

FIRST NATIONS DIRECTOR CASE PRACTICE AUDIT REPORT
Gitxsan Child and Family Services Society (IQG)

Fieldwork completed August 13, 2009
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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the audit is to improve and support child service, guardianship and family service. Through a review of a sample of cases, the audit is expected to provide a baseline measure of the current level of practice, confirm good practice, and identify areas where practice requires strengthening. This is the second audit for the agency. The first audit of the agency was conducted in August 2006.

The specific purposes of the audit are:

- to confirm good practice and further the development of practice;
- to assess and evaluate practice in relation to existing legislation and the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI);
- to determine the current level of practice across a sample of cases;
- to identify barriers to providing an adequate level of service;
- to assist in identifying training needs;
- to provide information for use in updating and/or amending practice standards or policy.

Aboriginal Policy and Service Support is conducting the audit using the Aboriginal Case Practice Audit Tool. Audits of delegated agencies providing child protection, guardianship, family services and resources for children in care will be conducted according to a three-year cycle.

2. METHODOLOGY

This was a Common Audit which involved a practice audit, operational review and a financial review of the agency. There were two practice auditors from MCFD Aboriginal Policy and Service Support who conducted the practice audit and operational review and a Business Advisor from Internal Audit and Advisory Services, Office of the Comptroller General, Ministry of Finance who conducted the financial review.

The practice auditors conducted field work from August 10, 2009 to August 13, 2009. The computerized Aboriginal Case Practice Audit Tool (ACPAT) was used to collect the data and generate office summary compliance reports and a compliance report for each file audited. There were a total of 26 open resource files, 16 open family service file and 9 open child service files at the time of the audit. A sample size of 10 resource files, 5 family service files, 4 child service

files was audited or approximately 40% of the open files. These files were randomly selected to ensure that a cross representation of files from each team member was reviewed.

Upon arrival at the agency, the auditors and the business advisor met with the Executive Director, acting team leader and staff to review the audit purpose and process. At the completion of the audit, the auditors and the business advisor met with the Executive Director, acting team leader and staff to discuss the preliminary findings of the audit. At this meeting, the next steps of the audit process were discussed including the report and the recommendations process.

3. AGENCY OVERVIEW

a) Delegation

Gitxsan Child and Family Services Society was formed in 1999 and received C3 Voluntary Services delegation in 2002. In 2004, the agency moved to C4 Guardianship delegation. In the August 2006 audit, although delegated to do C4 work, the agency had not yet begun to do this work thus the agency was audited at the C3 level. This audit was conducted based on the C4 Guardianship work of the agency. This level of delegation enables the delegated agency to provide the following services:

- Temporary custody of children;
- Permanent guardianship of children in continuing custody;
- Support services to families;
- Voluntary Care Agreements;
- Special Needs Agreements;
- Establishing Residential Resources

Gitxsan Child and Family Services Society signed their initial agreement in 1999. A Delegation Confirmation Agreement has been extended to March 2010.

b) Demographics

Gitxsan Child and Family Services Society is located on Gitxsan land in Hazelton. Hazelton is often referred to as “Old Hazelton.” The agency provides services to 6 communities. These communities are Gitanmaax, Gitanyow, Gitsegukla, Gitwangak, Glen Vowell, and Kispiox. These communities are located in relative close proximity to the agency and all are accessible by road. Travelling times to these communities varies from 15 minutes to 1 hour. All of these communities are part of the Gitxsan Nation. There are approximately 2753 registered on reserve band members for these 6 communities (*source: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Aboriginal Peoples and Communities, Registered Population July 2009*).

