

CHILD PROTECTION: *WORKLOAD, TRAINING AND BUDGET CHANGES*

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A. Purpose

This is a background report prepared for the Children and Youth Review being undertaken by Mr. Ted Hughes at the request of the British Columbia provincial government.

The purpose of this report is to consider three separate but related questions:

1. Has the caseload or workload of child protection social workers increased significantly in recent years?
2. What training is provided to child protection social workers prior to taking on their duties?
3. How have the budget cuts undertaken by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) affected child protection resources?

The following discussion is based upon information provided by the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

B. Workload and Caseload

The issue of whether or not MCFD and its predecessors have enough resources, especially child protection social workers, to discharge its child protection responsibilities has been perennial. This section of the report examines recent available evidence about workloads and caseloads of child protection social workers to determine whether changes in the ministry over the past few years have increased workload and caseload.

What are “Caseload” and “Workload”?

The ministry distinguishes between workload and caseload to reflect the complexity and diversity of the child protection system.

Caseload means the number of active files or cases that a social worker has responsibility for at any one time. For individual social workers, the nature of the cases they are dealing with will depend on the nature of the work that they do. An open case for a social worker could be an active investigation of a child protection report, management of a case related to bringing a child or youth into the temporary care of the Ministry, dealing with someone in temporary custody or discharging someone from the temporary care of the ministry, dealing with someone in the permanent care of the ministry or a case where an out-of-care option is being considered or implemented for a child or youth.

For the various different sorts of cases, the nature of the case and the amount of resources required varies considerably. The ministry has determined that simply counting the number of files assigned to social workers is not a good indicator of whether demands on social workers are increasing or decreasing. In addition, it is

not a simple matter to count files. Caseload is usually measured by comparing the number of children in care with the number of social workers at a given point in time. That is problematic because many “cases” relate to children who are not in care, and there is huge variability in the amount of child protection effort devoted to different children in care, depending on their circumstances.

Workload has therefore been defined by the ministry as an alternative mechanism to measure the activity of child protection social workers. Rather than considering the demands placed on social workers in terms of the number of cases that they are dealing with at a given time, the workload concept considers the amount of time that must be devoted to the various social work tasks that comprise the child protection function.

Measuring Workload

The ministry has been using the workload concept to help manage child protection social work resources since 1997, when a model known as “CHILDREN” was introduced.

The purpose of the model was to estimate the number of child protection social workers required to undertake the child protection function in BC. That model was used and maintained sporadically until 2004, when a project to update and more intensively support the model was undertaken.

The revised model, known as “Knowing Intentions and Determining Services (KIDS)” was completed in August, 2005. The purposes of the revision included: making the model more user-friendly and accessible so that it can be used as a management tool throughout the ministry; taking into account changes in legislation, standards and practice which have changed the set of child protection social work activities and the time required for those activities; and specifically taking into account the out-of-care options and other practice changes such as alternative dispute resolution associated with service transformation goals.

The model is a type of input-output model. In essence, the model divides all child protection work into a number of specific tasks, each with an assigned average amount of social work time required to complete the task. The total amount of child protection social work required is calculated by multiplying the expected number of times each task will need to be performed during a year by the average time for performing the task. That total number of social worker hours is then converted to social work FTE’s using the average number of hours that a full time social worker has available during the year for social work, taking into account vacations, sick leave and other leave, training, travel and other factors. The model provides estimates of the amount of social work effort required in various practice areas (groups of tasks), as well an estimate of the overall number of FTEs. The model also provides information on a regional and sub-regional basis.

