Introduction

The December 2008 Report on Children in the Care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development in the North is the ministry’s first public report specifically on the safety and well-being of children in its care within the North region. The following report consists of a series of measures that document both the outcomes achieved by Children in Care in the North and the work of the ministry. As part of its commitment to report publicly on measures, the ministry will be producing similar material that is region specific on a regular basis.

MCFD has a host of measures that it monitors on a regular basis to help inform decision-making and policy development, many of which are available publicly on the ministry’s website and annual service plan. However, the ministry is continually examining what new measures may be added to appropriately assess outcomes of vulnerable children.

The report is in two sections, the first section focuses on all Children in Care in the North. The second section focuses on Aboriginal Children in Care in the North.

Section 1: All Children in Care in the North

Progress at School

Improving educational outcomes for the children in its care is a priority for the Ministry. While many children only come into the care of the Ministry for a brief period of time, the Ministry’s relationship with children under a Continuing Custody Order is longer-term in nature. This means that the Ministry has an opportunity to positively affect the educational attainment of these children. The Ministry currently tracks and reports provincially on educational outcomes for children under a Continuing Custody Order. It will now report and track on educational outcomes for Children under a Continuing Custody Order in the North using Age Appropriate Grade. Age Appropriate Grade identifies whether a school-aged child is in the grade that is appropriate for their age. For example, children six years old before the end of December of the school year are generally in grade one.

MCFD and the Ministry of Education have embarked on a joint process to assess, monitor and improve educational outcomes for children in care – and in particular, children in care under a Continuing Custody Order. As part of this process, cross-ministry educational guidelines have been prepared to assist educators, social workers and caregivers in developing goals and supports to improve educational outcomes.

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<tr>
<th>How MCFD will measure progress at school</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Comments and provincial context</th>
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| Age Appropriate Grade Level for children under a Continuing Custody Order (CCO) in the North | As of September 2007, 76.9% of children under a CCO in the North were at their age appropriate grade level | **Indicator Type:** Outcome  
**Desired Indicator Result:** Increase  
**Comments:** Data available annually |
Plan of Care

Every child that comes into care needs a plan of care. The ministry’s intent is that every child that comes into care has a plan of care that: is holistic, current and relevant to the child’s unique circumstances and needs, reflects ongoing significant changes in the child’s development, and takes into account the child’s family and community situation. Within 30 days of a child coming into care, the ministry’s goal is that: an initial assessment of the child’s needs is completed, an initial plan of care for the child is in place, and the child’s health and urgent developmental needs are addressed. The ministry will now track and report on whether Children in Care in the North, who are in care more than 30 days, have a complete and up-to-date Comprehensive Plan of Care (CPOC).

It is important to note that a great deal of work takes place when a child comes into the care of the ministry – even if the care plan has not been formalized within the 30-day standard. When a child comes into the care of the ministry, there is an initial assessment to establish the child’s needs, what supports may be required and how best to provide those supports or services.

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<tr>
<th>How MCFD will measure Plan of Care</th>
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| A child in care in the North for more than 30 days will have a complete and up to date Comprehensive Plan of Care (CPOC) | 38.4% of Children in Care in the North that have been in care for more than 30 days have a complete and up to date CPOC. | Indicator Type: Output  
Desired Indicator Result: Increase  
Comments: Does not include Community Living BC (CLBC) Children in Care, children in the care of Delegated Agencies, or Children in Care in an adoption placement.  
Measure estimated December 31, 2008. The next report will have an additional measure including CLBC Children in Care, children in the care of Delegated Agencies and Children in Care in an adoption placement.  
Provincial Context: 32.0% of Provincial Children in Care that have been in care more than 30 days have a complete and up to date CPOC. Measure estimated December 2008. |
Visits with Guardianship Workers

Ensuring that a child in care receives quality care and is regularly informed of, and educated about, their rights and entitlements is an important priority of the ministry. Regular meetings with guardianship workers help ensure that a child is well cared for, and that the child in care has opportunities to express their views about decisions affecting them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How MCFD will measure visits with guardianship workers</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Comments and provincial context</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The percentage of Children in Care in the North who have had face-to-face contact with guardianship workers every 90 days.</td>
<td>86.8% of Children in Care in the North have had face-to-face contact with guardianship workers every 90 days.</td>
<td><strong>Indicator Type:</strong> Output  <strong>Desired Indicator Result:</strong> Increase  <strong>Comments:</strong> Data is based on audit compliance results and the criteria: “Since April 1, 2004, the social worker has had private, in person contact with the child at least every 90 days and whenever there has been a change in placement, social worker, or other significant circumstance”. Measure estimated December 2008.  <strong>Provincial Context:</strong> 61.7% of provincial Children in Care have had face-to-face contact with guardianship workers every 90 days. Measure estimated December 2008.</td>
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Moves While In Care

