

**ABORIGINAL SERVICES VOLUNTARY SERVICES PRACTICE
AUDIT REPORT**

Heiltsuk Kaxla Child & Family Services (IKC)

Fieldwork completed November 28, 2008
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. PURPOSE	1
2. METHODOLOGY	1
3. AGENCY OVERVIEW	2
a) Delegation.....	2
b) Demographics	2
c) Professional Staff Compliment	3
d). Supervision & Consultation.....	3
4. STRENGTHS OF AGENCY.....	4
5. CHALLENGES FACING AGENCY	4
6. DISCUSSION OF THE PROGRAM AUDITED	6
a) Family Service Files	6
7. COMPLIANCE TO THE PROGRAMS AUDITED.....	6
8. RECOMMENDATIONS	8
APPENDIX I: AGENCY AUDIT COMPLIANCE REPORTS	

ABORIGINAL SERVICES VOLUNTARY SERVICES PRACTICE AUDIT REPORT

HEILTSUK KAXLA CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES (IKC)

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the audit is to improve and support child service, guardianship, family service and investigative practice. 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 practice audit was conducted in August 2005.

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 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 practice audit involving the Aboriginal Policy and Service Support of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). There were two practice auditors from MCFD.

Two auditors conducted field work from November 24, 2008 to November 28, 2008. 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. In selecting the files to audit, there were problems determining the accurate number of open files. This was mainly due to the agency having a number of files opened internally but not registered on MIS. As well, upon further review of the internal files, it was clear that some of the files were intakes that should have been closed, some were family service files that

needed further documentation to open them and some were reports of a miscellaneous nature. There were a total of 4 open Family Service files at the time of the audit. All of the files (100%) were audited and they represented work done by both of the agency's delegated social workers. The agency's delegation does allow for the provision of voluntary child services and resources however there were no open files of that type at the time of the audit. Although the audit scope was three years, the files audited only represented work from the past year.

Upon arrival at the agency, the auditors met with the Executive Director and a larger meeting occurred with all the agency staff where the details of the audit were discussed. The auditors were available to answer any questions from staff that arose during the audit process. At the completion of the audit, the auditors met with the Executive Director and the agency 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

Heiltsuk Kaxla Child and Family Services is currently delegated at C3 Voluntary Services delegation. This level of delegation enables the delegated agency to provide the following services:

- Support services to families;
- Voluntary Care Agreements;
- Special Needs Agreements;
- Establishing residential resources for children in care.

Heiltsuk Kaxla signed their initial agreement in 2000 and in 2005, a Delegation Confirmation Agreement was signed confirming the agency's authority to provide child welfare services. The vision of the Heiltsuk Kaxla Child and Family Services Agency is to ensure that children are safe, healthy, uplifted and respected while being grounded in their culture with a strong sense of belonging.

b) Demographics

Heiltsuk Kaxla serves the community of Heiltsuk in Waglisa (Bella Bella) on Campbell Island. It is approximately seven hours by ferry to Port Hardy or two hours by plane to Vancouver. The population of this community totals approximately 1066 people (Source: *Registered Indian Population by Sex and Residence 2006, Vital Statistics Canada*). Services available in the community include the RCMP, hospital, health centre, Telehealth mental health, community

school offering K-12, Community College offering upgrading and post secondary courses, Band office and a Band store.

c) Professional Staff Complement

At the time of the audit the agency staff consisted of two delegated social workers with one being the Executive Director, a Supported Child Development/Speech & Language worker, Family Preservation/Support Worker, Early Child Development/Speech & Language worker, Aboriginal Infant Development/FASD Key worker, Executive Assistant and a Receptionist/File Clerk who also provides part time service to MCFD.

The agency has recently secured the contract funding for a .5 Mental Health Worker. The Executive Director is currently reviewing the best option for providing this service to the children and families in the community.

The Executive Director has spent most of the past year focusing on developing a filing system for the delegated work, submitting proposals for additional contract funding for new programs, managing the various staff that she has hired and working through the backlog of miscellaneous paperwork that she found when took over the position .

d) Supervision and Consultation

The Executive Director is the main supervisor for all the staff and their various programs. She has an open door policy for all the staff and all staff indicated that they are able to access supervision easily. The delegated social worker consults with the Executive Director immediately after receiving an intake and then as frequently as needed. The social worker also meets with the Executive Director on a weekly basis to review case planning. When the Executive Director is out of the office, the social worker is able to contact her by phone or email and if necessary, the MCFD team leader in Bella Coola is available for consultation.