The following example is intended only to demonstrate how the calculation is performed and is not based on actual numbers or average times for tasks and is a

gross simplification of the myriad tasks actually involved in child protection social work. It assumes that a full time social worker has 1,500 hours available per year:

Task	Number of Tasks Expected	Average Time Required (hours)	Total Time Required (hours)	Total FTEs Required
Receiving a report	10,000	3.0	30,000	20
Investigating a report	1,000	45.0	45,000	30
Apprehending a child	100	150.0	15,000	10
Total			90,000	60

The key to reasonable estimates for the required total number of child protection social work FTEs under the model is reasonable assumptions regarding the number of each of the tasks that need to be performed. The model does not rely on assumptions being input directly for each of the tasks, but rather those assumptions are generated based on the workflow underlying social work practice and the factors which drive the requirements for each task to be performed. Indicators such as the number of reports received and trends for, for example, the number of reports that result in full-fledged child protection investigations and how many of those investigations result in a child being taken into care, provide a structure within which the assumptions can be generated. Changes in practice and intentions to change practice, such as the service transformation toward out-of-care options, also affects the assumptions chosen.

The model can be used in several different ways, depending on how those assumptions are generated.

One way that it can be used is to look back at what happened in the past as a way to better understand what has happened and is happening, which can help to manage for the present and the future. That is done by “backcasting” instead of forecasting, running the model with actual data from a previous period and comparing the results with how many FTE’s were actually available in total and in each of the practice areas, providing information about what might need to be adjusted in future.

Another way the model can be used is to forecast. Given forecasts of the assumptions and intentions about practice shifts and priorities, the model can be used to ask “What is the total number of FTE’s that will be required and in what practice areas?”

Finally, the model can be used to ask “what if” questions such as: All other things being equal, what if the number of out-of-care options used were doubled? What if out-of-care was not used at all? What if a new delegated agency resulted in certain tasks being reduced by certain amounts but other tasks being increased?

The workflow logic of the model also produces another output from the model, which is an estimate of the number of children in care at the end of the period. This estimate is not a forecast based on socio-economic data, which the ministry produces independently of the KIDS model – it is simply a calculation based on the tasks to be performed of the number of children in care, given that many of the tasks either contribute to increasing the number of children in care by being part of the process by which children are taken into care, or reduce the number of children in care by providing alternatives to state guardianship or are part of the process by which children in care are discharged. The estimate of children in care generated by the model is a useful indicator to help calibrate the model and to provide an indication of the effect beyond the direct child protection social work practice of factors that affect that practice.

The KIDS model is limited only to child protection and does not include related activities such as guardianship, adoption, and contracted resource management.

Workload Evidence

Can the workload model be used to determine whether the ministry has adequate social work resources? It can be used to give an indication, subject to some important limitations, including:

- It can not be used to give an indication of whether there are sufficient social worker FTEs regionally because comparable regional FTE funded and actual child protection social worker data are not available; and
- The estimates of the required child protection social worker FTEs depends on the assumptions input into the model. The ministry has indicated that the estimates presented below are “backcasts” based on actual data for assumptions but the data has not been verified a part of this work.

The following table compares the number of required child protection social worker FTEs generated by the workload models as compared with funded FTEs and FTEs actually used for each fiscal year from 1997/98 to 2005/06. In addition, the table shows the number of children in care for which the ministry is directly responsible and the number of these children in care per child protection social worker.

Consider first the traditional caseload measure of children in care per child protection social worker, which has fallen from 8.9 in 1996/97 to 6.6 in 2005/06. By this measure, caseloads have fallen dramatically (over 25%) as social worker FTEs have increased and the number of children in the direct care of the ministry

have decreased. However, it would be inappropriate to conclude from this evidence that workloads have decreased significantly over the period.

Child Protection Social Work FTEs and Children in Care

Year	Workload Model FTEs	Funded FTEs	Actual FTEs	Average CIC	CIC Per Funded FTE
97/98	1,198	999		8,921	8.9
98/99	1,257	1,221		9,715	8.0
99/00	1,274	1,221		9,675	7.9
00/01	1,289	1,286	1,052	9,771	7.6
01/02	1,269	1,268	1,044	9,853	7.8
02/03	1,171	1,216	1,121	8,891	7.3
03/04	1,095	1,160	1,101	7,565	6.5
04/05	1,086	1,103	1,020	7,305	6.6
05/06	1,091	1,103	1,002	7,269	6.6

Notes:

