

POLICY ISSUE

Strategies to Promote Inter-Ministry Collaboration

DATE: February 6, 2003

GROUP:

Child and Family Steering Committee on Community Governance

NOTE:

The Steering Committee's mandate does not include advice about the governance of services to Aboriginal children and families. A separate consultation process is underway with Aboriginal communities. Recommendations and other material developed by the committee are available for use in discussions with Aboriginal communities.

ISSUE:

To provide potential strategies to ensure inter-ministry collaboration

PURPOSE OF ISSUE PAPER:

To facilitate and support a recommendation on strategies for leadership in inter-ministry collaboration.

POLICY DISCUSSION:

Introduction

In an effort to support families and communities in providing the best possible future for children and youth, a number of provinces and territories have established inter-ministerial committees, councils, secretariats or coalitions. Although the structure and membership of the committees varies, the goal of the committees is to encourage collaborative efforts between communities and government to address the needs of children and youth. The existence of an effective inter-ministerial committee is an indication that collaboration and integration of policies and services for the healthy development of children and youth is a high-ranking government priority.

Within government there are often many departments or ministries that are involved in providing services or determining policies that impact children, youth and families. There is a growing recognition that an integrated and co-ordinated, government wide (Municipal, Provincial and Federal) effort is critical for the effective and efficient development and delivery of programs, services and policies. Without this integration one ministry or level of government may develop policies which may have unforeseen consequences for programs and services provided by another ministry.

The focus of inter-ministerial committees is to promote collaboration amongst governments, ministries, departments, and authorities together with communities and families. The overall goal is to improve the well being of children and youth. Through the joint efforts of all partners, issues can be effectively addressed and direction can be provided for the development of long-term policies, strategies, and initiatives.

Scope

This paper describes strategies that promote inter-ministry collaboration at the highest organizational level. There are many other equally important strategies that promote collaboration amongst ministries at the regional and community level. However, efforts to collaborate amongst ministries and departments at these levels will be undermined without strong and ongoing collaboration at the most senior organizational level. That level is the focus of this paper. A discussion of strategies to promote collaboration amongst ministries and agencies at the community level can be found in the following policy papers: *Strategies to Build Community Capacity in Service Delivery* and *Strategic Service Delivery Considerations*.

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE INTERMINISTRY COMMITTEES:

According to the literature¹ there are various *characteristics* of effective inter-ministry committees. Such committees:

- Require leaders who have the skills, relationships and vision to transform individual interests into a dynamic collective force that is able to achieve targeted outcomes.
- Must ensure the participation of community organizations and citizens including youth.
- Need formalized processes and procedures that clarify staff and member roles and responsibilities and provide clear guidelines for all of the processes involved in the collaborative work.
- Must have a well-developed internal communication system that promotes information sharing and problem discussion and resolution.
- Must have or acquire the human and financial resources to perform collaborative work.
- Are flexible and responsive. They must be able to address emergent issues, respond to feedback and evaluation data, dialogue about problems and seek external information and expertise.
- Need the capacity to design and implement innovative programs and policies that will have a meaningful impact within communities.

Additionally, there are at least four *conditions* that must be in place for provincial inter-ministerial committees to be effective:

- There must be a clear vision and agreed upon expectations and outcomes for the committee from the outset.
- There must be a high level of commitment and support for the committee from within government. Ministers and senior level executives of involved ministries must participate directly. Potential strategies for ensuring this include legislating such committees, as proposed in the U.K., including them in the performance agreements

¹ 2001 Journal of Community Psychology

of Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers, or offering incentives to those who participate.

- Those serving on the committee must have the capacity and authority to make the necessary decisions to implement the agenda of the committee (e.g. policy direction, resource allocation, etc).
- The committee must have an adequate consolidated budget to resource necessary initiatives.

INTER-MINISTRY COMMITTEES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

In 1979 *Inter-Ministry Children's Committees* (IMCCs) were established in British Columbia in an effort to provide vehicles for co-ordinated responses to case management issues at the local, regional and provincial levels. Over time, formal IMCCs ceased to function in a number of areas.

In 1991, a *Child and Youth Secretariat* was created in government to focus responsibility for coordination, integration and implementation of inter-ministry policies and programs for children and youth. This body consisted of Assistant Deputy Ministers from the ministries of Attorney General, Education, Health and Social Services including senior staff from the involved ministries. Local membership on the CYCs included municipal officials, non-government agencies, youth, parents and other stakeholders. One of the *Child and Youth Secretariat's* major initiatives was the creation and support of local and regional Child and Youth Committees (CYCs) throughout the province, which still exist in some communities. The *Child and Youth Secretariat* was disbanded in 1995 shortly before the present ministry was created. The rationale was that amalgamating the child-serving programs of various provincial ministries into a single children's ministry (MCFD) would make the *Secretariat* redundant.

There is a significant difference between the *Secretariat* in British Columbia and successful inter-ministerial committees in other provinces as described in this paper. The membership of the *Secretariat* was at the Assistant Deputy Minister and senior management level, whereas committees in other jurisdictions are led by Ministers or Deputy Ministers from the participating ministries.

Currently within British Columbia an inter-ministerial committee or council does not exist. Ad hoc committees generally are formed around specific issues and are usually short term in nature.

Issues are normally discussed at the Deputy Minister level. A "leading ministry" may be assigned to co-ordinate and collect information on a particular topic from other ministries. This information is then provided to Deputy Ministers for discussion.

ELEMENTS OF COMMITTEES: (see Appendix A for a detailed overview)

Goals

The goals of the committees are usually broad-based, and use early intervention and population health models. Typical goals include ensuring children and youth will be:

emotionally and physically healthy, safe and secure, socially engaged and responsible, culturally connected, and successful at learning to their fullest potential.