The Executive Director has recently appointed the Supported Child Development/Speech & Language worker as a Team Leader for the current staff in the Early Child Development program, Aboriginal Infant Development program and the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder program as well as any new staff hired for these programs. This position is considered a training position and the Executive Director provides support and consultation to the worker.

4. STRENGTHS OF THE AGENCY

One of the biggest strengths of the agency is that the children and families being served by the agency are receiving community based services, provided by skilled community professionals. There is a strong commitment by the staff in the agency to serve the community in whatever capacity they can. The agency is

involved in responding to community initiatives that are outside their general duties, for example community kitchens, soup kitchens and food drives. The staff see their role in providing these services as part of contributing to the overall well being of the community, which in turn, assists them with their work.

Another strength of the Heiltsuk Kaxla is the leadership found in the Executive Director. Despite having to face the immediate task of hiring staff and developing services that could address the needs of the community, the Executive Director has remained centered and committed to seeing the agency through the challenges. She has combined her vision of the agency with her practice experience and commitment as a community member to create an agency that is responsive to the needs of the community and the staff that serve them.

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

- Collaborative practice – most of the services provided by the agency are co-located within the agency which allows for ease in referrals, confidential case consultation and sharing of program information.
- Supportive work environment – all the staff commented on how enjoyable their work place is and that they felt supported by each other. They have the opportunity for regular circles and good debriefing with each other.
- Training – the staff are supported in obtaining any additional training that would be beneficial to the delivery of services to their clients. The staff receive annual evaluations and a training/education plan is included in the evaluation.
- Community membership – a significant strength is that all the staff are community members. They have a tremendous amount of knowledge of the culture, family membership and the community strengths and challenges. This knowledge and insight is very beneficial for working with the children and families.

5. CHALLENGES FACING THE AGENCY

One area that was identified as a significant challenge is the limited amount of file documentation prior to 2007. The current files open in the agency contain documentation completed from 2007. There is limited information on services provided to families prior to this date and what has been found is currently located in a miscellaneous file. There was no formal filing system in place prior to 2007 so it has been difficult for the social workers to create a file for the past involvement with a family from so little information. This issue became clear to the auditors when the miscellaneous file information was reviewed and it was difficult to determine who was provided service, what services were provided, the term of the service, etc. The Executive Director and social workers are aware of this information and are attempting to determine who the file information belongs to. The Executive Director had made every effort to locate previous files and was

only able to gather the various loose documents that she provided to the auditors.

In addition, the auditors were provided with several current miscellaneous files from the delegated social worker however these had not been coded or registered on MIS as family service files therefore it was difficult to determine whether they were true family service files to be audited. After discussion with the social worker and Executive Director, the auditors learned that the social worker had only received MIS training in September 2008 and the Executive Director had been the only other social worker with MIS training prior to this date. An agreement was reached that the social worker and Executive Director would work on reviewing the file information and enter the information into an open or closed family service file on MIS and these files would be audited at a later date.

Secondly, a further concern is the condition of the filing system. The agency is lacking office systems to support the work and this has been an area the Executive Director and the File Clerk have been working on this past year. There is now a file system developed for the delegated work and they are working on reviewing the filing system requirements with the social worker to ensure that the documentation is submitted for filing in a timely fashion. The goal now is to develop further filing systems to ensure the office is running smoothly and information can be easily accessed.

Finally, a challenge to the agency is the response to child protection reports by MCFD Bella Coola. MCFD social workers come to the community approximately twice monthly. When a child protection report is received in between those visits, the agency social workers are often asked by MCFD After Hours or the MCFD Bella Coola social workers to respond to the report. Both the delegated Executive Director and the social worker are aware of their current delegation and the type of requests they are delegated to respond to. Despite this, they are repeatedly requested to respond to child protection reports. Additionally, MCFD Bella Coola has an office within the agency and has part time use of the agency's receptionist/file clerk. This co-location with the Ministry has made it difficult separating the agency work from the protection work. The community perception of the agency is important and the agency is working hard at communicating its programs and involvement in the community. This has proven to be very challenging for the agency social workers and has been previously raised as a concern by the agency Executive Director with the MCFD Vancouver Coastal Region management however the practice has continued within the community. It was reported to the auditors that a solution to this problem is currently under development with MCFD Vancouver Coastal Region.