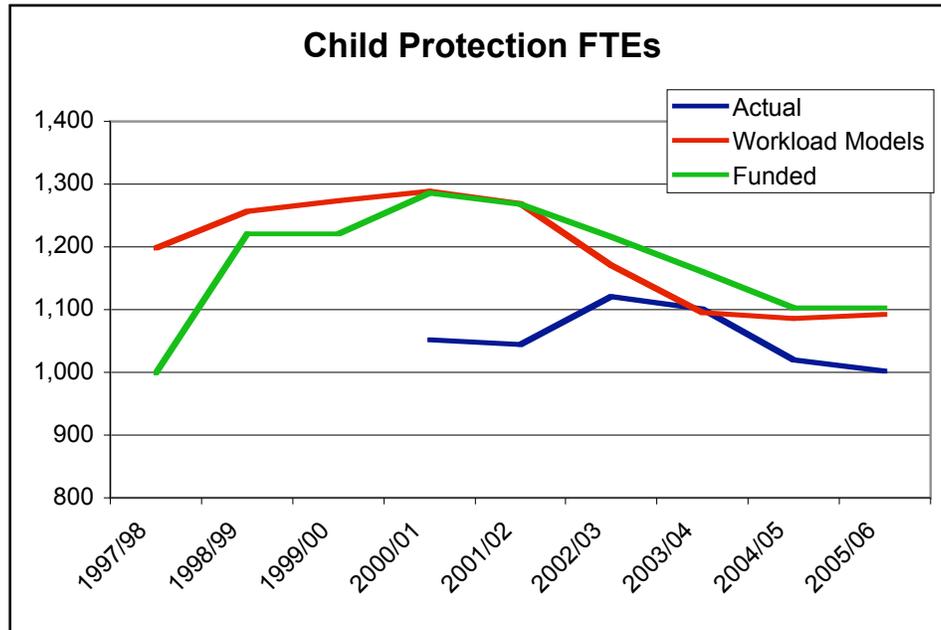
- (1) Children in Care (CIC) excludes delegated and from 2003/04 on excludes special needs children and children in the care of Community Living BC
- (2) 2005/06 is projected
- (3) Actual FTEs are from CHIPS/HR data.
- (4) CP FTEs includes CP, Guardianship and Multidisciplinary with CP workers

In terms of the number of children in the direct care of the ministry, three major trends have been observed over the period:

- The number of children in care that are under the direct care of a delegated agency has increased. However, that has not resulted in a proportionate decline in workload, since much of the child protection work leading up to the children entering care and/or being discharged from care is still undertaken by the ministry.
- The number of children in the direct care of the ministry was reduced significantly with the transfer of special needs children to the care of Community Living BC, but that also does not imply that ministry child protection social workers are not involved with those children before and after they come into care.
- The overall number of children in care is dropping, partly in response to practice changes, but those practice changes may also increase workload. In addition, a reduction in the number of children in care does not necessarily mean that demands for child protection services are decreasing at the same rate.

This illustrates why caseload is a flawed measure of the work undertaken by social workers.

The following chart plots the number of child protection social worker FTEs indicated by the workload models as compared to funded and actual FTEs.



The number of FTEs indicated by the workload model grew in the late 1990's, decreased from 2000/01 to 2004/05 and has stayed constant from 2005/06. At the beginning of the period there was a significant gap between funded and required FTEs, which was addressed in 1998/99 and 2000/01 with the addition of a significant number of new funded positions. As actual FTE usage is not available for the period, it is not known how successful the ministry was in translating additional funded FTEs into net new social workers. However, in 2000/01, the actual number of child protection social work FTEs used was substantially (about 18%) below the number of FTEs required, as indicated by the model.

Since 2000/01, both workload model and funded FTEs have decreased, with funded FTEs exceeding the number indicated by the workload model for the entire period. While actual FTEs increased for 2002/03 and 2003/04, briefly matching the number of FTEs indicated by the workload model, for 2005/06 actual FTEs are expected to be about 8% or 90 FTEs below the workload model number.

