develop the necessary framework and support systems to address the risks and violence that many Aboriginal women are currently exposed to. The council will be a key advisor to how government engages with Aboriginal peoples and in developing the Aboriginal strategy.

ACTION PLAN

This action plan which responds to the 2012 Representative for Children and Youth's report, *Honouring Kaitlynne, Max and Cordon: Make Their Voices Heard Now*, is the first step towards developing a coordinated and systemic approach to addressing domestic violence in BC.

The eight recommendations in the RCY report are:

RECOMMENDATION 1:

That the Ministry of Health, in partnership with the Ministry of Children and Family Development, take immediate steps to ensure that all staff and professionals connected to their systems understand the risk factors relating to children of parents with a serious untreated mental illness, and promote the well-being of children by:

- a. putting in place procedures for the identification at intake in the health care system or child-serving system of the parental role of people with a mental illness, including expectant parents
- b. developing and implementing policies and procedures to support workers to identify and reduce risk factors for children affected by parental mental illness and domestic violence
- c. ensuring appropriate information regarding referral to services for families affected by parental mental illness without abdicating the focus on child safety
- d. developing and implementing policies for early detection of risk factors for families associated with mental illness (e.g., social isolation, frequent moves, emotional and financial instability, violent episodes).

RECOMMENDATION 2:

That the Government of British Columbia take the following actions to demonstrate a renewed and serious commitment to protect children who are exposed to or are living in circumstances of domestic violence. This means identifying and closing the gaps in policies and practices across government programs and services that touch the lives of children, including child welfare, adult mental health, criminal and family justice systems, police, victim services, education and income assistance.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

That the Ministry of Children and Family Development reconsider its previous unwillingness to implement a key recommendation in the *Honouring Christian Lee* (2009) report. That recommendation asked the ministry to “propose required changes to legislation, and develop policies, standards and training to provide social workers with clear direction in assessing the safety of children who are exposed to domestic violence.” Addressing that recommendation requires explicit provisions in child protection legislation and standards for responding when children are exposed to domestic violence.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

That the Ministry of Children and Family Development develop and implement a comprehensive plan to improve the capacity of social workers and child and youth mental health professionals to protect and support children who are living in circumstances of domestic violence.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

That the Ministry of Children and Family Development develop and implement a comprehensive training plan for supervisors on providing clinical supervision to child welfare workers.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

That the Ministry of Education develop and implement a plan to improve the capacity of school personnel to support and protect children who are living in circumstances of domestic violence.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

That the Ministry of Justice develop and implement a plan to improve legal processes related to domestic violence cases and successful prosecutions of such cases.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

That the Ministry of Social Development develop and implement a plan to improve the capacity of the income assistance program to contribute to the protection of children who are living in circumstances of domestic violence by improvements to its services to the families.

Key Themes

The actions outlined in this plan respond to the eight recommendations in the RCY report (See Appendix A for the RCY recommendations and specific responses to each recommendation). Instead of responding to each recommendation individually the actions in response to the recommendations have been grouped into four key themes:

1. Coordination and Collaboration
2. Legislation and Policy
3. Services, Supports and Processes
4. Awareness and Training

The 2012 RCY report *Honouring Kaitlynn, Max and Cordon: Make Their Voices Heard Now* makes two overarching systemic recommendations. The first is to increase the focus on family-oriented practice in the adult mental health system to ensure the care and protection of children and family members. It is recognized that having a parent experiencing serious, untreated mental illness, problematic substance use and/or domestic violence will likely have adverse effects on the development and mental health of children, and that a family friendly, culturally sensitive and responsive approach to providing services and supports can benefit the wellbeing of all family members, especially children who are often most vulnerable.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) and MCFD will work together to develop protocols, including screening tools, risk assessments, information sharing and referral processes for staff within both systems. This work will focus on addressing the risk factors relating to children of parents experiencing serious untreated mental illness, problematic substance use and/or domestic violence. The ministries will engage in discussions with the health authorities, MCFD Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAA), various committees representing doctors, hospitals, mental health and substance use services, public health, individuals and families with lived experience of mental illness, problematic substance use and/or domestic violence, and frontline staff. The discussions with MOH, MCFD and DAA staff, in addition to family and community members impacted by serious untreated mental illness, problematic substance use and/or domestic violence, will help determine effective family-orientated and family-sensitive approaches to identify, screen, refer and share information across the systems to address the needs, especially safety needs of children and women.

Health authorities and MCFD regions will identify initial locations throughout the province that are already engaging in best practices, or are prepared to implement new protocols and practices, with expansion across the province planned through 2013/2014. These prototype initiatives will be evaluated and reported on by MOH. By using research, and best practices, MOH and MCFD will develop a process for emergency room and primary care physicians to identify parents experiencing mental health, problematic substance use and/or domestic violence and screen for risk factors for their children. This will assist with making appropriate referrals to supports and services for both parents and children.

