

FIRST NATIONS DIRECTOR CASE PRACTICE AUDIT REPORT
Métis Family Services (IGA,IGB)

Fieldwork completed October 28, 2009
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APPENDIX I: AGENCY AUDIT COMPLIANCE REPORTS

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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the audit is to improve and support child service and guardianship. 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 October 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 are 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 two Business Advisors 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 October 19, 2009 to October 28, 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 138 open child service files. A sample size of 48 child service files was audited or approximately 35% of the open files. These files were randomly selected to ensure that a cross

representation of files from each team member was reviewed. The Agency had approximately 30 open resource files registered to office code IGB and the Agency developed 6 of these resource files and all 6 or 100% of these files were audited.

Upon arrival at the agency, the auditors and the business advisors met with the Executive Director, Program Manager, Finance Manager and the file clerk to review the audit purpose and process. At the completion of the audit, the auditors met with the Program Manager, Guardianship and Resource Team Leaders 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

Métis Family Services (MFS) was established in 1998 and received C4 delegation in April 2001. MFS is currently providing guardianship services for children in continuing custody and developing resources. 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:

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

Métis Family Services signed their initial delegation agreement in April 2001. A Delegation Confirmation Agreement has been extended to March 2013.

b) Demographics

Métis Family Services is located in Surrey, a community in the Fraser Region. The agency provides services to the Fraser Region from Chilliwack to Richmond. Guardianship files are transferred from the Region to Métis Family Services when a family self-identifies or has genealogy documentation to support Métis status. Métis Family Services is currently operating at capacity with the present staff compliment and is not able to assume responsibility for increased caseloads. The Program Manager monitors all Métis Continuing Custody Order (CCO) files in the Region and accepts files when caseload space permits. Due to the current staffing levels this transfer process commences when a current CCO turns nineteen years of age and is no longer the responsibility of the Agency as described in the Act.

Traveling from MFS to the outlying communities can be very time consuming due to distances, traffic and weather. Different strategies have been implemented in the past to reduce travel times, however the complexities of changing resources, caregiver turnover and CCO participation in planning has resulted in the caseworkers having to manage files in all the communities.

Métis Family Services provides non-delegated family support through the Family Development Program offering mentorship, parenting, community kitchens, tool times and circles.

Métis Family Services is able to utilize the services of Child and Youth Mental Health, which is provided through the MCFD offices in the various communities. MFS utilizes several different services in the communities of the Fraser Region, depending on the placement of the CCO. MFS and MCFD share services when necessary, for example; Aboriginal Youth Mental Health, S.O.S Children's Village and counseling services. MFS has excelled in the Guardianship Agency Protocols Standard due to these arrangements for services. Also, the Agency provides a Mentorship Program, access to Elders, a cultural and dance program and a culture night for youth.

Located next door to MFS is the Kla-how-eya agency and they provide services similar to Friendship Centers. The city of Surrey, Parks and Recreation Department offer reduced rates to MFS to use the facilities in the community. MCFD After Hours provides service to MFS during non-office hours, both during the week and on weekends. After Hours is provided with contact information to support planning.

c) Professional Staff Complement

At the time of the audit MFS was co-located with MCFD who provides full child protection services and resources support. MFS employs a Program Manager with C4 delegation and is responsible for Guardianship, Resources and Family Development. A Guardianship Team Leader is responsible for six (6) Guardianship social workers, who are all currently delegated to C4. The Resources Team has a Team Leader and three (3) resource social workers delegated to C4. Also, the Team Leader of the Resource team has been seconded by MCFD to be the Team Leader of the Child Protection team consisting of three (3) social workers. MFS provides non-delegated support services with a Family Development Supervisor, mentorship worker and three (3) support workers.

Métis Family Services had some staffing challenges that were addressed with the ongoing support, monitoring and evaluation of staff.

d) Supervision and Consultation

As previously stated, the Program Manager has C4 delegation and provides supervision to the Team Leaders and undelegated programs and staff. This supervision also includes back-fill for vacations and other situations. MFS uses an 'open door' policy for staff to consult as necessary. The Team Leader meets weekly with the social workers when time permits to discuss individual cases and for supervision. Team meetings are held weekly as a forum to discuss complex cases and policy. The main theme presented was the supportive nature of the current supervision.

4. STRENGTHS OF THE AGENCY

One of the significant strengths of the agency is the support and cooperation required to manage several complex files. The staff are familiar with the high needs files serviced by MFS to allow for backfill and colleague support. File documentation indicates MFS can rely on the staff to ensure immediate safety plans and that resource support is in place in the absence of the case manager or to support the case manager.

Another strength of MFS is the co-location of the MCFD protection team to provide service to Métis children and families in the catchment area. With both organizations accessible to clients the resulting service options are comprehensive. MFS Family Development program can provide a rapid response to MCFD protection concerns and provide ongoing prevention services.