To provide some context, over the period 2002/03 to 2004/05 the number of new child protection social workers joining the ministry averaged about 100 individuals per year. On average, there are about 1.28 individual social workers per FTE, meaning that a 90 FTE gap implies about 115 individual social workers, on

average. This suggests that, to bring the number of actual child protection social worker FTEs up to the current number indicated by the workload model would require recruitment of child protection social workers to increase substantially, given that current intake levels of about 100 are not maintaining social worker FTE levels. Whether or how much the number of social workers needs to increase will depend on the future need for social workers.

Is the need for social workers expected to decline? That question is beyond the scope of this report, but the following observations are offered:

- The number of children in care as a proportion of the 0-18 population fell from a high of 11.1 children in care per 1,000 children in the population in 2001 to a rate of 10.0 and has remained constant for two years;
- The population of aboriginal children continues to grow, and the rate of aboriginal children in care as a proportion of the aboriginal population of children continues to grow, increasing from about 36 per 1,000 in 1998 to 53 at present;
- The number of child protection reports and investigations has decreased in each of the past several years;
- The service transformation initiatives, particularly the increased usage of out-of-care options, are expected to reduce the number of children in care over time and to improve outcomes for children at risk, but there is an upfront investment in social work required to implement these options and a change in the nature of the social work required will require a change in the skills and competencies of social workers over time to increase use of these tools. The workload model takes into account the increased social work effort required to undertake service transformation; and
- The demographic trend of ageing baby boomers who will be retiring over the next several years will be a factor affecting child protection social workers directly as social workers in that demographic leave the ministry and indirectly as the trend affects the labour market in general, which is expected to result in shortages of skilled workers in many disciplines.

Regional Workload Evidence

The ministry provided the following data by region:

2005/06 Social Worker FTEs by Region

Region	Regional Workload Model FTEs	Actual FTEs – Children and Family Services ¹	Actual/Model
Fraser	333	516	1.5
Interior	211	385	1.8
Vancouver Coastal	175	335	1.9
Vancouver Island	221	332	1.5
North	151	261	1.7
Total	1,091	1,829	1.7

While the actual FTEs and FTEs indicated by the workload model are not directly comparable, they are provided here to give a sense of the regional distribution of FTEs. Using the ratio of actual FTEs to FTEs indicated by the model, Fraser and Vancouver Island regions are below average and the other three regions are at or above average. That indicates that overall these two regions have relatively few FTEs, which could, but does not necessarily, mean that they are understaffed.

It is noted that the Fraser region hosts the provincial after hours program. That program, which uses about 50 FTEs, is not included in the number of child protection social workers predicted by the workload model but is included in the actual number of Children and Family Services FTEs. One would expect that actual total Children and Family Service FTEs would exceed model FTEs by more than the average amount in Fraser, unless there are other factors which mean Fraser has relatively lower requirements in non-child protection services to children and families.

C. Training for Child Protection Social Workers

Training of child protection social workers is crucial to the delivery of effective child protection services, especially where there is a significant number of new social workers entering the workforce on an ongoing basis. Training and turnover also have implications for workload as one would expect new social workers to be less efficient than experienced social workers, but the degree and nature of the training provided will affect the relative efficiency.

¹ Includes child protection social workers plus other workers who provide services to children and families.

Social Worker Turnover

The following table shows the total number of individual child protection social workers (i.e. people rather than FTEs) together with a measure of those leaving child protection work:

Child Protection Social Worker Turnover, 2002/03 to 2005/06

	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Total Number of CPSWs	1,428	1,344	1,324	1,351
CPSWs Leaving MCFD	122	120	112	78
CPSWs Moving to non-CP Jobs	34	29	58	16
Total CPSWs Leaving CP	156	149	170	94
CPSWs Leaving/Total CPSWs	10.9%	11.1%	12.8%	11.9%

Notes:

- (1) 2005/06 data are to October 31, 2005.
- (2) the ratio of CPSWs leaving to total CPSWs for 2005/06 is calculated based on annualized number of CPSWs leaving child protection of 161.

This indicates that turnover of child protection social workers is significant, with over 10% leaving child protection practice in each of the four years since 2002/03. As discussed above, there seems to be a gap between the number of needed and actual social workers which suggests that additional recruitment will be needed over the next few years to close the gap, unless the need for child protection social workers declines.