The second systemic recommendation is that the provincial government develop a strategy to improve supports and services to individuals and families impacted by domestic violence. The government acted immediately and established the PODV as the lead for government on domestic violence.

The specific actions being taken to address these systemic recommendations are outlined in the coordination and collaboration section below. The specific actions being taken in response to the other six recommendations in the RCY report have been grouped according to relevant themes.

1. COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

OBJECTIVE: To lead and build a coordinated systemic response across government to improve the supports and services to children, women and individuals impacted by domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Provincial Office of Domestic Violence

Complete

- ▶ Establish the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV) including staffing model and budget for new office
- ▶ Develop an action plan in response to the recommendations in the RCY 2012 report *Honouring Kaitlynnne, Max and Cordon: Make Their Voices Heard Now*
- ▶ Delegate PODV staff under the CFCSA to provide support and consultation to the Provincial Director of Child Welfare on case specific circumstances where domestic violence is a factor

Underway

- ▶ Develop and implement an engagement strategy in collaboration with community partners to identify key issues, specific actions, strategies, timelines and desired outcomes
- ▶ Host provincial consultation forums on addressing domestic violence
- ▶ Develop a three-year provincial plan to address domestic violence in collaboration with community partners
- ▶ Identify all domestic violence training programs for service providers across government to identify strengths, duplications and gaps, and develop additional training or revise training as necessary
- ▶ Identify and map all data systems across government and Crown corporations used to collect domestic violence related data including identifying current data collected
- ▶ Identify and map across government all legislation, policies, programs, services and committees regarding domestic violence at the provincial and community level to identify strengths and gaps

Short term: January – December 2013

Provincial Office of Domestic Violence

- ▶ Report on the implementation of the action plan in response to the 2012 RCY report *Honouring Kaitlynnne, Max and Cordon: Make Their Voices Heard Now*
- ▶ Develop learning materials to ensure the RCY report is used to promote learning across systems
- ▶ Implement, monitor and report on the progress of the three-year plan to address domestic violence
- ▶ Revise and/or develop core training materials for service providers on information sharing, protection orders and dynamics of domestic violence that can be shared across systems, in partnership with government and community anti-violence professionals and partners
- ▶ Develop a website for service providers to share information on policies, programs, services and training initiatives across sectors
- ▶ Develop an evaluation plan for domestic violence initiatives, programs, services and supports across systems in partnership with government and community anti-violence professionals and partners
- ▶ Partner and participate with academic and community experts on domestic violence research and publications
- ▶ Produce an annual report

OBJECTIVE: To develop an Aboriginal specific domestic violence strategy that informs and is interlinked with the three-year plan to address domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Provincial Office of Domestic Violence

- ▶ Work with MARR and consult with the MACAW on the development of an engagement strategy
- ▶ Engage with First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal leadership, communities and organizations on the development of an Aboriginal specific domestic violence strategy
- ▶ Engage with First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal leadership, communities and organizations on the development of a three-year provincial plan to address domestic violence to ensure it is informed by Aboriginal peoples

OBJECTIVE: To increase the focus on family-orientated and family-sensitive practice in the adult mental health system to ensure the care and protection of children and family members.

The actions outlined in response to this objective will be implemented in three phases:

- ▶ **Phase 1** – develop, pilot and evaluate protocols within two BC communities (one urban and one rural)
- ▶ **Phase 2** – pilot the protocols developed in Phase 1 in four (two urban and two rural) representative communities per health authority/MCFD region (a total of twenty participating communities)
- ▶ **Phase 3** – implement protocols across the province

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Consult with key leaders within Ministry of Health, health authorities, MCFD and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAA) regarding development of an engagement strategy in order to ensure their involvement and commitment to the implementation of the relevant key Actions
- ▶ Connect with those with lived experience of mental illness, problematic substance use and/or domestic violence to identify family-oriented and family-sensitive approaches
- ▶ Present to, consult with and where necessary, develop committees that have a mandate to support and influence practice through health authorities, MCFD and DAA's to determine effective family-oriented and family-sensitive approaches to identifying, screening, referrals and information sharing across the systems to address the safety needs of children in identified families
- ▶ Identify best practices for screening, referrals and family-oriented and family-sensitive approaches to address safety needs of children
- ▶ Integrate harm reduction and early intervention trauma-informed approaches into practices
- ▶ Identify roles and responsibilities of system partners
- ▶ Develop protocols, including policies, screening tools, risk assessments, information sharing and referral processes as required
- ▶ Identify prototype locations for project within two BC communities (1 urban and 1 rural) for phase 1, to pilot and evaluate protocols. This will include ER/hospital, primary care and relevant health authority and MCFD/DAA community level services, and relevant victim-serving agencies
- ▶ Implement multi-disciplinary training for local community, MCFD, DAA and hospital staff starting in the prototype sites

