

October 15, 2010

Government strengthening child intervention system

Edmonton... The Government of Alberta has accepted 10 recommendations made by a panel of specialists from across the country asked to examine Alberta's child intervention system and to bring forward leading practices and ways the system can be strengthened to support at-risk children, youth and families.

"This report confirmed that stakeholders believe the vision for child intervention services in Alberta is the right one," said Yvonne Fritz, Minister of Children and Youth Services. "With Aboriginal children making up 64 per cent of the children in care, we must take immediate steps to strengthen services for our Aboriginal children, youth and their families as we implement improvements to the system overall."

Based on the review findings, improvements to the child intervention system will include:

- Creating a senior Aboriginal leadership position at the Assistant Deputy Minister level to bring an Aboriginal perspective to child intervention policy and practice;
- Increasing input from the Aboriginal community in the development and delivery of culturally appropriate services, and building the capacity of Aboriginal-led service providers;
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities for Aboriginal service delivery between provincial, federal, and First Nations partners;
- Establishing a Child and Family Service Quality Council to provide external oversight of the child intervention system and publicly report on findings related to systemic matters;
- Ensuring more consistent evaluation of service quality across the province;
- Continuing implementation of an outcomes-based performance management system;
- Improving coordination between government ministries and service providers; and
- Better supporting staff in implementing system improvements.

Government evaluated the panel's recommendations based on the potential for improved outcomes for children and youth, effective allocation of resources, and the ability to enhance accountability and transparency. Work has begun to implement the accepted recommendations.

"As we move forward, changes will be made using a thoughtful, planned and measured approach," said Fritz. "We will continue to engage our stakeholders and Aboriginal community to ensure we are taking the right steps, at the right time, to provide better outcomes for our vulnerable children and youth, and their families."

In August, an additional investment of \$72 million was allocated for Children and Youth Services. This included \$40 million for child intervention services. The implementation of the

panel's recommendations, coupled with this additional investment, will be the foundation for moving forward with improved supports for at risk children, youth and families.

"Thank you to the Co-Chairs and the members of the panel for their diligence and hard work," said Fritz. "Their experience, skills and perspectives were of great benefit to the examination of Alberta's child intervention system."

The complete report and recommendations, and the government's response, are available at www.child.alberta.ca/cisreview

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Backgrounder: Review process and recommendations

Media inquiries may be directed to:

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To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

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Review process and recommendations

A review of the child intervention system by a panel of specialists was called in 2009 to determine whether the supports provided to at-risk children and families by Children and Youth Services are keeping pace with leading practice and the impacts of population growth, demographic shifts and societal changes.

The child intervention system review panel was asked to make recommendations that focus on the following key questions:

- Are the necessary checks, balances and processes in place to ensure accountability and transparency in the child intervention system?
- Does the system have the capacity to effectively respond to emerging societal trends, service demands, and evolving workforce and practice issues?
- Is the system organized and aligned with leading practices and evidence-based research?

Over the course of a year, the panel met with hundreds of key individuals and groups, invited a range of stakeholders and experts to make presentations to a symposium held in March 2010, and reviewed 1,800 responses from Albertans to an online survey.

The panel's 14 recommendations are set out in four themes: services for Aboriginal Albertans, quality assurance, capacity to implement change, and governance.

Children and Youth Services used the following criteria when considering the panel's recommendations:

- Will implementation result in improved service delivery and make a meaningful difference to children and youth?
- Will implementation result in planned and incremental improvements that support staff to remain focused on the top priority of achieving safety and well-being for children and youth?
- Will implementation result in the effective allocation of resources that will directly impact outcomes for children and youth?
- Will implementation strengthen community and stakeholder confidence in the system?

Four panel recommendations were not accepted because they focused primarily on major structural and organizational change that would require significant resources to implement, and were not aligned with findings from other government-commissioned reviews. The ten accepted recommendations provided the most demonstrable improvements to service delivery and outcomes for children and youth.

Recommendations:

Area of Focus	Recommendation	Government Response
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Services for Aboriginal Albertans	1. Establish a senior executive position at the Assistant Deputy Minister level tasked with enhancing the capacity and cultural competency of the child intervention system to serve Aboriginal children and families.	Accept
	2. Establish an ongoing, formal, tripartite process to collaboratively address inequity for First Nations people in the child intervention system.	Accept
	3. Enhance capacity for Aboriginal-led agencies to provide services for Aboriginal people in off-reserve communities. As capacity is built over time, enable Aboriginal-led agencies to provide a greater range of child intervention services to Aboriginal children and families off-reserve.	Accept
	4. Establish an off-reserve Aboriginal service delivery stream to provide child protection, investigations and case management for Aboriginal children and families.	Not accepted
Quality assurance	5. All child intervention services delivered to children and families by government or on behalf of government should be accredited.	Accept
	6. Continue to develop and implement a clear, efficient process for escalating and tracking serious incidents within the Ministry, DFNAs, and contracted agencies.	Accept
	7. Clarify the role of the Child and Youth Advocate to focus on individual advocacy and not system-level advice.	Not accepted
	8. Establish a provincial Child and Family Service Quality Council with a mandate to systematically assess service quality and report findings publicly.	Accept
Capacity to implement change	9. Develop and resource a change strategy that aligns and guides implementation of the various child intervention improvement initiatives.	Accept
	10. Develop and implement a human resource strategy that addresses capacity, qualification and competencies at all levels of the system.	Accept

	11. Continue the shift towards an outcomes-based performance management system.	Accept
	12. Seek a mandate to establish a shared approach and infrastructure to better support vulnerable children and families in Alberta.	Accept
Governance	13. Establish a clear line of accountability for local child intervention service under Regional Directors who report to the Provincial Director.	Not accepted
	14. Transition CFSA Boards to become Child and Family Services Advisory Councils focused on providing input to the Ministry on behalf of communities.	Not accepted

The panel included specialists in the fields of child intervention, health, mental health, justice and services for Aboriginal people. It was co-chaired by Dr. Nico Trocmé, Philip Fisher Chair in Social Work at McGill University and Scientific Director of the Canadian Centre of Excellence in Child Welfare; and Peter Dudding, Executive Director of the Child Welfare League of Canada.

Names of all panel members and their biographies, the complete report and recommendations, and the government's response, are available at www.child.alberta.ca/cisreview

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