Social Worker Training and Recruitment

The ministry has provided the following information on the recruitment and training of child protection social workers:

You asked about the adequacy of training and mentorship for new child protection social work hires. The training program has changed since the post-Gove period when 20 weeks of training were required by the ministry. The change has been a positive one as MCFD together with the universities developed a child welfare specialization program. The development of the specializations reduced the need for pre-employment child protection training that Gove recommended. The Justice Institute BC:

- Delivers a 13 week modular program (plus 6 week practicum) for new hires holding general BSW and BA (CYC) degrees;
- Developed and delivers a 3-week orientation program for new hires holding the specialized child welfare BSW or BA (CYC) degrees; and

- Developed and delivers an on-line course for more experienced Child Welfare social workers in the Ministry on 'Intervening in Child Neglect' (which addresses level 3 competencies).

These arrangements have been in full operation for three years and are well accepted and successful. MCFD child protection hiring now usually requires applicants to hold a specialized degree. The specialized programs have attracted students who have a serious interest in the child welfare field and the programs and practicum allow both students and the Ministry to assess suitability for practice prior to job entry. Attached to this document is a summary of the details of the training programs. Additional details on the ministry's training programs have been provided to the Review in the update to the Gove recommendations.

In terms of your question on mentorship, there are two ways in which mentorship is supported currently for CPSWs:

Practicum Mentorship Model

- There are 5 MCFD regional practicum coordinators who provide mentorship training and coaching for team leaders who are supporting CW specialization post-secondary practicum students in MCFD offices. Enhancing the post-secondary practicum experience for students through a mentorship model has improved the MCFD experience for students and current MCFD employees. Expectations are clearer as well as roles and responsibilities of the students as well as the mentors who support students through their 12 week practicum.

Corporate Mentorship Program

- MCFD was the first Ministry in government to pilot the electronic Mentoring and Protégé Program [MAPP], an on-line partner matching and resource system.
- In 2004, the BC Public Service Agency (BC PSA) took over the management and administration of what is now known as the 'Corporate Mentoring Program'. Through this change MCFD was able to retain its own unique MCFD mentor and protégé employee pool for all employees, while the Corporate Program focussed more on the Leadership Pool at the ML5-12 levels.
- The BC PSA has now set up and is administering an "Across Ministry Mentoring Pool" for Mentors and Protégés. This larger across-ministry mentoring pool provides protégés and mentors with more opportunities for a 'best match.' It has the added advantage of increased learning and sharing between ministries as well as program groups.
- 120 MCFD employees are currently enrolled in the program. Employees have access to a mentor program that informally supports knowledge sharing among employees and offers coaching expertise within the organization.

JI Training Practicum Component

- The JI has a field placement coordinator who not only teaches some of the courses in the 19 week modular program but also liaises with the employees when they are on their field practicum placement, as well as with their team leaders.
- The practicums occur in the employee's home office that s/he has been hired into.
- In the past, when there was a 'pre-hire' training course through the JI, Education Services put on a mentoring program that team leaders attended so that they were able to coach and support those on their JI practicum more effectively.
- Once the pre-hire training ended and just the post-hire training was in place, mentorship training was not provided for the team leaders supporting employees on their JI practicum placement.

Appendix A includes additional information about training supplied by the ministry.

D. Effects of Budget Changes on Child Protection Resources

Ministry Response

The Ministry was asked to provide: details of budget changes by program areas over the past several years; and, context about the ministry's approach to dealing with the budget cuts and a description of the impacts of budget reductions on foster care and contracted resources.

