

**ABORIGINAL SERVICES LEVEL 13 GUARDIANSHIP C4
PRACTICE AUDIT REPORT**

Nisga'a Family and Child Services (INA)

Field Work Completed: January 24, 2006

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APPENDIX 1: AGENCY AUDIT COMPLIANCE REPORTS

ABORIGINAL SERVICES LEVEL 13 or C4 PRACTICE AUDIT REPORT

Nisga'a Family and Child Services (INA)

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the audit is to improve and support practice regarding child protection, guardianship, family service and resources for children in care. 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. As this is the first audit for the agency, this report should be seen as a platform for improvement.

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.

The audit is being conducted using the Aboriginal Audit Tool developed by Aboriginal Services Branch. 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

Field work was conducted from January 16-24, 2006 by one auditor. The computerized Aboriginal Case Practice Audit Tool (ACPAT) was used to collect data, generate office summary compliance reports and a compliance report for each file audited. ACPAT is a Microsoft Access program which is based on the Aboriginal Audit Tool. A sample size of 11 child service files; 5 family services files; 10 resource files were audited. In all 26 files were audited. Cases were randomly selected from a total of 19 open child service file, 9 open family files, and 23 open resource files. Cases were selected from each caseload in order to get an equal representation of files from each worker. Most of the child service files had been transferred from the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) to Nisga'a Family and Child Services (NFCS) in November 2003 and August 2004. Only the work completed by NFCS during the past 3 years was audited.

Upon arrival at NFCS headquarters in New Aiyansh, this auditor met with the agency's

director, clinical supervisor and staff. The purpose of the meeting was to meet staff and to review the audit purpose and process. This auditor was available to answer any questions from staff that arose during the audit process. Staff members were invited to meet with this auditor to discuss office systems and procedures. A similar process of meeting with staff was followed during the audit at the agency's Prince Rupert office. At the completion of the audit, a meeting occurred with staff at the head office to discuss the general findings of the audit as well as describe the next steps of the audit process including the report and recommendations. The agency's director and clinical supervisor attended both the meetings at the beginning of the audit and at the end of the audit. This auditor also met with the worker in Terrace, whose files had been audited at the head office, and reviewed with her the audit purpose and process, as well as the general findings of the audit. This auditor also met individually with the director, the clinical supervisor and all the staff.

3. AGENCY OVERVIEW

a) Delegation

NFCS is delegated at Level 13 or C4, Guardianship. This level of delegation enables the delegated agency to provide the following services:

- Guardianship of children in continuing custody;
- Support services to families;
- Voluntary care agreements;
- Special Needs agreements;
- Establishing and working with residential resources for children in care.

b) Demographics

In May 1997, NFCS began operating with Level 12, C3 Voluntary Services delegation. In April 2002 they obtained Level 13 or C4 Guardianship delegation. NFCS provides services to Nisga'a people in the 4 Nisga'a Villages and the urban communities of Terrace and Prince Rupert. The 4 Nisga'a Villages are: Gingolx (Kincolith); Laxgalts'ap (Greenville); Gitwinksihlkw (Canyon City); and Githaxt'aamix (New Aiyansh). There are approximately 1707 registered Nisga'a people residing in the 4 villages (320 in Kincolith; 467 in Greenville; 201 in Canyon City; and 719 in New Aiyansh.). There are approximately 998 registered Nisga'a residing in Terrace and approximately 1,299 registered Nisga'a residing in Prince Rupert. (Statistics provided by Nisga'a Lisims Government). NFCS provides services only to Nisga'a people and not all aboriginal people in these areas. All 4 Nisga'a villages are located in the Nass Valley, which is situated between Terrace and Prince Rupert. The distance between Terrace and New Aiyansh is approximately 100 km. The furthest distance between the villages is approximately 80 km. Until 2 years ago, Kincolith was only accessible by air from Prince Rupert. Staff had to drive from New Aiyansh to Prince Rupert and fly to Kincolith. Now access to all villages is by road, making the connection between the

villages much easier.