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

- Promotion of culture – the agency has program, staff and access to support the Métis culture.
- Diverse backgrounds – the social workers have varied educational, cultural and experiential backgrounds, this promotes problem solving through the sharing of ideas.
- Staff Commitment – the current staff are committed to providing service that is in the best interest of the children.
- Ancillary protocols – the physical files indicate a strong ability to manage complex files with the inclusion of outside agencies.
- Resource development – the resource Team Leader and the social workers have committed to providing capable caregivers and developing those caregivers to support the needs of the children in their care.
- Responding to crisis- file documentation indicates that MFS uses creative solutions and teamwork to resolve high-risk situations. This can include the participation of the Program Manager, Team Leaders, resources, social workers, support staff and administration.

5. CHALLENGES FACING THE AGENCY

One of the most significant challenges identified during the audit was the need to utilize the documentation system (TITAMEG) in a uniform and consistent manner. Documenting the oral consultations, planning and decisions with a prescribed format will increase several compliance Standards. Another significant challenge is the caseload sizes as they relate to the high needs of the CCO population. In some cases the physical files have seven volumes, a result of multiple medical, social, safety and educational needs. In 2008 there was an average of approximately 110 open CCO files and 46 Reportable Circumstances registered with the Director.

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

- Cultural plans – the files indicate cultural participation and discussion in some cases, no formal cultural plans or details of the service offered were documented.
- Abbreviations and undated worker notes and letters- this makes determining plans and outcomes problematic.
- Undocumented outcomes- several issues are present in some files with no consultation, planning or outcomes documented.
- Updated pictures and information –Several files did not contain current photos and personal information to facilitate the safety of the children in care.
- Recording information – files without opening recordings, internal transfer recording, updated and clear plans of care resulted in poor compliance scores.

6. DISCUSSION OF THE PROGRAM AUDITED

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

a) Resource files

As previously stated, 6 out of 30 open resource files were audited. The six files were generated by MFS. This program area showed significant documentation that resulted in a very high compliance rating. 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 plans for caregivers.

b) Child Service files

As already stated, 48 out of 138 open child service files were audited. The audit revealed considerable improvement from the previous audit conducted in 2006 in regards to the overall compliance to many of the guardianship standards. A number of positive aspects found included: 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, documentation of the social worker's knowledge of the existing interagency protocols in the communities and responsibilities to the Public Guardian.

Documentation missing from the files included: providing the caregiver with information on the child and reviewing appropriate discipline standards. Documenting Supervisor approvals and monitoring the child plan of care and interviewing the child regarding their experience in care.

7. COMPLIANCE TO PROGRAM AUDITED

Two auditors audited the child service files at Métis Family Services. The 'not applicable' scores were not included in the total.

a) Compliance to Resource File Practice

Six (6) of the six (6) MFS generated resource files were audited. Overall compliance to the resource standards was **83%**. 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) – 6 files compliant.**
- 2. Standard 29: Family Care Homes – Application and Orientation (AOPSI Standard 29 Voluntary Services) – 6 files compliant.**
- 3. Standard 30: Home Study (AOPSI Standard 30 Voluntary Services) – 6 files compliant.**

4. **Standard 31: Training of Caregivers (AOPSI Standard 31 Voluntary Services)** – 2 file compliant; 4 files non-compliant.
5. **Standard 32: Signed Agreement with Caregivers (AOPSI Standard 32 Voluntary Services)** – 6 files compliant.
6. **Standard 33: Monitoring and Reviewing the Family Care Home (AOPSI Standard 33 Voluntary Services)** – 6 files not applicable.
7. **Standard 34: Investigation of Alleged Abuse or Neglect in a Family Care Home (AOPSI Standard 34 Voluntary Services)** - 1 file compliant; 5 files non-compliant.
8. **Standard 35: Quality of Care Review (AOPSI Standard 35 Voluntary Services)** – 6 files not applicable.
9. **Standard 36: Closure of the Family Care Home (AOPSI Standard 36 Voluntary Services)** – 6 files not applicable.

b) Compliance to Child Service Practice

Forty-eight (48) of the one hundred and thirty-eight (138) open child service files were audited. The overall compliance was **61%**. 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)** – 27 files compliant; 21 files non-compliant.
2. **Standard 2: Development of a Comprehensive Plan of Care (AOPSI Standard 12 Voluntary Services)** –1 file compliant; 47 files not applicable.