The following table outlining budget changes by program area was provided by the ministry in response to the first part of the question put to them, with the row showing the percentage change from 2002/03 to 2005/06 added:

MCFD Restated Actual Expenditures by Fiscal Year & Core Business						
****Less Federal \$\$\$****						
Year	Adult Community Living	Child & Family Development	ECD, Child Care & CYSN	Provincial Services	Executive & Support Services	Ministry Total
----- (\$ millions) -----						
2001/02	526.5	674.2	298.8	70.0	41.2	1,610.7
2002/03	553.1	667.0	301.6	70.4	29.3	1,621.4
2003/04	518.8	593.2	301.8	58.9	19.2	1,491.9
2004/05	506.9	567.8	311.5	53.9	19.0	1,459.1
2005/06 (Estimated)	520.6	588.5	327.8	53.3	18.2	1,508.4
% change 02/03 to 05/06	-5.9 %	-11.8 %	8.6 %	-24.3 %	-37.9 %	-6.8 %

Notes:

- The figures have been restated based on current core businesses and to account for program transfers during the intervening years. Therefore will not agree with the amounts quoted in Public Accounts. Reconciliation to Public Accounts is available.
- 2005/06 figures are based on end of October forecast. Adult Community Living forecast is based on operating funding to be provided to CLBC (excludes grants for IT/other capital purposes)

The table indicates that the area reduced most in the ministry was Executive and Support Services, which is essentially the headquarters function, reduced by almost 40% since 2002/03 and by over 55% since 2001/02. Provincial Services, which refers to youth justice (youth custody centres and other services to young offenders) has also been reduced significantly, while “Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Support for Children and Youth with Special Needs” increased over the period.

In addition, the ministry also provided the following staff FTE information:

FTE's		
Year	Budget	Actual
2000/01	4,996	4,827
2001/02	5,076	4,780
2002/03	4,907	4,542
2003/04	4,274	4,186
2004/05	4,134	4,061
2005/06	3,952	3,985

The following is the ministry's response to the rest of the question:

In terms of the context around budget decisions, the ministry was tasked with developing plans for a 23% budget reduction. At the time the Mid-Term Review was called in May 2003, the ministry was criticized for not having detailed plans to implement the budget targets. The Ministry was asked to present a detailed plan to Treasury Board on how the 23% reduction could be achieved. The Ministry's submission was prioritized against the following principles that any initiatives be:

- Consistent with government priorities
- Realistic and achievable
- Supported by evidence and service effectiveness
- Focus on administration and labour reductions before service cuts
- Limit impacts on other ministries and federal contributions
- Limit health and safety impacts for individuals
- Limit involuntary changes in residential placements

These principles were endorsed by Treasury Board and were the guide against which decisions were made. The resulting decision by Treasury Board was that the ministry's budget reduction would be 11% rather than 23%. \$122M was restored to the ministry's budget to ensure that we could meet our mandate to protect vulnerable children and families. The review also resulted in the protection of funding for early childhood development, services for special needs children and child and youth mental health. This left \$100M for MCFD to reduce, of which \$30M in initiatives had been underway at the time of the Treasury Board presentation.

The areas targeted for reduction all had to be consistent with the principles. They were:

Workload, Training &
Budget Changes

Initiative	04/05 Target
Community Living Services: Increased efficiencies in the system while creating choice and flexibility for clients	\$6.0M
Youth Justice: Reducing youth custody facilities since the youth custody rates had declined by 45%	\$4.5M
Reducing Compensation and Benefits Costs in the Sector: Initiatives to address labour costs in contracted agencies and through the ministry's procurement practices	\$35.0M
FTE Reductions: Reductions to HQ, CLS and CFD staffing	\$18.5M
Child Welfare Practice: Shifting child welfare practice consistent with new research and evidence to reduce children in care rates such as promoting out-of-care options and permanency planning through adoption	\$6.0M

In addition, Treasury Board approved an initiative termed "service delivery re-design" whereby \$7.33M was saved through the reconfiguration or elimination of service contracts, but the entire savings amount was reinvested into services that were more evidence-based and culturally appropriate (\$5M of the savings were reinvested in Aboriginal services).

The largest proportion of the savings were found through reducing compensation and benefit costs in the sector. 80% of the ministry's budget is in contracts with community-based service providers, and 85% of their costs are labour costs. The initiative had two components, recovery of compensation overpayments to agencies and sector collective bargaining. This initiative had no service impacts.