The auditors identified several challenges facing the agency and the agency's practice during the course of the audit:

- General challenges facing the community - Some of the challenges facing the community include drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, shortage of housing and recovering from historic abuse.
- Current office space – although the agency office recently underwent renovations to make better use of their current space, there is little room for future expansion. As well, the agency has leased a small house next door the main office in order to provide additional office space for their growing staff. This solution is less than ideal as it was reported that the staff felt separated from the rest of the team.
- Staffing shortages – the agency has had difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified staff. It was described to the auditors that there is a systemic instability of staffing in the community and the agency is feeling the impact of this. In addition to this, there is a serious housing shortage and this affects the possibility of hiring a qualified candidate from outside the community.

6. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE ONE PROGRAM AUDITED

a) Family Service Files

As previously stated, all four of the open family service files were audited. Several positive aspects found included: documenting supervisory approval, gathering information and providing appropriate referrals for service, clearly documenting the family service plan, overall case documentation and knowledge of community protocols and services.

Documentation missing from the family service files included: on some of the files, an intake outlining the request for voluntary service, current or recent support service agreements and a review of the circumstances leading to a closing of the family service file.

7. COMPLIANCE TO THE PROGRAM AUDITED

Two auditors audited the family service files at Heiltsuk Kaxla Child & Family Services. The 'not applicable' scores were not included in the total.

Four (4) of the four open family service files were audited. The overall compliance was **75%**. The files were audited for compliance to the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators, C3 Voluntary Services 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
- File Documentation.

The following provides a breakdown of the compliance ratings:

1. **Standards 1: Receiving Requests for Services (AOPSI Standard 1 Voluntary Services)** – 2 files compliant; 2 files non-compliant.
2. **Standard 2: Supervisory Approval Required for Voluntary Services (AOPSI Standard 2 Voluntary Services)** – 3 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant.
3. **Standard 3: Information and Referral for Voluntary Services (AOPSI Standard 3 Voluntary Services)** – 3 files compliant; 1 file not applicable.
4. **Standard 4: Involving the Aboriginal Community in the Provision of Services (AOPSI Standard 4 Voluntary Services)** – 3 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant.
5. **Standard 5: Family Service Plan Requirements and Support Services, Voluntary Care, and Special Needs Agreements (AOPSI Standard 5 Voluntary Services)** – 4 files (100%) compliant.
6. **Standard 6: Support Service Agreements (AOPSI Standard 6 Voluntary Services)** – 2 files compliant; 2 files non-compliant.
7. **Standard 7: Voluntary Care Agreements (AOPSI Standard 7 Voluntary Services)** – no files applicable.
8. **Standard 8: Special Needs Agreements (AOPSI Standard 8 Voluntary Services)** – no files applicable.
9. **Standard 9: Case Documentation for Voluntary Family Service Files (AOPSI Standard 9 Voluntary Services)** – 3 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant.
10. **Standard 24: Transferring Voluntary Services Files (AOPSI Standard 24 Voluntary Services)** – no files applicable.
11. **Standard 26: Closing Voluntary Service Files (AOPSI Standard 26 Voluntary Services)** – 1 file non-compliant; 3 files not applicable.
12. **Standard 27: Voluntary Services Protocols (AOPSI Standard 27 Voluntary Services)** – 4 files (100%) compliant.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Date: April 9, 2009

Present: _____, Executive Director, Heiltsuk Kaxla Child & Family Services

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

Shannon Daniel, Practice Analyst, MCFD Aboriginal Policy & Service Support

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

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

Heiltsuk Kaxla Child and Family Services management will:

1. Use of MIS/SWS:

- a) Use MIS/SWS as required by AOPSI Standards 9 & 10 Voluntary Services to document their service involvement and prior contact checks. A review will take place with delegated staff to ensure that information is entered in a timely manner and accurate data is maintained on MIS/SWS.

2. Office Systems:

- a) Review with agency staff the need to maintain accurate and organised case files in accordance with recognised file management procedures. If agency staff require additional support in this area, the Practice Analyst from Aboriginal Policy & Service Support will assist by securing adequate support from Provincial Office, Records and Forms Operations.

3. Family Service:

- a) Review with agency staff the need to negotiate and document Family Support Services Agreements fully under Part 2 of the *CF&CS Act*.

MCFD First Nations Director will:

1. Dialogue with the Director of Integrated Practice for Vancouver Coastal Region with respect to the regional practice to refer Child Protection matters to the agency staff for immediate follow-up as this practice currently lies outside of the delegated authority of Heiltsuk Kaxla Child & Family Services to respond to.
2. Conduct a re-audit on the agency's files to ensure that appropriate documentation has occurred and that the files have been registered on MIS/SWS. This re-audit will occur one year from the final sign off date.