The agency has been providing family service and resource service since it was formed in 1997. Approximately 5 years ago the agency began accepting a selected few child service files from MCFD, for children in care under a Continuing Custody Order (CCO). Discussions between MCFD and NFCS continued for some time regarding the transfer of Nisga'a CCOs to NFCS. A 2 year agreement was finally reached in March 2005. In view of the time involved in reaching an agreement, NFCS requested that the CCO files be transferred to them before an agreement was reached. In November 2003, approximately 15 Nisga'a CCO files were transferred from MCFD in Terrace to NFCS. In August 2004, approximately 12 Nisga'a CCO files were transferred from MCFD in Prince Rupert to NFCS. Contracts were developed between MCFD and the agency to cover costs associated with these files. Although the agency received operations funding prior to the signing of the agreement, the funding did not include maintenance costs. Maintenance costs were covered by the agency until March 2005 when the agency and ministry signed the agreement. At that time, the agency received a back payment of approximately \$700,000.

The agency has also been working with the "Roots Project" in regards to Nisga'a children in foster care in the greater Vancouver area. The "Roots Project" is a MCFD program mandated to reunite and reconnect aboriginal children with their home communities. In February 2006 the Nisga'a people will be celebrating their New Year (Hobiye) in Prince Rupert. The plan is for approximately 15 Nisga'a children in foster care in the greater Vancouver area to come up to Prince Rupert to join in the New Year celebration. The children will be accompanied by caregivers and social workers. The travel costs will be covered by the "Roots Project". The plan is not to have a "Reclaiming" ceremony as some other nations have had in regards to their children, but rather to introduce the children to their families. The Nisga'a nation does not think it appropriate to have the nation reclaim their children, but rather that the families begin to reclaim their children. NFCS is in the process of contacting the families of these children to see what connections can be made between them during this weekend. The plan is not to single out these children but rather have them participate in the weekend events. However, NFCS wants to spend some time with these children, their caregivers and social workers and is planning a low-keyed luncheon for them. Small, culturally appropriate gifts will be presented to each child during this luncheon. This is seen as a beginning to introduce Nisga'a children to their culture as well as to their families. The director advised there are approximately a total of 180 Nisga'a children in foster care in B.C.

There is limited employment in the 4 villages as well as in Terrace and Prince Rupert. In Prince Rupert there is seasonal employment during the fishing season from March-April and July-September, and many aboriginal people work in the fish canaries. Some of canaries operate 24 hours a day/seven days a week and require workers to work various shifts. During this period of time, it is often difficult for families to continue with their involvement in counseling, visiting their children in foster care etc. as they are working the various shifts. This sometimes leaves children/families in limbo for a period of time. During these times, there is sometimes not sufficient understanding by the

various agencies involved with the families and conflict arises. At times clients have to choose between earning a living or working towards re-establishing their families, as they cannot do both at the same time.

As already stated, NFCS provides family services, guardianship services and resource services for children in care. The agency also provides funding for prevention services in both the villages and for Nisga'a people residing in Prince Rupert and Terrace. In the villages, funding is provided to Village Governments for services such as youth work, recreational director, family support and monies for workshops. In Terrace and Prince Rupert funding is provided for recreational programs for families and for school start up funds for children.

In addition to the services provided by NFCS, Nisga'a Valley Health, which is based in New Aiyansh, has also been providing services to the 4 villages. These services include drug and alcohol counseling, family counseling, mental health, Diagnostic and Treatment Center (satellite clinics in the other 3 communities), medical clinics, visiting dental clinics, and programs for long term patients. There has recently been some restructuring of Nisga'a Valley Health and they are in the process of reducing some of these services. This is of great concern, as people may have to go to the Terrace for some of these services. This is seen as a major set back and a real obstacle for clients receiving the needed assistance.

Each village also provides services through their social development programs, housing programs, public health nurse, and Headstart or day care programs. Each village also has a recreational center. The 4 villages have their own School District (92). In New Aiyansh schooling is available from Kindergarten to Grade 12. The other 3 communities have schooling available from Kindergarten to Grade 7. Children attending the higher grades are either bused to New Aiyansh or reside in residence at New Aiyansh. Educational upgrading for adults is available in each village and in New Aiyansh there is also a University College.

The RCMP provides services to the 4 villages. Their main office is in New Aiyansh, with satellite offices in Kincolith and Greenville. They also offer the Victims Assistance Program. There are churches in each of the villages. In 3 communities there are Anglican Churches and in 1 community there is a Salvation Army Church. There is also a Good Food Box program in 3 communities, in which families receive additional funds (\$20/month) to purchase fruit and vegetables, so as to promote healthy living.