The FTE reductions represented a 40% reduction to HQ FTEs, 12-15% of Child and Family Development FTEs (including regional office admin) and a 10% reduction to CLS FTEs. Prior to the mid term review we had already achieved reduction of roughly 700 FTEs from our initial allocation of around 5076. This was done by not filling vacancies, not filling new FTEs that we received in the 2001/02 budget and through the first round of VDP/ERIP. During the mid term review we reduced by further 493 FTEs: HQ 179 (roughly 40%), CFD 274 (roughly 12-15%). CLS 40 (roughly 10%). To achieve the reductions, 92% of the FTEs were managed through early retirement or the voluntary departure program. The direction to the field on the FTE reductions was to maximize reductions in the regional offices (ie administrative positions and management) and to non-child protection FTEs (e.g. other SPO positions such as youth probation where we have seen a declining count of youth).

In terms of your third question, the impact of budget reductions on foster care on contracted services, there were no reductions to foster care rates in the ministry's budget process. There have been reductions in the number

of children-in-care which has resulted in a need for fewer foster homes but given that we are continually recruiting new and experienced homes, no homes were closed as a result of the budget initiatives. For contracted resources, any impacts would have been felt through sector collective bargaining.

E. Conclusions

Workload

The evidence suggests that the ministry has maintained funding for front line child protection social workers at or above the workload levels suggested by its workload model. If the actual number of FTEs available was equal to the number of funded FTEs then, on average, workloads should be reasonable for front line social workers. However, it appears that actual FTEs are about 8% less than funded FTEs, indicating a gap of about 90 FTEs or 115 individuals, which would require significant additional recruitment to close.

Regional estimates of required FTEs are available from the workload model but comparable numbers of funded or actual FTEs do not seem to be available. It is important that that information be generated in order to make the regional information produced by the model useful to regional managers and headquarters staff alike.

Comparing regional actual FTEs in the children and families services program area with regional FTEs estimated by the model shows some variability in the way the FTEs are distributed, with Fraser and Vancouver Island below average. Although that does not necessarily mean that those regions are relatively under-resourced in the child protection social work function, it could indicate that they are under-resourced and this should be explored more fully.

The KIDS workload model appears to be a sophisticated and useful management tool. However, the model has not been subject to external review and validation. It is suggested that, now that the model has been substantially revised, such a review would be a useful next step to ensure its long term credibility and usefulness.

Training

Over the past decade, the ministry has significantly increased its recruitment standards and training. In addition, changes to the way that delegation of child protection authority is handled have provided a mechanism for the ministry to better ensure that staff meet standards prior to gaining authority to apprehend children. While it is not possible to say whether the ministry recruitment and training programs are “adequate” and it is beyond the scope of this report to review how actual recruitment and training compares with the ministry’s standards, there is no doubt that MCFD is providing considerably more support to new social workers and setting higher standards for recruitment and delegation than prior to

implementation of the Gove Report. The ministry has indicated that training and recruitment have not been adversely affected by budget reductions.

It is noted that the service transformations underway in the ministry toward more use of out-of-care options and alternative dispute resolution require a considerably different set of skills and competencies than traditional child protection social work, where ultimately the state, as represented by the child protection social worker, is making parental decisions. Considerable training will be required for service transformation to be successful. Simply protecting the current level of training will not be sufficient, even though the level of training is at an all-time high.

Budget Reduction Implications

The ministry response together with the analysis of workload indicate that in meeting its budget reduction targets over the past five years, the ministry has tried to protect services by reducing headquarters and regional administration as much as possible.

Arguably that is a reasonable strategy in this type of situation, but the sustainability of the strategy may be questionable. While it is almost always possible to achieve some administrative efficiencies, at some point budget cuts will reduce capacity. Reducing administrative capacity in headquarters and regions is likely to have three consequences for service delivery – the capacity to plan and manage resources will be reduced; the capacity to develop policy and adapt to changing conditions will be reduced; and ability to undertake effective quality assurance functions will be impaired. These are the functions that the ministry needs to effectively manage its operations and to develop its policy and programs.