The agency is able to utilize the services of Child and Youth Mental Health, which is provided through the MCFD Smithers office. MCFD staff travel to Hazelton to provide this service. Alcohol and drug services are available in each community. Public health and some mental health services are also provided in the communities. Mental health services are also available in Smithers and Terrace. Agency staff also work in conjunction with the social development workers from each of communities. All of the communities, except for Glen Vowell, have schools located in their communities. These schools provide education up to grade 7. For grades 8 –12, the children are bused to Hazelton. The RCMP for the area is located in New Hazelton. Other services in the area include medical and dental services, a hospital, and a fire department. Specialized medical services are available in Smithers and Terrace.

c) Professional Staff Complement

At the time of the audit the agency's delegated staff consisted of two social workers, the Executive Director and the A/Team Leader who also carried a caseload. Additional staff at the agency consisted of the Board Liaison/Operations Manager, Family Group Conference Coordinator, Social Worker assistant, Roots Coordinator/Social Worker, finance assistant, office administrator and a receptionist. The agency continues to contract with a finance administrator who provides part - time financial services. There is also a Family Facilitator Coordinator and six Family Facilitators who are located in another office in New Hazelton. Each of the Family Facilitators works with one assigned community and they provide community prevention programs to children and families in the communities. The agency is reviewing the focus of this program and the Family Facilitators may once again be providing some 1:1 family support work. The Executive Director indicated that, in the future, the agency may send the Family Facilitators to Family Support Worker training if it is offered by the Caring for First Nations Children Society.

The agency has experienced significant staff turnover in the past three years. All of the social workers hold C4 guardianship delegation.

d) Supervision and Consultation

The Executive Director of Gitksan Child and Family Services Society has C4 delegation and directly supervises the acting Team Leader, Board Liaison/Operations Manager, Family Facilitator Coordinator, Roots Worker, finance contractor and the janitor. In addition, the Executive Director provides backfill for the team leader position for holidays as well is available for regular case consultation with the acting team leader.

The acting Team Leader supervises the delegated social workers, Social Worker Team Assistant and the Family Group Conference Coordinator. The Executive

Director and the acting team leader maintain an open door policy and staff reported that they are able to access individual case supervision easily. The staff reported that they used to have bi-weekly team meetings in which all the staff attended and general program updates were provided. This was an opportunity to share information across programs and most staff found the meetings to be very useful. These meetings may be implemented again.

4. STRENGTHS OF THE AGENCY

One of the significant strengths of the agency is that the staff follow the Gitksan culture, the clan system and work with the various Wilp (House groups). This is evident when speaking to the staff as well as in the documentation on the files.

Another strength is the Family Facilitator program and the prevention programs that are provided in the communities. This program has changed focus in the last few years from one to one family support work to a more broad based delivery of community prevention and support programs. Given the range of skills of the staff that are delivering the programs and the positive response from the communities, this program is very beneficial to the agency.

The auditor identified several strengths of the agency and of the agency's practice over the course of the audit:

- Location of agency – the agency is located in Gitksan territory in the community of Gitanmaax on the Skeena River and this further supports the cultural focus of the agency's work.
- Board of Directors – the Directors of the Board have been the same since the inception of the agency and are supportive of the program and want the Gitksan culture to be part of the program.
- Staff Commitment – most of the staff are from the Gitksan communities and are very committed to the work they are doing and the future growth of the agency. Many of the staff are willing to help in areas that are outside of their own responsibilities.
- Organization of physical files – the physical files were in good order with the documents being grouped into sections, in chronological order. Also, filing was up to date.
- Referrals for service – The auditors found that the agency social workers were determined to find the appropriate services for the children and families they served. Of the files audited, the children and families had been referred for support through Community Living British Columbia, Autism funding through MCFD as well as local behavioural intervention programs.

5. CHALLENGES FACING THE AGENCY

One of the most significant challenges of the agency has been the staff turnover and the instability this has created amongst the current staff of the agency. The social workers have experienced the impact of staff shortages over the last few years. In addition, recruitment of staff has been difficult due to the remoteness of the agency and the province wide competition for qualified, experienced social workers.