Short term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Implement Phase 1 prototype sites, which will involve all relevant stakeholders, using an integrated approach across sectors within local communities
- ▶ Develop an evaluation framework in collaboration with key partners and stakeholders and conduct evaluation of Phase 1 – to begin January 2013
- ▶ Use findings from evaluation to strengthen Phase 2 of prototype implementation
- ▶ Identify and implement additional prototype sites, including 2 rural and 2 urban sites in each of the health authority/MCFD regions (total of 20 sites) – by September 2013
- ▶ Implement Phase 2 across a total of 20 communities (2 urban and 2 rural communities per health authority/MCFD regions) to meet the needs of affected families within local communities – to begin October 2013

Long term: January 2014 onwards

Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Implement protocols (Phase 3) across the province

2. LEGISLATION AND POLICY

OBJECTIVE: To ensure effective legislation and coordinated policies across government in response to domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Consider amendments to the CFCSA to provide social workers with direction in assessing the safety of children exposed to domestic violence. Community anti-violence professionals and partners will be consulted
- ▶ Review and update Child Protection and Child and Youth Mental Health policies, standards and practice guidelines as necessary to reflect collaborative and supportive approaches
- ▶ Develop and implement clear case management standards and policies for front-line staff including a case transfer process when families move
- ▶ Develop a monitoring and case consultation mechanism in the Provincial Director of Child Welfare's office to provide support and direction to regional staff on high-risk cases involving domestic violence

Ministry of Justice

- ▶ Change the court rules to support the *Family Law Act*
- ▶ Develop resource materials to support the legal community and public in preparing for the transition to the *Family Law Act*
- ▶ Introduce an enhanced flagging system in the computer system (JUSTIN) to improve identification of files involving child victims for the purpose of proactive case management

Ministry of Social Development

- ▶ Develop and update policies regarding clients fleeing domestic violence and consolidate all domestic violence related policies so they are clear and available to both staff and clients

Short term: January -December 2013

Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Develop and implement clear standards and policies for clinical supervision of child protection staff
- ▶ Implement consequential amendments to the *CFCSA* making breaches of protection orders under the *CFCSA* a criminal offence via s. 127 of the *Criminal Code* effective March 18, 2013

Ministry of Justice

- ▶ Implement the *Family Law Act* on March 18, 2013
- ▶ Consult with stakeholders with respect to the regulations that will be required to support the *Family Law Act*
- ▶ Complete the regulations prior to the implementation of the *Family Law Act* with the intention of bringing the regulations into force at the same time

Ministry of Social Development

- ▶ Develop a communication plan and resource materials for field staff and key performance measures to monitor compliance with policies
- ▶ Develop a domestic violence flag on the computer system (ICM) to monitor new applications and existing clients where domestic violence is a factor and ensure that expedited applications for income assistance or supplements, policy exemptions and necessary supports are made available

3. SERVICES, SUPPORTS AND PROCESSES

OBJECTIVE: To ensure services, supports and processes are responsive to the needs of individuals, children, women and families affected by domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Justice

- ▶ Determine next steps regarding domestic violence courts upon review of the BC Justice Reform Initiative report

Short-term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Education

- ▶ Establish an index of community resources in schools to inform students about supports available regarding domestic violence and parental mental illness
- ▶ Ensure collaboration with community partners to support community based violence prevention programs in schools

Ministry of Justice

- ▶ Review the tele-bail process. (The review will inform a proposal with possible options for improvements to tele-bail for consideration that will be complete by May 31, 2013)
- ▶ Review status reports from the 30 communities who received grants to coordinate their local response to violence against women/domestic violence

Ministry of Social Development

- ▶ Enhance the client self-service application form that guides clients and employment assistance workers through the income assistance application process to allow a safe and easy way to disclose if fleeing domestic violence and for employment assistance workers to communicate to clients that options and supports are available in these situations
- ▶ Develop and implement a domestic violence case management role within existing field staff positions to oversee clients impacted by domestic violence, to make sure that domestic violence related policies are applied, be a point of contact for the client and to provide a coordination point to and from other services

4. AWARENESS AND TRAINING

OBJECTIVE: To promote a consistent and in-depth understanding across systems on the complex dynamics of domestic violence and best approaches to supporting women, children and families dealing with domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Children and Family Development

Complete

- ▶ Establish domestic violence leads in each of the MCFD service areas to provide consultation, training and coordination support to front line and management staff

Underway

- ▶ Develop training curriculum for MCFD social workers and supervisors, DAA social workers and supervisors on legislation, standards, policies and best practices regarding domestic violence
- ▶ Deliver child and youth mental health specific training in Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy will include consideration of the impact of domestic violence on children, youth and families

Ministry of Education

- ▶ Deliver training (October 2012-June 2013) on recognizing and responding to domestic violence to approximately 4,000 school personnel and community partners with a focus on school administrators, teachers and support staff (20% of the training spots will be dedicated to community partners who work with students)