In Prince Rupert and Terrace, the Nisga'a people are able to avail themselves of all the services existing in those communities which include public health, mental health, various medical services, Headstart, day care, drug and alcohol counseling, family counseling, RCMP services. There are also Friendship Centers in both communities.

c) Professional Staff Complement

The agency currently consists of 1 director, 1 supervisor, 5 social workers, 1 family development worker and 2 team assistants. NFCS has 3 offices from which services are provided. The main office is located in the Nisga'a Lisims government building in New Aiyansh. This office provides services to the 4 Nisga'a villages. The office in Prince Rupert is located downtown in Nisga'a Hall, which contains offices of the Nisga'a Society. This office provides services for Nisga'a people residing in the Prince Rupert area. The agency does not have its own office in Terrace, but has office space in one of the MCFD offices which is located close to downtown. The worker situated in Terrace provides services for Nisga'a people residing in Terrace. The clinical supervisor provides supervision to workers in all 3 offices. It should be noted that NFCS only provides services to Nisga'a people and not to all aboriginal people residing on or off Nisga'a land.

Although some of the workers have been with the agency for a relatively short period of time, all of the staff have previously worked in various capacities in the local ministries/agencies and have a good knowledge of the needs of the clients and the services available in the communities.

For some time now the child service files and family service files have been managed by workers in each of the offices. However, the resource files were managed by a worker in the head office. With the new social worker in Prince Rupert having completed her training and receiving delegation, the plan is to transfer the resource files in Prince Rupert to that office. The worker at the head office, who was responsible for all of the resource files, will continue to be responsible for the resource files in the villages and in Terrace.

There are two committees which are structured with NCFS: 1) a Joint Management Committee comprised of representatives of the four Nisga'a Village Government portfolio holders for child welfare. The purpose of this Committee is to provide direction and feed back to the Village Government in conjunction with NCFD. 2) a Community Prevention Services Committee comprising of the Joint Management Committee representatives and the front line social development workers from each community. The purpose of this Committee is to provide preventative services on behalf of NCFS and responses to issues which are of mutual concern.

i) Nisga'a Family and Child Services New Aiyansh Office

As already stated, the NFCS main office is located at New Aiyansh and serves the 4 villages. Staff at the New Aiyansh office consists of the director, 1 clinical supervisor, 2 social workers, 1 team assistant and 1 family development worker. The team assistant, in addition to assisting the workers, also has administrative responsibilities including invoicing the maintenance payments for caregivers, ordering office supplies, arranging meetings, taking minutes for various meetings, ensuring the agency's vehicle is serviced, etc. This office has a full complement of staff, and with the exception of the family development worker who was hired in March 2005, the other staff have been at this

office for a number of years.

There are some concerns relating to the physical space in this office which include lack of confidentiality, lack of office space and a small file room. Although there is no waiting room close to the offices, confidentiality is a concern in that people walking down the hallways can overhear conversations in workers' offices. Space is at a premium as this office is in the Nisga'a Lisims Government building. There is a small office which also functions as a "family room" which is too small to meet with a family. The file room is also very small and is filled to capacity. It appears that there is little room for expansion in the area where the agency's office is housed.

ii) Nisga'a Family and Child Services Prince Rupert Office

The Prince Rupert office consists of 2 social workers and 1 team assistant. The team assistant, in addition to assisting the workers, also has administrative responsibilities including reception, invoicing, ordering office supplies, making travel arrangement for clients, etc. Due to the demands of the team assistant, filing is somewhat behind. This is being addressed and an additional person has been hired to assist the office for 1 day per week. The plan is for the additional person to provide reception work during that day so as to allow the team assistant to catch up with filing and other duties that may need attending. It is hoped this will assist the team assistant with her numerous responsibilities.

In this office, 1 social worker has been there for years and the other social worker for . The latter social worker just obtained her delegation in December 2005. This worker attended training for much of the past year, which left the office with 1 social worker. With this new social worker now having completed the training, the office is looking forward to having a complete complement of staff. The new worker is looking forward to getting her own caseload and not just helping out.