Stability for a child in care is central to maintaining the child’s well-being. While a change in the child's living arrangements is sometimes necessary, the ministry’s intent is to minimize the number of moves a child experiences while in care. If a move is necessary, all efforts are made to prevent and mitigate the trauma the child may experience. A necessary change in living arrangements is an opportunity to review whether it is possible for the child to be placed within their extended family and community.

New joint ministry guidelines have been developed with the Ministry of Education to address some of the challenges associated with moves involving children in care. The Ministry of Education has called on school districts to minimize school moves and where such moves do take place, the guidelines establish increased information sharing and joint planning to ensure an appropriate support structure is in place for the child.

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<tr>
<th>How MCFD will measure moves in care</th>
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<tr>
<td>The number of moves in their most recent care period for</td>
<td>0.9 moves per year of children discharged from Temporary Custody Orders</td>
<td><strong>Indicator Type:</strong> Outcome  <strong>Desired Indicator Result:</strong> Reduce</td>
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</table>
discharged children in the North. (TCOs) or Continuing Custody Orders (CCOs) composed of:

- 1.1 moves per year for Northern children discharged from a Temporary Custody Order; and
- 0.7 moves for Northern children discharged from a Continuing Custody Order.

Comments: Data is based on the results for children discharged from TCOs and CCOs between April 2008 and December 2008. For these children, the measure considers all moves that have occurred during the child’s most recent period in care. The initial move into care is not included in the calculation.

Provincial Context: 0.8 moves for all children discharged from TCOs and CCOs between April 2008 and December 2008. This number is composed of:

- 1.0 moves per year for children discharged from a TCO; and
- 0.7 moves for children discharged from a CCO.

### Recurrence of Maltreatment

If it is determined that a child or youth has been or is at risk, the Ministry works with the family involved and provides services to build strengths and resilience, reduce future harm and address the needs of the child and the family.

This measure identifies the proportion of families that have two confirmed incidents of child neglect and/or abuse within 12 months of each other. The recurrence of neglect and/or abuse is an indicator of an ongoing problem that may require increased intervention services.

British Columbia is believed to be one of only two provinces in Canada that publicly report on the rate of recurrence. B.C.’s results are comparable with those of the Province of Alberta. Between 2004/05 and 2007/08, Alberta’s reported recurrence rate fluctuated between 25.1 and 20.6 per cent while B.C.’s recurrence rate was between 18.1 and 20.9 per cent for the same four years.

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<th>How MCFD will measure recurrence</th>
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| 12-month recurrence rate for children in the North. | 24.9% of Northern families with a confirmed case of child neglect and/or abuse in 2008 have also had a confirmed case in the previous 12 months. | Indicator Type: Outcome  Desired Indicator Result: Reduce  Comments: Measure estimated based on December 2008 data.  Provincial Context: As of December 2008, the provincial 12-month recurrence rate is 21.4%.

Neglect is defined as a failure by the parent or guardian to provide for a child’s basic needs; it may include failure to provide food, shelter, basic health care, supervision or protection from risks, to the extent that the child’s physical health, development or safety is, or is likely to be, harmed.
Abuse is defined as physical or sexual maltreatment or emotional neglect.

Section 2: Aboriginal Children in Care in the North

Characteristics

As of December 2008, 35.2 per cent of the North’s child population were Aboriginal while 79.1 per cent of Children in Care in the North were Aboriginal. As a first step in improving outcomes for Northern Aboriginal Children in Care the ministry will monitor and track the characteristics of its Children in Care caseload in the North.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What characteristics of its Northern Aboriginal Children in Care caseload will MCFD track</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>Comments and provincial context</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Number of Aboriginal Children in Care in the North | There are 839 Aboriginal Children in Care as of December 2008. Of this total: • 656 are in the care of MCFD; • 15 are in the care of CLBC; and • 168 are in the care of a Delegated Aboriginal Agency. | Indicator Type: Output  
Desired Indicator Result: Reduce over time (safety concerns remain paramount).  
Comments: Data is as of December 2008. Since April 2002, the North region has transferred a total of 204 Aboriginal Children in Care to Delegated Aboriginal Agencies.  
Provincial Context: 4,709 Aboriginal Children in Care. Since April 2002, the Province has transferred a total of 1,691 Aboriginal Children in Care to Delegated Aboriginal Agencies. |