Ministry of Justice

- ▶ Provide domestic violence training at the November 2012 Crown counsel conference
- ▶ Collaborate with organizations such as Justice Institute of British Columbia and the Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia to support the development of training on the *Family Law Act* for lawyers and other family practitioners including family justice counsellors
- ▶ Develop legal education materials for the public with the Public Legal Education Institute and the Legal Services Society on the *Family Law Act*
- ▶ Develop and present webinar training specific to the findings in the RCY report *Honouring Kaitlynn, Max and Cordon: Make Their Voices Heard Now* (2012) for Crown counsel
- ▶ Implement online training to 2,500 support workers in victim services, violence against women and transition house programs on domestic violence safety planning

Ministry of Social Development

- ▶ Identify training materials and resources for staff on the dynamics of domestic violence

Short-term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Deliver in-person training to MCFD child protection social workers and supervisors and DAA child protection social workers and supervisors on legislation, policies and best practices regarding domestic violence (approx. 1,930 staff)
- ▶ Deliver in-person training to MCFD non-protection staff and DAA non-protection staff and supervisors on legislation, policies and best practices regarding domestic violence (approx. 1,570 staff)
- ▶ Integrate the domestic violence training into the child protection new hire training

Ministry of Education

- ▶ Deliver training on recognizing and responding to domestic violence to remaining school personnel (approx. 13,000) to make sure all schools and districts have teams with the tools and techniques to recognize and respond to issues of domestic violence – beginning in October 2013 and continuing over the next four years

Ministry of Justice

- ▶ Develop and implement follow-up training for police officers on *Assessing Risk and Safety Planning in Domestic Violence Investigations*

Ministry of Social Development

- ▶ Coordinate and implement the delivery of domestic violence training to staff
- ▶ Evaluate training and develop plan for ongoing domestic violence training for new staff

OBJECTIVE: To enhance the capacity of MCFD and DAA supervisors to provide clinical supervision to child welfare workers to improve the capacity of front line staff to protect and support children and families impacted by domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Host regional supervisor forums to discuss the RCY report and recommendations in order to promote continuous learning and professional development

Short-term: January – December 2013

- ▶ Develop a pre-appointment training program and certification for MCFD and DAA supervisors
- ▶ Implement a pre-appointment training program and certification prototype in select MCFD and DAA offices
- ▶ Gather feedback from participants of the prototype and prepare final framework for pre-appointment training program and certification for MCFD and DAA supervisors
- ▶ Develop advanced clinical supervision training for MCFD and DAA child protection supervisors that includes a module specific to domestic violence
- ▶ Deliver training to MCFD and DAA supervisors (approx. 520 staff)

CONCLUSION

Taking action on domestic violence in British Columbia is a priority for government. The BC government has made a commitment to ensure that children and families are protected and feel safe at home and in their communities as part of the *Families First Agenda* for British Columbia. The government recognizes its responsibility to take a leadership role to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to domestic violence is in place across government systems.

This action plan is in response to the findings and recommendations made in the RCY report, *Honouring Kaitlynn, Max and Cordon: Make Their Voices Heard Now* (2012). This plan demonstrates the BC government's commitment to improving and strengthening systems of support for those affected by domestic violence in partnership with community anti-violence professionals and partners.

APPENDIX A: RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE RCY REPORT *Honouring Kaitlynn, Max and Cordon: Make Their Voices Heard Now*

RECOMMENDATION 1: That the Ministry of Health, in partnership with the Ministry of Children and Family Development, take immediate steps to ensure that all staff and professionals connected to their systems understand the risk factors relating to children of parents with a serious untreated mental illness, and promote the well-being of children by:

- a. Putting in place procedures for the identification at intake in the health care system or child-serving system of the parental role of people with a mental illness, including expectant parents
- b. Developing and implementing policies and procedures to support workers to identify and reduce risk factors for children affected by parental mental illness and domestic violence
- c. Ensuring appropriate information regarding referral to services for families affected by parental mental illness without abdicating the focus on child safety
- d. Developing and implementing policies for early detection of risk factors for families associated with mental illness (e.g. social isolation, frequent moves, emotional and financial instability, violent episodes)

DETAIL:

Improvements should include:

- ▶ policies and standards for identifying and managing cases where serious parental mental illness may jeopardize the safety and well-being of children, taking into account concurrent substance abuse
- ▶ provision for an active outreach and monitoring program across the province, and identifying and monitoring for factors which may increase the risk
- ▶ ensuring that children who have been traumatized are referred to and engaged with the child and youth mental health system
- ▶ provision for a consultation service for social workers and other professionals involved with the child so that they can better understand the dynamics in the home
- ▶ mechanisms to ensure effective links with child protection and child and youth mental health services at the local level
- ▶ ensuring this report will be used to promote practical learning in the adult mental health system across the province and among policy staff in the ministry

A plan should be finalized by Sept. 3, 2012, and a first progress report to the Representative on implementation of the plan should be made by Dec. 31, 2012.