Staff advised that clients often drop in to the office without appointments. Only recently have clients begun to make appointments to see a worker. Issues relating to the physical space in this office include safety issues, lack of accessibility to physically handicapped people, lack of confidentiality, and a very small file room. The safety issue is that there is only 1 door to the office, which is from the hallway. In case of an emergency, there is no other exit. Also, the office is not accessible to physically handicapped people as it is located on the second floor of a building which has no elevator. Confidentiality is also a concern in that discussions held in the workers' offices, no matter how quietly, can be overheard by people in the waiting room. Staff advised that Prince Rupert has been known as "Prince Rumor". The file room is also of concern in that it very small and not many more files can be stored in this room. The director and supervisor are aware of these issues and attempts are being made to address them.

iii) Nisga'a Family and Child Services Terrace Office

The current social worker in Terrace, has been with the agency for years; in Prince

Rupert and in Terrace. As already stated, the agency does not have its own office in Terrace, but has office space in one of the MCFD offices. This office space is quite large and 2 desks are in the office. The supervisor and other workers who may need to be in Terrace for meetings, court hearings, etc. also use this office when in town. The worker uses the equipment in the MCFD office and looks after her own files. In regards to the office in Terrace, the agency hopes to be able to have its own office in the near future.

In addition to providing the stated services, NFCS also works closely with MCFD who provides protection services in the area. MCFD in Terrace is responsible for protection services in the 4 Nisga'a Villages and in Terrace. MCFD in Prince Rupert is responsible for the protection services in the Prince Rupert area. Whenever possible, NFCS staff accompanies MCFD during investigations of protection matters involving Nisga'a people. NFCS also assists MCFD during meetings and other contacts with Nisga'a families. MCFD in Terrace has assigned 2 staff to do investigations in the villages. This has greatly improved the relationship between MCFD and the villages. The assigned MCFD staff have become more sensitive to the culture and needs of the people in the villages and the people in the villages have become more accepting of MCFD staff. NFCS staff have developed a close working relationship with MCFD in Terrace and the relationship with MCFD in Prince Rupert is improving.

d) Supervision/Consultation

The agency has 1 supervisor who is responsible for the work being done in the 3 offices. The supervisor travels to Terrace and Prince Rupert on a bi-weekly basis to meet with staff. The supervisor is accessible to the staff via phone or cell phone. E-mail is also frequently used to contact the supervisor and discuss cases. Although the staff is not housed together, ongoing consultation does take place between workers and supervisor. The supervisor meets individually with all staff on a bi-weekly basis. The supervisor also meets with the workers approximately every 3-4 months to review all their cases. Some joint staff meetings have taken place and the plan is for these meetings to occur more frequently. If the supervisor is on leave, another social worker is appointed to act as supervisor. The agency's policy is that at least 50% of staff need to be on duty at all times. The director is also available to staff and he is also contacted if needed. The director is very knowledgeable about the agency and is involved in all major decisions. Staff stated they also consult with MCFD, with whom they have a good working relationship.

4. STRENGTHS

The following strengths of the agency and of the agency's practice were identified by the staff during the course of the audit:

- Continuity and commitment of staff – some of the staff have been with the agency for a number of years. Agency staff is very committed to serving their clients and communities. They see themselves as working for and with the people.

- Knowledge of Community – The staff are very knowledgeable of the community and services available in/to the community
- Enthusiasm and staff morale – all of the staff is enthusiastic about their work and enjoys working with the people. There is good staff morale at the agency.
- Supportive work environment – staff members are very supportive of each other and assist each other whenever possible. There had been some personality differences in the past, but these have been resolved and staff get along well.
- Organization of physical files – the physical files were in good order with the documents being grouped into sections, in chronological order.
- Training of staff – the agency encourages and financially supports ongoing training for staff.
- Services provided – the agency and other organizations provide a variety of services which families can engage in. These services greatly assist staff in their work with clients.
- Children placed in Nisga'a homes – the agency is committed to placing Nisga'a children into Nisga'a homes.
- Culturally sensitive, creative and collaborative approach – the agency's practice is to be culturally sensitive and allow for and encourage new and creative measures to be used in assisting families. As much as possible, power is given to families and villages to address their specific issues and the role of the agency is to support them through this process.
- Relationships with MCFD – the agency has a good working relationship with MCFD in Terrace and relationships with MCFD in Prince Rupert have greatly improved. The agency regularly attends planning meetings with MCFD as well as monthly inter-agency meetings.
- Individuality of communities – the communities are different and are recognized as having specific strengths and challenges. The agency attempts to work with the community's strengths and support the community in the challenges they face.
- Size of agency – the agency is small and staff is able to assist each other when needed. They know each other's cases well.
- Respectful of people – staff are respectful of people and realistic and concise with clients regarding meeting the expected criteria.