3. **Standard 3: Monitoring and Reviewing the Child's Comprehensive Plan of Care (AOPSI Standard 13 Voluntary Services)** - 26 files compliant; 16 files non-compliant; 6 files not applicable.
4. **Standard 4: Supervisory Approval Required for Guardianship Services (AOPSI Standard 4 Guardianship Services)** – 16 files compliant; 32 files non-compliant.
5. **Standard 5: Rights of Children in Care (AOPSI Standard 14 Voluntary Services)** – 26 files compliant; 17 files non-compliant; 5 files not applicable.
6. **Standard 6: Deciding Where to Place the Child (AOPSI Standard 15 Voluntary Services)** – 28 files compliant; 2 files non-compliant; 18 files not applicable.
7. **Standard 7: Meeting the Child's Need for Stability and Continuity of Relationships (AOPSI Standard 16 Voluntary Services)** – 43 files compliant; 5 files non-compliant.
8. **Standard 8: Social Worker's Relationship & Contact with a Child in Care (AOPSI Standard 17 Voluntary Services)** – 25 files compliant; 23 file non-compliant.
9. **Standard 9: Providing the Caregiver with Information and Reviewing Appropriate Discipline Standards (AOPSI Standard 18 Voluntary Services)** – 2 files compliant; 40 files non-compliant; 6 files not applicable.
10. **Standard 10: Providing Initial and Ongoing Medical and Dental Care for a Child in Care (AOPSI Standard 19 Voluntary Services)** – 39 files compliant; 9 file non-compliant.
11. **Standard 11: Planning a Move for a Child in Care (AOPSI Standard 20 Voluntary Services)** – 24 files compliant; 1 files non-compliant; 23 files not applicable.
12. **Standard 12: Reportable Circumstances (AOPSI Standard 21 Voluntary Services)** – 11 files compliant; 6 files non-compliant; 31 files not applicable.
13. **Standard 13: When a Child or Youth is Missing, Lost or Runaway (AOPSI Standard 22 Voluntary Services)** – 9 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant; 37 files not applicable.
14. **Standard 14: Case Documentation for Guardianship Services (AOPSI Standard 14 Guardianship Services)** – 31 files compliant; 17 files non-compliant.

15. **Standard 15: Transferring Continuing Care Files (AOPSI Standard 15 Guardianship Services)** – 3 files compliant; 45 files not applicable.
16. **Standard 16: Closing Continuing Care Files (AOPSI Standard 16 Guardianship Services)** – 1 file non-compliant; 47 files not applicable.
17. **Standard 17: Rescinding a Continuing Custody Order and Returning the Child to the Family Home (AOPSI Standard 17 Guardianship Services)** – 1 file non-compliant; 47 files not applicable.
18. **Standard 19: Interviewing the Child about the Care Experience (AOPSI Standard 19 Guardianship Services)** – 4 files compliant; 12 files non-compliant; 32 files not applicable.
19. **Standard 20: Preparation for Independence (AOPSI Standard 20 Guardianship Services)** – 11 files compliant; 2 files non-compliant; 35 files not applicable.
20. **Standard 21: Responsibilities of the Public Guardian and Trustee (AOPSI Standard 21 Guardianship Services)** – 23 files compliant; 2 files non-compliant; 23 files not applicable.
21. **Standard 24: Guardianship Agency Protocols (AOPSI Standard 24 Guardianship Services)** – 46 files compliant; 2 files non-compliant.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Date: January 26, 2010

Present:

Ron Shortt, Executive Director, Métis Family Services
 , Programs Manager, Métis Family Services
 , Team leader, Métis family Services

Denise Connell, A/Deputy Director, MCFD Aboriginal Policy & Service Support
 Jennifer Donison, A/Quality Assurance Manager, MCFD Aboriginal Policy & Service Support

Darlene Thoen, Auditor, MCFD Aboriginal Policy & Service Support
 Gary Cheney, Auditor, MCFD Aboriginal Policy & Service Support

The following recommendations and responses were developed in consultation with Métis Family Services and MCFD Aboriginal Policy & Service Support. The time frame for completion of the recommendations is three months from the final sign off date.

Métis Family Services management will:

1. Resource:

- a) Add a face sheet or standardized recording form to each resource file. This will record training offered and training taken.

2. Child Service:

- a) Continue to develop processes and procedures to increase the documentation on the files.
- b) Implement the Agency plan to use a package to address Section 70 and the discipline policy for periodic sign-off by the social worker, child in care and the caregiver.
- c) Continue to use recently implemented strategies to have the worker notes added to the files.
- d) Continue to have the Team Leader and/or the Programs Manager review and sign or initial the documentation required for Standard compliance.
- e) Implement the documentation of all direction provided by the assigned Practice Analyst regarding Reportable Circumstance inquiries.
- f) Implement the documentation of all interviews of children leaving placements.

MCFD First Nations Director will:

- 1. Provide checklists or support documents as requested by the Agency.
- 2. Continue to provide support from the Aboriginal Policy & Service Support Practice Analyst.