Reducing headquarters and regional capacity beyond the critical mass needed to plan, manage and maintain accountability and focus on legitimate provincial interests will create problems for any operational organization like MCFD at any time. It is particularly problematic when done at a time when both the organizational structure is being changed as the ministry moves toward regional governance for operations and the work that the organization does is being changed through the practice shifts related to service transformation. Both of these changes demand substantial headquarters and regional administrative and managerial resources to be successfully implemented. Significant budget reductions in the administrative area at the time that such a change is being implemented introduce significant risks into the process.

One other point of note is that the ministry response indicates that part of the budget cut was accommodated through use of more out-of-care options. As mentioned above, ministry staff have also indicated that these practice changes, while likely to reduce costs to the ministry over time as fewer children are in care, as well as improving outcomes for children and youth at risk, require an upfront investment. That investment takes several forms, including:

- increased social work effort to use the out-of-care options instead of taking a child into care;
- increased and different use of contract resources to support those caring for the child who is subject of the out-of-care option;
- start-up costs associated with ensuring staff have the skills and competencies needed to make use of these options a success and to ensure the necessary contracted resources are in place in the community to provide needed support; and
- effective quality assurance to ensure that lessons learned from the implementation of practice changes are captured and disseminated through policy, standards, training, etc.

If this reasoning is correct, expectations about realizing immediate savings from service practice shifts are likely to be limiting the rate at which those practices can be expanded.

Appendix A – Training

Social Worker Training - Questions and Answers

What are the qualifications needed to work in child protection?

One of the following degrees:

- Bachelor of Social Work
- Masters in Social Work
- BA in Child and Youth Care
- M. Ed in Counselling
- MA in Clinical Psychology having completed a practicum in family and child welfare

or an equivalent combination of education and experience

Preference is given to those having a Specialization in Child Welfare and those who have completed a practicum in a child protection office.

What training do social workers receive to work in child protection?

Newly recruited social workers with a Child Welfare Specialization (Child Welfare Specialization includes a 4th year practicum placement in a child protection office of approximately 3 months), receive a 3 week 'Child Welfare Specialization' course.

Course content includes:

- Review of relevant legislation and practice standards
- Investigative interviewing
- Court skills, child abuse and neglect
- Working with Aboriginal children and families
- Overview of dispute resolution
- Review of substance abuse and FASD in the context of child protection
- 4 days of computer training

- Still need one further week of guardianship to be fully delegated under CF&CSA

For those newly hired who have an appropriate University degree but do not have a Child Welfare Specialization, there is a 'Child Welfare Training' Program consisting of 11 weeks of classroom instruction interspersed with 8 weeks of field placement.

Course content includes:

- Orientation to child Welfare Practice – legislation, practice standards, permanency options for children, out-of-care options, computer training, dispute resolution and communication skills
- Building on child, Youth and Family Strengths – participants apply knowledge of child development, abuse and neglect, trauma and attachment issues to case studies, consider how substance abuse, FASD, disabilities impact child safety and well being and examine strategies to support aboriginal children and families.
- Working with Families and Communities to Keep Children Safe –investigative interviewing, risk assessment, strategies for reducing and managing risk, court skills
- Placement Options for Children and Youth – review guardianship standards, legislation, assessing and planning for children and youth, involving parents and extended family in planning, overview of adoption, considerations when returning children home, preparing youth for independence.

What training is available for existing social workers?

- Employees are sponsored to attend workshops and conferences demonstrating collaborative strategies and supporting current research in the areas of Family Development Response, Family Group Conferencing, and Alternative Dispute Resolution.
- Supervisors and team leaders have access to supervisory training in clinical practice.
- The Ministry has a mentorship program that informally supports knowledge sharing among employees and offers coaching expertise within the organization – 120 employees are currently involved in the program.
- Work has been done on utilizing more 'on line' training options but improved computer technology is needed (refreshed computers don't allow for video streaming) and supervisors must respect that an employee working on a course on the computer should not be interrupted. One example of on line

training was a course, 'Intervening in Child Neglect', offered last year and currently being revised.

- Between 2002 and 2003, 250 Ministry employees attended Leadership training at Royal Roads University. The BC Public Service Agency now offers a comparable program through their 'Leading the Way' series.