Response To Recommendation #1

COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

OBJECTIVE: To increase the focus on family-orientated and family-sensitive practice in the adult mental health system to ensure the care and protection of children and family members.

The actions outlined in response to this objective will be implemented in three phases:

- ▶ **Phase 1** – develop, pilot and evaluate protocols within two BC communities (one urban and one rural)
- ▶ **Phase 2** – pilot the protocols developed in Phase 1 in four (two urban and two rural) representative communities per health authority/MCFD region (a total of 20 participating communities)
- ▶ **Phase 3** – implement protocols across the province

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Consult with key leaders within Ministry of Health, health authorities, MCFD and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAA) regarding development of an engagement strategy in order to ensure their involvement and commitment to the implementation of the relevant key actions
- ▶ Connect with those with lived experience of mental illness, problematic substance use and/or domestic violence to identify family-oriented and family-sensitive approaches
- ▶ Present to, consult with and where necessary, develop committees that have a mandate to support and influence practice through health authorities, MCFD and DAA's to determine effective family-oriented and family-sensitive approaches to identifying, screening, referrals and information sharing across the systems to address the safety needs of children in identified families
- ▶ Identify best practice for screening, referrals and family-oriented and family-sensitive approaches to address safety needs of children
- ▶ Integrate harm reduction and early intervention trauma-informed approaches into practices
- ▶ Identify roles and responsibilities of system partners
- ▶ Develop protocols, including policies, screening tools, risk assessments, information sharing and referral processes as required
- ▶ Identify prototype locations for project within two BC communities (1 urban and 1 rural) for phase 1, to pilot and evaluate protocols. This will include ER/hospital, primary care and relevant health authority and MCFD/DAA community level services, and relevant victim-serving agencies
- ▶ Implement multi-disciplinary training for local community, MCFD, DAA and hospital staff starting in the prototype sites

Short term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Implement phase 1 prototype sites, which will involve all relevant stakeholders, using an integrated approach across sectors within local communities
- ▶ Develop an evaluation framework in collaboration with key partners and stakeholders and conduct evaluation of phase 1 – to begin January 2013
- ▶ Use findings from evaluation to strengthen phase 2 of prototype implementation
- ▶ Identify and implement additional prototype sites, including 2 rural and 2 urban sites in each of the health authority/MCFD regions (total of 20 sites) – by September 2013
- ▶ Implement phase 2 across a total of 20 communities (2 urban and 2 rural communities per health authority/MCFD regions) to meet the needs of affected families within local communities – to begin October 2013

Long term: January 2014 onwards

Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Implement protocols (phase 3) across the province

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the Government of British Columbia take the following actions to demonstrate a renewed and serious commitment to protect children who are exposed to or are living in circumstances of domestic violence. This means identifying and closing the gaps in policies and practices across government programs and services that touch the lives of children, including child welfare, adult mental health, criminal and family justice systems, police, victim services, education and income assistance.

DETAIL:

A meaningful commitment requires that deficiencies not currently addressed by recent government actions or existing government committees be addressed:

- ▶ adequate additional funding
- ▶ appointment of a permanent lead or agency of government with sufficient authority across government to be accountable for delivering on a comprehensive approach
- ▶ continuous evaluation and regular public reporting of outcomes.
- ▶ The following key components must be improved in order to ensure better protection of children and support of families:
- ▶ standardized risk and safety assessment tools
- ▶ domestic violence policy and legislation, including transparency and sharing of domestic violence orders and accountability of offenders
- ▶ victim support and safety planning, including access to housing and practical supports for victims of domestic violence and their children
- ▶ information sharing, coordination and collaboration amongst all components of the system

*A comprehensive plan should be finalized by Sept. 3, 2012,
and all aspects of the plan should be implemented by April 2, 2013.*

Response To Recommendation #2

COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

OBJECTIVE: To lead and build a coordinated systemic response across government to improve the supports and services to children, women and individuals impacted by domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Provincial Office of Domestic Violence

Complete

- ▶ Establish the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV) including staffing model and budget for new office
- ▶ Develop an action plan in response to the RCY 2012 report *Honouring Kaitlynn, Max and Cordon: Make Their Voices Heard Now*
- ▶ Delegate PODV staff under the CFCSA to provide support and consultation to the Provincial Director of Child Welfare on case specific circumstances where domestic violence is a factor

Underway

- ▶ Develop and implement an engagement strategy in collaboration with community partners to identify key issues, specific actions, strategies, timelines and desired outcomes
- ▶ Host provincial consultation forums on approaches to addressing domestic violence
- ▶ Develop a three-year plan to address domestic violence plan in collaboration with community partners
- ▶ Identify all domestic violence training programs for service providers across government to identify strengths, duplications and gaps, and develop additional training or revise training as necessary
- ▶ Identify and map all data systems across government and Crown corporations used to collect domestic violence related data, including identifying current data collected
- ▶ Identify and map across government all legislation, policies, programs, services and committees regarding domestic violence at the provincial and community level to identify strengths and gaps