The auditor identified several challenges to the agency and of the agency's practice over the course of the audit:

- Finance contractor – the current contractor provides part-time financial services to the agency. This is proving to be an inadequate arrangement as financial reports and billings are not being completed within the required time frames. The agency is planning to review this contract within the overall plan for the future development of the agency.
- Lack of Foster Parent training – the agency currently does not provide any new or ongoing caregiver training for its foster parents.
- File room – The file room is accessible to most of the agency staff, including non-delegated staff, due to the co-location of the MCFD printer and computer network server with the agency library. The files are not secured in fireproof, locked cabinets but are filed on open shelves within the file room. In addition, there is no smoke detector or fireproof door.
- Staff training – some staff felt there was not enough training being offered to them.

6. DISCUSSION OF THE FOUR PROGRAMS AUDITED

The audit reflects the work done by the staff in the agency's delegated programs over the past three years.

a) Resource files

As previously stated, 10 out of 26 open resource files were audited. This program area showed significant improvement from the previous audit when there was only one resource file open and little statistical information could be gathered. Many positive aspects were found in the resource files including: documenting supervisory approval, complete application and orientation, home studies and signed agreements with caregivers.

Documentation missing from the resource files included: training of caregivers and on all applicable files, no annual reviews were found.

b) Family Service Files

As previously stated, 5 of 16 open family service files were audited. Many positive aspects were found in the family service files including: documenting or

accepting appropriate requests for service within the agency's delegation, obtaining information and making appropriate requests for service, involving the aboriginal community, using and completing a special needs agreement appropriately, transferring the family service file and knowledge of the various services and protocols within the community.

Documentation missing from the family service files included: documentation of supervisory approval, documenting the family service plan, overall case documentation and on all applicable files, no support service agreements were found.

c) Child Service files

As already stated, 4 out of 9 open child service files were audited. The audit revealed considerable improvement in the overall compliance to many of the guardianship standards. A number of positive aspects found included: documented efforts to preserve the Aboriginal identity and providing culturally appropriate services, monitoring and reviewing the child's comprehensive plan of care, documenting supervisory approval for guardianship services, discussing the rights of children in care with the child and caregiver, involving family and community when deciding where to place a child, meeting the child's needs for stability by ensuring there is continuity in their relationships, planning a move for a child in care, preparation for independence and documentation of the social worker's knowledge of the existing interagency protocols in the communities.

Documentation missing from the files included: providing the caregiver with information on the child and reviewing appropriate discipline standards.

7. COMPLIANCE TO PROGRAMS AUDITED

Two auditors audited the resource, family service and child service files at Gitxsan Child & Family Services Society. The 'not applicable' scores were not included in the total.

a) Compliance to Resource File Practice

Ten (10) of the twenty-six open resource files were audited. Overall compliance to the resource standards was **61%**. The files were audited for compliance to the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators, C4 Guardianship resources including:

- Application and orientation of caregiver;
- Home study of caregiver;
- Training of caregiver;
- Signed Agreements with caregiver;

- Providing caregiver with written information regarding child; and,
- Monitoring and reviewing homes.

The following provides a breakdown of the compliance ratings:

1. **Standard 28: Supervisory Approval Required for Family Care Home Services (AOPSI Standard 28 Voluntary Services)** – 9 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant.
2. **Standard 29: Family Care Homes – Application and Orientation (AOPSI Standard 29 Voluntary Services)** – 8 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant; 1 file not applicable.
3. **Standard 30: Home Study (AOPSI Standard 30 Voluntary Services)** – 8 files compliant; 1 file not applicable; 1 file not applicable.
4. **Standard 31: Training of Caregivers (AOPSI Standard 31 Voluntary Services)** – 1 file compliant; 9 files non-compliant.
5. **Standard 32: Signed Agreement with Caregivers (AOPSI Standard 32 Voluntary Services)** – 7 files compliant; 3 files non-compliant.
6. **Standard 33: Monitoring and Reviewing the Family Care Home (AOPSI Standard 33 Voluntary Services)** – 6 files (100%) non-compliant; 4 files not applicable.
7. **Standard 34: Investigation of Alleged Abuse or Neglect in a Family Care Home (AOPSI Standard 34 Voluntary Services)** – 10 files not applicable.
8. **Standard 35: Quality of Care Review (AOPSI Standard 35 Voluntary Services)** – 10 files not applicable.
9. **Standard 36: Closure of the Family Care Home (AOPSI Standard 36 Voluntary Services)** – 10 files not applicable.