- Advocate for clients – staff see themselves as advocates for their clients. If the agency is not able to meet their client’s needs, staff will advocate for the best solution possible.

5. CHALLENGES FACING AGENCY

The following challenges facing the agency and agency’s practice were identified by the staff during the course of the audit.

- Liaison with New Aiyansh – although the agency liaisons with all 4 villages, their connection with New Aiyansh is not as strong as with the other villages. The agency is working towards strengthening its working relationship with New Aiyansh.
- Working relationship/protocol with service providers in Nass Valley – the agency attempts to work closely with the service providers in the Nass Valley, but needs to continue to strengthen its working relationship with these agencies. Many decisions are still made without consulting each other. The agency currently has a protocol established only with MCFD. There are no protocols established with the other service providers/agencies in their catchment area.
- Prevention – although a number of prevention programs exist, ongoing emphasis still needs to be placed on prevention. At times the agency is somewhat overwhelmed with the demands/needs of their communities that the importance of prevention is not focused on.
- Expectations of staff – some staff felt that too many expectations were placed on them, resulting in them having to complete many tasks and therefore not being able to develop expertise in any area. This was frustrating and discouraging for staff.
- Lack of training - some staff stated they lacked knowledge in computer skills and requested more training in this area so as to become more proficient in these tasks. They are requesting technical assistance in designing a system that would allow for storing of documentation which would be accessible to all agency staff i.e. worker’s notes. Some staff also stated that although the agency encourages staff to engage in professional development and other training and workshops are held in the villages, the needed training is not always available, i.e. “Children Who Witness Violence”.
- MIS a real problem – for some time now there has been great difficulty in accessing the MIS system. This has made it difficult to enter or retrieve information that is needed to do the work.
- Payment for maintenance/other financial supports - invoices for foster maintenance payments or other financial supports are completed by the team assistants and forwarded to the Finance Department of the Nisga’a Lisims Government for payment. Payments are not always produced in a timely manner which has created hardships

for people awaiting these funds. The agency has met with the Finance Department in an attempt to address this situation.

- Social workers providing services to people they know – it can be difficult for social workers to provide services to people they know. In regards to services for family members or other people they know well, this is seen as a conflict of interest and workers do not engage with these families.
- Interference of Village Governments – at times the Village Governments do not have a clear understanding of the agency’s role and mandate and interference occurs.
- Lack of promoting of agency – when the agency was first formed, much promotion of the agency occurred. However, this promotion of agency has diminished over time due to shortage of staff time. It is seen as very important that the promotion continue so that current staff of the various organizations are aware of the role/mandate of the agency.
- Regular joint staff meetings – although the supervisor travels to the offices in Prince Rupert and Terrace on a bi-weekly basis, it is difficult for the agency to have regular joint staff meeting when staff are located in 3 different locations. The agency is addressing the issue of staff meetings and the plan is for staff to meet on a more regular basis in the future.
- Agency housed in Nisga’a Lisims Government building – being housed in this building makes it difficult for the agency to have a separate identity. They are often seen as part of/employees of the Nisga’a Lisims Government.
- Feeling of isolation – at times staff feel isolated and lack confidence that they are managing the administrative aspects correctly. They have only MCFD to compare with. They would like to establish contact with other delegated agencies and observe their method of operation.
- Lack of credibility – at times some of the service providers and/or clients do not see the agency as being credible.
- Lack of transportation for clients – at times transportation can be difficult for clients, as they may need to travel to another village or to the urban centers to participate in services. In the urban communities, buses are not always available at the times clients attend the various programs (i.e. evening sessions).
- Funding in foster homes – at times the caregivers view the maintenance funds provided them for the child in their care, as an income. They request additional funds for items that would normally be covered by the maintenance payment. Although the purpose of these funds has been discussed with the caregivers during foster parent orientation, the workers sometimes need to re-emphasize the purpose of these payments and provide the caregiver with a breakdown of the funds.