| Aboriginal Children in Care rate per 1,000 Children | The Aboriginal Children in Care rate per 1,000 Aboriginal children in the North is 44.2. | Indicator Type: Output  
Desired Indicator Result: Reduce over time (safety concerns remain paramount).  
Comments: The North’s child population as of December 2008 was 72,908 children including 18,991 Aboriginal children of which 839 are Children in Care. Data is as of December 2008.  
Provincial Context: Aboriginal Children in Care rate per 1,000 Aboriginal children is 63.5 for the |
province as a whole. The North has the lowest rate of the five MCFD regions.

| Number of Aboriginal Children in Care in the North by Aboriginal status | Of the 839 Aboriginal Children in Care:  
  • 672 are First Nations;  
  • 75 Nisga’a;  
  • 89 Métis; and  
  • 3 are Inuit | Indicator Type: Output  
  Comments: Data is as of December 2008. Of the 672 First Nations Children in Care in the North, 558 have a band affiliation identified.  
  Provincial Context:  
  • 3,828 First Nations  
  • 110 Nisga’a  
  • 681 Métis  
  • 27 Inuit  
  • 63 No Status Identified  
  Data is for December 2008. |

### Plan of Care

The ministry will now track and report on whether Aboriginal Children in Care in the North, who are in care more than 30 days, have a complete and up-to-date Comprehensive Plan of Care (CPOC).

It is important to note that a great deal of work takes place when a child comes into the care of the ministry – even if the care plan has not been formalized within the 30-day standard. When a child comes into the care of the ministry, there is an initial assessment to establish the child’s needs, what supports may be required and how best to provide those supports or services. All plans of care are relevant to the child’s unique circumstances and needs, reflect ongoing significant changes in the development of the child, and include the child’s family and community situation. They are developed in collaboration with the child, family, extended family and cultural or Aboriginal community.

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| An Aboriginal child in care in the North, who is in care for more than 30 days, will have a complete and up to date Comprehensive Plan of Care (CPOC) | 38.1% of Aboriginal Children in Care in the North that have been in care more than 30 days have a complete an up to date CPOC. | Indicator Type: Output  
  Desired Indicator Result: Increase  
  Comments: Does not include Community Living BC Children in Care, Children in Care of Delegated Agencies, or Children in Care in an adoption placement. Measure estimated December 2008.  
  The next report will have an additional measure including CLBC Children in Care, children in the care of Delegated Agencies and Children in Care in an adoption placement. |
Provincial Context: 32.3% of Provincial Aboriginal Children in Care that have been in care more than 30 days have a complete and up to date CPOC.
Measure estimated December 2008.

Collaborative Planning and Decision-Making

Mediation and Family Group Conferencing are examples of collaborative planning and decision making. These processes involve family and community members in child welfare decision-making, and produce plans and agreements that protect children and youth and address the needs of families. For Aboriginal children, involving extended families in decision-making processes also help sustain the child's cultural heritage.

How MCFD will measure collaborative planning and decision making

| Participation of Aboriginal families in the North in Mediation and Family Group Conferencing | Mediation: There have been 43 completed mediations with Aboriginal families in the North involving 78 Aboriginal children. | Indicator Type: Output
| Family Group Conferencing: For the North, 92 Conferences and 23 Reviews held involving 154 Aboriginal subject children. | Desired Indicator Result: Increase
| | • Mediation: 486 completed mediations (April 2008 to December 2008). Of this total, 182 completed mediations involved 329 Aboriginal children. | Provincial Context:
| | • Family Group Conferencing: 461 conferences and 144 reviews held involving 484 Aboriginal children. |

Summary

This report establishes indicators for monitoring the progress of Children in Care in the North.

For the next report the number of indicators for Aboriginal Children in Care in the North will be expanded to include other indicators currently presented in Section 1 of the report.

The next reporting period will also include a region-by-region comparison for selective measures.