Short term: January – December 2013

Provincial Office of Domestic Violence

- ▶ Report on the implementation of the action plan in response to the 2012 RCY report *Honouring Kaitlynn, Max and Cordon: Make Their Voices Heard Now*
- ▶ Develop learning materials to ensure the RCY report is used to promote learning across systems
- ▶ Implement, monitor and report out on the progress of the three-year plan to address domestic violence
- ▶ Revise and/or develop core training materials for service providers on information sharing, protection orders and dynamics of domestic violence that can be shared across systems in partnership with government and community anti-violence professionals and partners
- ▶ Develop a website for service providers to share information on policies, programs services and training initiatives across sectors
- ▶ Develop an evaluation plan for domestic violence initiatives, programs, services and supports across systems in partnership with government and community anti-violence professionals and partners
- ▶ Partner and participate with academic and community experts on domestic violence research and publications
- ▶ Produce an annual report

OBJECTIVE: To develop an Aboriginal specific domestic violence strategy that informs and is interlinked with the three-year plan to address domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Provincial Office of Domestic Violence

- ▶ Work with MARR and consult with the Minister's Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women (MACAW) on development of an Aboriginal engagement strategy
- ▶ Engage with First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal leadership, communities and organizations on the development of an Aboriginal specific domestic violence strategy
- ▶ Engage with First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal leadership, communities and organizations on the development of a three-year provincial plan to address domestic violence to ensure it is informed by Aboriginal peoples

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the Ministry of Children and Family Development reconsider its previous unwillingness to implement a key recommendation in the *Honouring Christian Lee* (2009) report. That recommendation asked the ministry to “propose required changes to legislation, and develop policies, standards and training to provide social workers with clear direction in assessing the safety of children who are exposed to domestic violence.” Addressing that recommendation requires explicit provisions in child protection legislation and standards for responding when children are exposed to domestic violence.

Legislative changes should be made as soon as possible and no later than March 30, 2013

Response To Recommendation #3

LEGISLATION AND POLICY

OBJECTIVE: To ensure effective legislation and coordinated policies across government in response to domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Consider amendments to the *CFCSA* to provide social workers with direction in assessing the safety of children exposed to domestic violence. Community anti-violence professionals and partners will be consulted
- ▶ Review and update Child Protection and Child and Youth Mental Health policies, standards and practice guidelines as necessary to reflect collaborative and supportive approaches

Short term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Implement consequential amendments to the *CFCSA* making breaches of protection orders under the *CFCSA* a criminal offence via s. 127 of the Criminal Code effective March 18, 2013

RECOMMENDATION 4: That the Ministry of children and Family Development develop and implement a comprehensive plan to improve the capacity of social workers and child and youth mental health professionals to protect and support children who are living in circumstances of domestic violence

DETAIL:

Improvements should include:

- ▶ training of all front-line social workers and supervisors in the dynamics of domestic violence
- ▶ clear case management standards and policies, including case transfer processes when families move
- ▶ requirements to engage and involve fathers in planning
- ▶ development of a mechanism in the office of the Provincial Director of Child Welfare to monitor and identify high-risk cases and provide specialized consultation to designated directors, supervisors and staff in complex cases
- ▶ mechanisms to ensure effective links with the adult mental health system at the local level
- ▶ standards for child and youth mental health services
- ▶ accessible mental health services for children who have been traumatized by domestic violence
- ▶ ongoing monitoring of the well-being of those children
- ▶ ensuring this report will be used to promote practical learning across the child serving system and for policy staff in the ministry

The plan should be finalized by Sept. 3, 2012, and a first progress report to the Representative on implementation of the plan should be made by December 31, 2012.

Response To Recommendation #4

AWARENESS AND TRAINING

OBJECTIVE: To promote a consistent and in-depth understanding across systems on the complex dynamics of domestic violence and best approaches to supporting women, children and families dealing with domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Children and Family Development

Complete

- ▶ Establish domestic violence leads in each of the MCFD service areas to provide consultation, training and coordination support to front line and management staff

Underway

- ▶ Develop training curriculum for MCFD social workers and supervisors, DAA social workers and supervisors on legislation, standards, policies and best practices regarding domestic violence
- ▶ Develop and implement clear case management standards and policies for front-line staff including a case transfer process when families move
- ▶ Develop a monitoring and case consultation mechanism in the Provincial Director of Child Welfare's office to provide support and direction to regional staff on high-risk cases involving domestic violence
- ▶ Deliver child and youth mental health specific training in Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with modifications to include consideration of the impact of domestic violence on children, youth and families

Short term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Deliver in-person training to MCFD child protection social workers and supervisors and DAA child protection social workers and supervisors on legislation, policies and best practices regarding domestic violence (approx. 1,930 staff)
- ▶ Deliver in-person training to MCFD non-protection staff and DAA non-protection staff and supervisors on legislation, policies and best practices regarding domestic violence (approx. 1,570 staff)
- ▶ Integrate the domestic violence training into the child protection new hire training

RECOMMENDATION 5: That the Ministry of Children and Family Development develop and implement a comprehensive training plan for supervisors on providing clinical supervision to child welfare workers.