Membership

For committees to be effective, their agenda must address issues identified by the community and reflect the involvement and participation of the community including youth. One means of addressing this issue is to establish regional sub-committees. The subcommittees may include representatives from regions, service providers, citizens, parents and youth. Another is to have the committee comprised of ministers from government ministries and departments that have involvement with children and youth issues. Ministry staff typically supports the committee's administration and research.

The following are two examples of committee memberships (see Appendix A for additional examples). In Saskatchewan, the Council on Children was established under the *Action Plan for Children*. The Action Plan is an interdepartmental initiative involving nine ministries. Members of the Council are appointed and usually are from non-government agencies. Each department or ministry is allotted a specific number of nominations. In addition, two members from the Interdepartmental Steering Committee, are on the Council. The role of the Interdepartmental Steering Committee is to support the Council. The Interdepartmental committee meets monthly and creates more focussed working groups as needed. The Council provides a forum for discussion and direction to government in the areas of health, justice, education, recreation, housing and other issues related to the well-being of children. The Council provides advice to the six ministers responsible for the Action Plan.

Likewise, in Manitoba, the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet includes the Ministers from seven ministries and is chaired by the Minister of Family Services and Housing. The Deputy Ministers of the seven partner departments are also involved in a committee entitled Healthy Child Deputy Ministers' Committee. This deputy minister's committee is responsible for implementing the policies and initiatives within and across departments.

Objectives

Although the various committees are charged with a variety of responsibilities, typically the committees are involved in developing and evaluating approaches and long-term strategies to improve the supports and resources for children, youth and families. The initiatives emphasize community-based early intervention and prevention programs and services. Co-ordinating and integrating policies, programs and services across government and at a community level are other areas of concern for the committees. Annual reports are produced, which include the objectives and achievements of the committees.

EXAMPLES OF INITIATIVES ARISING FROM INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEES:

Alberta

The Children's Mental Health Initiative (CMHI) is one of the co-ordinated activities implemented as part of the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI). Working collaboratively, the Alberta Mental Health Board, government ministries and their agencies, regional health authorities, and contracted service providers, developed a provincial integrated policy framework for a comprehensive system of mental health services for children and youth.

Manitoba

Healthy Child Manitoba works with community agencies, service providers and health professionals to offer strategies and interventions that reduce risk factors for youth, including reducing the likelihood that they will become teen parents. In 2001/02 an interdepartmental working group, co-chaired by Healthy Child Manitoba and Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, was established to develop a provincial approach to Healthy Adolescent Development, as part of the broad youth strategy being developed by Manitoba Education, Training and Youth. A focus of the committee's work was working with community partners on the development of a strategic plan for a teen pregnancy prevention media campaign.

CONSENSUS OF DISCUSSION FROM THE CHILD AND FAMILY STEERING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE ON JANUARY 3, 2003

- **That the ministry lead the formation of a provincial inter-ministry committee for children and youth involving key provincial and federal ministries that provide services or make policies that impact children, youth and families.**

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School-aged Children across Canada: A Patchwork of Public Policies Rianne Mahon, Ph.D, CPRN

Building Collaborative Capacity in Community Coalitions: A Review and Integrative Framework

Appendix A Survey of Inter-ministerial Committees or Councils

<u>Province</u>	<u>Name of Committee</u>	<u>Partners</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
Alberta	Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI)	Alberta Children's Services Alberta Learning Alberta Health and Wellness Alberta Alcohol & Drug Abuse Commission Alberta Mental Health Board Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Alberta Community Development Alberta Human Resources and Employment Alberta Solicitor General	Introduced in 1998, ACYI is a collaborative partnership of government ministries working together on issues affecting children and youth. Children and youth issues cross many government ministries. There is recognition that a coordinated government-wide effort is critical for the effective and efficient support of children, youth and their families.
Saskatchewan	Council on Children	Saskatchewan Education Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Saskatchewan Health Saskatchewan Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs Saskatchewan Justice Saskatchewan Municipal Affairs and Housing Saskatchewan Social Services Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat Saskatchewan Northern Affairs	The council was established under the Action Plan for Children, which is an interdepartmental initiative involving nine ministries. Members usually are from non-government agencies, and are appointed. Each department is allotted a specific number of nominations. Two members are from the Interdepartmental Steering Committee. Provides a forum for discussion and direction to government in the areas of health, justice, education, recreation, housing and other issues related to the well-being of children. Advice is provided to the 6 ministers responsible for the Action Plan, as to what the council considers to be priorities for action. This plays a role in the development of a children's agenda in Saskatchewan.

Province	Name of Committee	Partners	Purpose
Manitoba	Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet	Ministry of Family Services and Housing Ministry of Health Ministry of Justice and Attorney General Ministry of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Ministry Responsible for the Status of Women Ministry of Education, Training and Youth Ministry of Culture, Heritage and Tourism	Bridges departments and governments and, together with the community, works to improve the well-being of Manitoba's children and youth. Coordinate and integrate policy, programs and services across government for children, youth and families using early intervention and population health models.
Northwest Territories	Leadership Council	Minister of Health and Social Services Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services Chairs of the Authorities	The council has been tasked with the stewardship and direction setting of the health system. The leadership council sets priorities for health and social services system and brings issues from the communities to the table.
Prince Edward Island	Children's Secretariat	Ministry of Health and Social Services Ministry of Education Ministry of Development and Technology Ministry of the Office of the Attorney General Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs	To improve outcomes for children in health, behavioral and emotional development and readiness to learn. To work together to promote healthy public policy for children and meet the collective responsibility for children's health and well-being.