

SUMMARY: DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S CASE REVIEW of an Incident Involving a Child Known to the Ministry

A. BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) conducted the Deputy Director's Review (DDR), to review case practice, particularly in relation to guardianship and placement, regarding a child in the care of the ministry. The review focused on the months prior to the incident and the ministry's actions after the incident. The child is Aboriginal.

For the purposes of the DDR, ministry documents and files were reviewed.

The DDR indicates historical involvement with child welfare services, including the ministry, existed for the family of the subject child (the child).

The child was in and out of government care and with alternative care providers until a continuing custody order was granted. After some years in an approved ministry foster home, conflict issues between the child and the foster caregivers were identified. The child experienced several placement changes that included being reunited with previous foster caregivers and being placed with family members, yet the child's placements were not stable. The DDR report indicates that caregivers advised the ministry that the child was not cooperative, the child did not stay committed to services that were provided and the child increasingly engaged in illegal and high risk behaviours.

Two Comprehensive Plans of Care were on file for the child. The most recent Comprehensive Plan of Care (CPOC) was informative yet lacked an itemization of specific needs and a comprehensive service plan to address presenting issues. Soon after the most recent CPOC was completed, changes were noted in the child's participation in specific programs and in the child's behaviour, and the CPOC was reviewed with the child.

The child's placements continued to be strained and to break down. The DDR report indicates that caregivers continued to advise the ministry about concerns regarding the child which included that the child was not co-operative, and that the child was engaging in illegal and high risk behaviours. Planning meetings occurred, specialized programs were put in place, and services were arranged for the child. The DDR report indicates the child continued to engage in concerning behaviours, the child's placements were not stable, and the child was not doing well.

When the ministry was informed of the incident that precipitated the DDR, the ministry provided direct support to the child and provided resources to facilitate support for the child from a person significant to the child and whom the child identified as a main support.

The DDR's final written report is dated after January 01, 2008.

B. CONCLUSIONS

In carefully reviewing the services provided to the family the DDR identified areas of practice where standards were not met or casework activities were not documented. The primary *Children in Care Service (CCS) Standards* that were not met are:

- CCS Standard 1: *Preserving the Identity of an Aboriginal Child in Care*; and,
- CCS Standard 10: *Meeting a Child's Need for Stability and Continuity of Lifelong Relationships*.

The DDR identified two completed CPOCs on the child's file to cover the child's entire time in care. As a result, the DDR concluded that minimal comprehensive planning for the child is documented on the file.

The DDR identified that, when the incident occurred, the ministry was attentive and responded appropriately. Two regional offices worked together to ensure the necessary arrangements were made to meet the needs of the child. Documentation on the file concerning the time period after the incident is limited and as a result the DDR could not comment on the ministry's practice after the incident.

The DDR report states that it can not be concluded that the incident could have been prevented.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

The DDR recommendations were brought forward by the Regional Director of Integrated Practice and are as follows:

1. The Community Service Manager is to ensure that planning for the child is up-to-date. The Family Group Conference co-ordinator is a resource that might be considered by staff in their planning.
2. The Regional Aboriginal Services Manager is to complete a written plan, to be reviewed by the Regional Executive Director, outlining how cultural planning can be increased for Aboriginal children in care within the region. The plan is to include measurable outcomes which will be monitored by the Regional Director of Integrated Practice.
3. The Regional Aboriginal Service Manager is to complete the plan by June 30, 2008. The Regional Director of Integrated Practice is to begin monitoring the effectiveness of the plan, and reporting about the regional outcomes, beginning September 30, 2008.