DETAIL:

The plan should include:

- ▶ pre-appointment training and certification for supervisors, with a strong emphasis on supporting and mentoring front-line staff on decision-making and caseload management
- ▶ clearly identified supervisory competencies
- ▶ performance appraisal linked to ongoing assessment of competencies
- ▶ clear standards and policies for clinical supervision of child protection social workers
- ▶ a strategy specific to providing supervision and management of complex, high-risk cases

A plan should be finalized by Sept. 3, 2012, and a first progress report to the Representative on implementation of the plan should be made by Dec. 31, 2012.

Response To Recommendation #5

AWARENESS AND TRAINING

OBJECTIVE: To enhance the capacity of MCFD and DAA supervisors to provide clinical supervision to child welfare workers to improve the capacity of front line staff to protect and support children and families impacted by domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Host regional supervisor forums to discuss the RCY report and recommendations in order to promote continuous learning and professional development

Short term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Children and Family Development

- ▶ Develop a pre-appointment training program and certification for MCFD and DAA supervisors
- ▶ Implement a pre-appointment training program and certification prototype in select MCFD and DAA offices
- ▶ Gather feedback from participants of prototype and prepare final framework for pre-appointment training program and certification for MCFD and DAA supervisors
- ▶ Develop and implement clear standards and policies for clinical supervision of child protection staff
- ▶ Develop advanced clinical supervision training for MCFD and DAA child protection supervisors that includes a module specific to domestic violence
- ▶ Deliver training to MCFD and DAA supervisors (approx. 520 staff)

RECOMMENDATION 6: That the Ministry of Education develop and implement a plan to improve the capacity of school personnel to support and protect children who are living in circumstances of domestic violence.

DETAIL:

Improvements should include:

- ▶ domestic violence training for school personnel
- ▶ reliable mechanisms to ensure that schools have copies of bail orders, protective orders or supervision orders, and to ensure notification of the school when those orders are changed or lifted
- ▶ training of school personnel as to the appropriate steps to be taken should they be concerned that orders are being breached or child safety is in jeopardy
- ▶ age-appropriate education of students about domestic violence and parental mental illness, and about supports and services available to them
- ▶ ensuring this report will be used to promote practical learning across the education system and for policy staff in the ministry

The plan should be finalized by Sept. 3, 2012, and a first progress report to the Representative on implementation of the plan should be made by Dec. 31, 2012.

Response To Recommendation #6

SERVICES, SUPPORTS AND PROCESSES

OBJECTIVE: To ensure services, supports and processes are responsive to the needs of individuals, children, women and families affected by domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Short-term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Education

- ▶ Establish an index of community resources in schools to inform students about supports available regarding domestic violence and parental mental illness
- ▶ Ensure collaboration with community partners to support community based violence prevention programs in schools

AWARENESS AND TRAINING

OBJECTIVE: To promote a consistent and in-depth understanding across systems on the complex dynamics of domestic violence and best approaches to supporting women, children and families dealing with domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Education

- ▶ Deliver training (October 2012-June 2013) on recognizing and responding to domestic violence to approximately 4,000 school personnel and community partners with a focus on school administrators, teachers and support staff (20% of the training spots will be dedicated to community partners who work with students)

Short term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Education

- ▶ Deliver training on recognizing and responding to domestic violence to remaining school personnel (approx. 13,000) to make sure all schools and districts have teams with the tools and techniques to recognize and respond to issues of domestic violence – beginning in October 2013 and continuing over the next four years

RECOMMENDATION 7: That the Ministry of Justice develop and implement a plan to improve legal processes related to domestic violence cases and successful prosecutions of such cases.

DETAIL:

Improvements should include:

- ▶ establishment of specialized domestic violence courts
- ▶ full implementation of the *Family Law Act* as soon as possible
- ▶ priority for matters involving family violence, including timely investigation, prosecution, sentencing and holding offenders to account for breaches of orders
- ▶ effective monitoring and timely enforcement of orders relating to domestic violence by police, bail supervisors and other officials
- ▶ a training program on the effective use and monitoring of various types of protection orders for social workers, school personnel, victim services workers and others who work with children who live in circumstances of domestic violence
- ▶ ensuring this report will be used to promote practical learning across the justice system, including police, prosecutors and the legal profession, the judiciary and probation staff, and policy staff in the ministry

The plan should be finalized by Sept. 3, 2012, and a first progress report to the Representative on implementation of the plan should be made by Dec. 31, 2012.