b) Compliance to Child Service Practice

Four (4) of the nine open child service files were audited. The overall compliance was **83%**. The files were audited for compliance to the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators, C4 Guardianship child service including:

- The quality and adequacy of the plan of care;
- The frequency and adequacy of the care plan review;
- The level of contact with the child;
- Placement stability and deciding when and where to move a child;
- The degree of stability and continuity provided to the child while in care;

- Informing the child and caregiver of the rights of children in care;
- Informing the child and caregiver of appropriate discipline policy; and,
- The level of file documentation.

The following provides a breakdown of the compliance ratings:

1. **Standard 1: Preserving the Identity of the Child in Care and Providing Culturally Appropriate Services (AOPSI Standard 11 Voluntary Services)** – 4 files (100%) compliant.
2. **Standard 2: Development of a Comprehensive Plan of Care (AOPSI Standard 12 Voluntary Services)** – no files applicable.
3. **Standard 3: Monitoring and Reviewing the Child’s Comprehensive Plan of Care (AOPSI Standard 13 Voluntary Services)** - 3 files (100%) compliant; 1 file not applicable.
4. **Standard 4: Supervisory Approval Required for Guardianship Services (AOPSI Standard 4 Guardianship Services)** – 3 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant.
5. **Standard 5: Rights of Children in Care (AOPSI Standard 14 Voluntary Services)** – 4 files (100%) compliant.
6. **Standard 6: Deciding Where to Place the Child (AOPSI Standard 15 Voluntary Services)** – 4 files (100%) compliant.
7. **Standard 7: Meeting the Child’s Need for Stability and Continuity of Relationships (AOPSI Standard 16 Voluntary Services)** – 4 files (100%) compliant.
8. **Standard 8: Social Worker’s Relationship & Contact with a Child in Care (AOPSI Standard 17 Voluntary Services)** – 3 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant.
9. **Standard 9: Providing the Caregiver with Information and Reviewing Appropriate Discipline Standards (AOPSI Standard 18 Voluntary Services)** – 4 files (100%) non-compliant.
10. **Standard 10: Providing Initial and Ongoing Medical and Dental Care for a Child in Care (AOPSI Standard 19 Voluntary Services)** – 3 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant.
11. **Standard 11: Planning a Move for a Child in Care (AOPSI Standard 20 Voluntary Services)** – 1 file (100%) compliant; 3 files not applicable.

12. **Standard 12: Reportable Circumstances (AOPSI Standard 21 Voluntary Services)** – 1 file (100%) compliant; 3 files not applicable.
13. **Standard 13: When a Child or Youth is Missing, Lost or Runaway (AOPSI Standard 22 Voluntary Services)** – 4 files not applicable.
14. **Standard 14: Case Documentation for Guardianship Services (AOPSI Standard 14 Guardianship Services)** – 3 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant.
15. **Standard 15: Transferring Continuing Care Files (AOPSI Standard 15 Guardianship Services)** – 1 file (100%) compliant; 3 files not applicable.
16. **Standard 16: Closing Continuing Care Files (AOPSI Standard 16 Guardianship Services)** – 4 files not applicable.
17. **Standard 17: Rescinding a Continuing Custody Order and Returning the Child to the Family Home (AOPSI Standard 17 Guardianship Services)** – 4 files not applicable.
18. **Standard 19: Interviewing the Child about the Care Experience (AOPSI Standard 19 Guardianship Services)** – 4 files not applicable.
19. **Standard 20: Preparation for Independence (AOPSI Standard 20 Guardianship Services)** – 2 files (100%) compliant; 2 files not applicable.
20. **Standard 21: Responsibilities of the Public Guardian and Trustee (AOPSI Standard 21 Guardianship Services)** – 4 files not applicable.
21. **Standard 24: Guardianship Agency Protocols (AOPSI Standard 24 Guardianship Services)** – 4 files (100%) compliant.