- Terrace files housed in New Aiyansh – having the files from Terrace housed in New Aiyansh, and not in Terrace, is somewhat cumbersome. The worker either has to travel to New Aiyansh to read the files or have someone in New Aiyansh read the files and provide her with the needed information. Furthermore, the worker needs to send all the reports/documentation to New Aiyansh to be put into the files. The worker thought it would certainly be easier and more efficient to have the files housed in Terrace.
- Physical layout of offices - the agency is considering applying for Level 15 or C6 delegation. Workers have some anxiety about moving to Level 15, both as it relates to assuming more responsibility as well as concerns re safety issues. The layout of the offices and lack of safety features, such as panic buttons in the offices, are of major concern. This concern is increased with the possibility of providing protection services. Confidentiality is also an issue. The limited space for file rooms is also of concern. The director and supervisor are aware of these concerns and are attempting to address these issues.
- The agency is concerned that they may not have enough funds to receive additional transfers of Nisga'a CCO files. The agency is expecting that in the very near future 6 more Nisga'a children in the area will become CCOs and they are not certain whether they will be able to accept these files due to lack of finances.

6. IDENTIFIED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- Documentation on Child Service files
- Documentation on Resource files
- Nature of Family Services files

The main issue identified on the child service files, was the lack of documentation on the physical file. On most child service files audited, there was little documentation in relation to the workers relationship and contact with child; discussing the rights of children in care with child and caregiver; and discussing the appropriate discipline policy with child and caregiver. Most of the workers this auditor spoke with stated that they saw their children regularly. Many of the workers reside in the same communities in which they work and attend the various community functions. They do not always have private talks with the children during these community functions, but do connect with the children and are able to observe their functioning. The workers acknowledged they have not been keeping regular notes of these contacts. In regard to discussing the rights of children in care and the appropriate discipline policy with children and caregivers, this has not occurred on a regular basis and where it has occurred it has not been noted.

The CCO files transferred from Terrace MCFD to NFCS in November 2003, either contained no Comprehensive Plans of Care (CPOC), or on those files that did contain a plan of care, the plan of care was not up to date. This auditor was advised that these

CPOC had been completed, but they were not located on the files. If they are completed, it would be helpful to have them on the files so that the files are up to date and reflect the work that is actually occurring. If the CPOC is not completed, it is hoped that the agency will be able to update them in the near future. The CCO files that were transferred from MCFD in Prince Rupert to NFCS in August 2004 all contain an updated CPOC that was completed by NFCS in summer 2005. Although the CPOC were not completed within the 6 month time period, they were completed within a year of the files being transferred to NFCS. This was seen as very positive and it is hoped that the agency will now be able to keep these CPOC up to date.

In regard to the resource files, issues included not receiving all the needed documents before completing the home study. In some files, not all of the references had been received before the home study was completed. In a few files, not all of the Criminal Record Checks (verbal or written) had been received before completing the home study. In one file, there is no record of receiving any Criminal Record Checks (verbal or written) before the home study was completed. Staff advised that at times it takes a long time before the written Criminal Record Check documentation is received and they proceed with the study based on the verbal information obtained. So as not to delay completing home studies, proceeding with the study after receiving verbal information re Criminal Record Check is acceptable, providing written information follows.

Although there was some record on most files that caregivers were provided with information during orientation, the exact nature of the information provided was not documented. Staff stated there was a package of information provided to each caregiver, but it was not known what information was provided. It would be helpful to know exactly what information had been provided to caregivers. Also, on most files there was some documentation that caregivers had received some ongoing training; however, the exact nature of this training was not always clear.

There was virtually no documentation on the files that indicated written information on the child was provided to the caregiver. Staff advised that they do not always provide written information on the child to caregivers. When information is provided, this is not documented on the file.

In regard to family service files, there were a total of 9 open family service files, 5 of which were audited. Four of the 5 family service files audited were files transferred from MCFD to NFCS. MCFD has had involvement with these families through protection services. Once MCFD has addressed the protection concerns, instead of closing the file, it is transferred to NFCS for family support. In the files transferred to NFCS there were no specific plans on file as to the needs of the family, the goals to be reached or the process to reach the goals. The clients were advised of the transfer of their file to NFCS and it was left up to them to contact NFCS if a need arose. Most of the clients have not made any contact with NFCS and those who have made a request, the nature of the request was of a very limited nature. No ongoing plans had been made with any of these clients. Most of the files had been open for some time with no contact with the client. The agency felt it was important to keep these files open and be available to the clients if

the need arose. Basically there was no family service provided in these files. This auditor discussed this situation with staff and they advised that most of the family services files open to NFCS were of that nature.