Response To Recommendation #7

LEGISLATION AND POLICY

OBJECTIVE: To ensure effective legislation and coordinated policies across government in response to domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Justice

- ▶ Change the court rules to support the *Family Law Act*
- ▶ Develop resource materials to support the legal community and public in preparing for the transition to the *Family Law Act*
- ▶ Introduce an enhanced flagging system in the computer system (JUSTIN) to improve identification of files involving child victims for the purpose of proactive case management

Short term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Justice

- ▶ Implement the *Family Law Act* on March 18, 2013
- ▶ Consult with stakeholders with respect to the regulations that will be required to support the *Family Law Act*
- ▶ Complete the regulations prior to the implementation of the *Family Law Act* with the intention of bringing the regulations into force at the same time

SERVICES, SUPPORTS AND PROCESSES

OBJECTIVE: To ensure services, supports and processes are responsive to the needs of individuals, children, women and families affected by domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Justice

- ▶ Determine next steps regarding domestic violence courts upon review of the BC Justice Reform Initiative report

Short term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Justice

- ▶ Review the tele-bail process. (the review will inform a proposal with possible options for improvements to tele-bail for consideration that will be complete by May 31, 2013)
- ▶ Review status reports from the 30 communities who received grants to coordinate their local response to violence against women/domestic violence

AWARENESS AND TRAINING

OBJECTIVE: To promote a consistent and in-depth understanding across systems on the complex dynamics of domestic violence and best approaches to supporting women, children and families dealing with domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Justice

- ▶ Provide domestic violence training at the November 2012 Crown Counsel Conference
- ▶ Collaborate with organizations such as the Justice Institute of British Columbia and the Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia to support the development of training on the *Family Law Act* for lawyers and other family practitioners including family justice counsellors
- ▶ Develop legal education materials for the public with the Public Legal Education Institute and the Legal Services Society on the *Family Law Act*
- ▶ Develop and present webinar training specific to the findings in the RCY report *Honouring Kaitlynn, Max and Cordon: Make Their Voices Heard Now* (2012) for Crown counsel
- ▶ Implement online training to 2,500 support workers in victim services, violence against women and transition house programs on domestic violence safety planning

Short term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Justice

- ▶ Develop and implement follow-up training for police officers on *Assessing Risk and Safety Planning in Domestic Violence Investigations*

RECOMMENDATION 8: That the Ministry of Social Development develop and implement a plan to improve the capacity of the income assistance program to contribute to the protection of children who are living in circumstances of domestic violence by improvements to its services to the families

DETAIL:

Improvements should include:

- ▶ improving compliance with policies related to cases where domestic violence is a factor
- ▶ a mechanism for flagging and monitoring of cases where domestic violence is a factor
- ▶ appointment of a single specialized case manager for clients fleeing domestic violence, where vulnerable children may be at risk
- ▶ training on domestic violence and policies regarding services to victims of domestic violence
- ▶ ensuring this report will be used to promote practical learning for income assistance and policy staff

The plan should be finalized by Sept. 3, 2012, and a first progress report to the Representative on implementation of the plan should be made by Dec. 31, 2012.

Response To Recommendation #8

LEGISLATION AND POLICY

OBJECTIVE: To ensure effective legislation and coordinated policies across government in response to domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Social Development

- ▶ Develop and update policies regarding clients fleeing domestic violence and consolidate all domestic violence related policies so they are clear and available to both staff and clients

Short term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Social Development

- ▶ Develop a communication plan and resource materials for field staff and key performance measures to monitor compliance with policies
- ▶ Develop a domestic violence flag on the computer system (ICM) to monitor new applications and existing clients where domestic violence is a factor and ensure that expedited applications for income assistance or supplements, policy exemptions and necessary supports are made available

SERVICES, SUPPORTS AND PROCESSES

OBJECTIVE: To ensure services, supports and processes are responsive to the needs of individuals, children, women and families affected by domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Short-term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Social Development

- ▶ Enhance the client self-service application form that guides clients and employment assistance workers through the income assistance application process to allow a safe and easy way to disclose if fleeing domestic violence and for staff to communicate to clients that options and supports are available in these situations
- ▶ Develop and implement a domestic violence case management role within existing field staff positions to oversee clients impacted by domestic violence, to make sure that domestic violence related policies are applied, be a point of contact for the client and provide a coordination point to and from other services

AWARENESS AND TRAINING

OBJECTIVE: To promote a consistent and in-depth understanding across systems on the complex dynamics of domestic violence and best approaches to supporting women, children and families dealing with domestic violence.

ACTIONS

Immediate: June – December 2012

Ministry of Social Development

- ▶ Identify training materials and resources for staff on the dynamics of domestic violence

Short term: January – December 2013

Ministry of Social Development

- ▶ Coordinate/Implement the delivery of domestic violence training to staff
- ▶ Evaluate training and develop plan for ongoing domestic violence training for new staff

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