c) Compliance to Family Service Practice

Five (5) of the sixteen open family service file was audited. The overall compliance was **69%**. The files were audited for compliance to the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators, C4 Guardianship family service including:

- Information and referral for service;
- Supervisors approval regarding voluntary service;
- Family Service Plan and components for support;
- Review of Family Service Plan;
- Support Service Agreements with families;
- Voluntary and Special Needs Agreements; and,
- File Documentation.

The following provides a breakdown of the compliance ratings:

1. **Standards 1: Receiving Requests for Services (AOPSI Standard 1 Voluntary Services)** – 4 files (100%) compliant; 1 file not applicable.
2. **Standard 2: Supervisory Approval Required for Voluntary Services (AOPSI Standard 2 Voluntary Services)** – 2 files compliant; 3 files non-compliant.
3. **Standard 3: Information and Referral for Voluntary Services (AOPSI Standard 3 Voluntary Services)** – 5 files (100%) compliant.
4. **Standard 4: Involving the Aboriginal Community in the Provision of Services (AOPSI Standard 4 Voluntary Services)** – 5 files (100%) compliant.
5. **Standard 5: Family Service Plan Requirements and Support Services, Voluntary Care, and Special Needs Agreements (AOPSI Standard 5 Voluntary Services)** – 1 file compliant; 4 files non-compliant.
6. **Standard 6: Support Service Agreements (AOPSI Standard 6 Voluntary Services)** – 3 files (100%) non-compliant; 2 files not applicable.
7. **Standard 7: Voluntary Care Agreements (AOPSI Standard 7 Voluntary Services)** – 5 files not applicable.
8. **Standard 8: Special Needs Agreements (AOPSI Standard 8 Voluntary Services)** – 2 files (100%) compliant; 3 files not applicable.
9. **Standard 9: Case Documentation for Voluntary Family Service Files (AOPSI Standard 9 Voluntary Services)** – 2 files compliant; 3 files non-compliant.
10. **Standard 24: Transferring Voluntary Services Files (AOPSI Standard 24 Voluntary Services)** – 3 files (100%) compliant; 2 files not applicable.
11. **Standard 26: Closing Voluntary Service Files (AOPSI Standard 26 Voluntary Services)** – 5 files not applicable.
12. **Standard 27: Voluntary Services Protocols (AOPSI Standard 27 Voluntary Services)** - 5 files (100%) compliant.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Date: January 8, 2010

Present: Lloyd McDames, Executive Director, Gitxsan Child & Family Services Society

Denise Connell, A/Deputy Director, MCFD Aboriginal Policy & Service Support

Jennifer Donison, A/Quality Assurance Manager, MCFD Aboriginal Policy & Service Support

Jackie Lee, Practice Analyst, MCFD Aboriginal Policy & Service Support

Darlene Thoen, Practice Auditor, MCFD Aboriginal Policy & Service Support

Gary Cheney, Practice Auditor, MCFD Aboriginal Policy & Service Support

The following recommendations and responses were developed in consultation with Gitxsan Child and Family Services Society and MCFD Aboriginal Policy and Service Support. The timeframe for completion of the recommendations is three months from the final sign off date.

Gitxsan Child and Family Services Society management will:

1. Resources:

- a) Continue to pursue ongoing options for training of caregivers which may include partnering with AXIS Family Resources or the Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents.
- b) Once a training partner has been identified, develop a training plan for agency caregivers.

2. Family Service:

- a) Ensure a checklist is located on the Family Service files so that social workers know the case documentation requirements of AOPSI Standard 9 Voluntary Services. The checklist will be reviewed with the staff to ensure they are familiar with the contents. The checklist will be signed off by the social workers and supervisor once documentation is completed on each file.