In one family service file audited, NFCS was periodically providing respite services for a family. The family would advise NFCS when respite was needed, place the child with an agreed upon family member and NFCS would provide the funding. According to the file, that was the extent of NFCS involvement with this family. In this file, a plan for service should have been achieved.

As it was very difficult to rate the 4 family service files in which no services were being provided, it was thought advisable not to rate these files, but rather discuss this matter in the report.

7. COMPLIANCE TO THE PROGRAMS AUDITED

One auditor audited the files at Nisga'a Family and Child Services. As already stated, only the child service files and resource files were rated as per compliance. The family service files were audited but not rated as per compliance, as previously described in the report.

a) Compliance to Child Service Practice

Eleven (11) child service files were audited. There were a total of 19 open child service files. Overall compliance to the child service standards was 64%. The files were audited for compliance to the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators, Level 13 or C4 Guardianship child service including:

- The quality and adequacy of the plan of care
- The frequency and adequacy of the care plan review
- The level of contact with the child
- Placement stability and deciding when and where to move a child
- The degree of stability and continuity provided to the child while in care
- Informing the child and caregiver of the rights of children in care
- Informing the child and caregiver of appropriate discipline policy
- The level of file documentation

The following provides a breakdown of the compliance ratings:

1. **Standard 14: Assessment of risk prior to a returning a child in continuing care to his/her home** (AOPSI Standard 14) – no files applicable.
2. **Standard 15: Assessment of risk when a continuing custody order is to be cancelled** (AOPSI Standard 15) – no files applicable.

3. **Standard 16: Permanency planning** (AOPSI Standard 16) – no files applicable.
4. **Standard 17: Preparation for independence** (AOPSI Standard 17) – 5 files (83%) compliant; 1 file non-compliant; 5 files not applicable.
5. **Standard 35: Interviewing the child about his/her care experience** (AOPSI Standard 19) – 7 files (78%) compliant; 2 files (22%) non-compliant; 2 files not applicable.
6. **Standard 19: Case closure for children in continuing custody** (AOPSI Standard 20) – no files applicable.
7. **Standard 20: Responsibilities to the public trustee** (AOPSI Standard 22) – 11 files (100%) compliant.
8. **Standard 23: The rights of children in care** (AOPSI Standard 23 Level 12) – 11 files (100%) non-compliant.
9. **Standard 24: Process for determining the needs of the child** (AOPSI Standard 24 Level 12) – 9 files (82%) compliant; 2 files (18%) non-compliant.
10. **Standard 25: Biographical information and family history** (AOPSI Standard 26 Level 12) – 11 files (100%) compliant.
11. **Standard 26: Development of the comprehensive plan of care** (AOPSI Standard 3) – no files applicable.
12. **Standard 27: Monitoring of the child's plan of care** (AOPSI Standard 5) – 7 files (64%) compliant; 4 files (36%) non-complaint.
13. **Standard 28: Informing the child and caregiver about appropriate discipline standards** (AOPSI Standard 9) – 11 files (100%) non-compliant.
14. **Standard 29: Deciding where to place a child** (AOPSI Standard 10) – 8 files (100%) compliant; 3 files not applicable.
15. **Standard 30: Deciding to move the child in care** (AOPSI Standard 12) – 6 files (75%) compliant; 2 files (25%) non-compliant; 3 files not applicable.
16. **Standard 31: Planning a move for a child** (AOPSI Standard 13) – 6 files (75%) compliant; 2 files (25%) non-compliant; 3 files not applicable.
17. **Standard 32: Reportable circumstances** (AOPSI Standard 18) – no files applicable.

18. **Standard 33: When a child or youth is missing, lost or runaway (AOPSI Standard 7)** – 2 files (67%) compliant; 1 file non-compliant; 8 files not applicable.
19. **Standard 34: Providing initial and ongoing medical and dental care for a child in care (AOPSI Standard 36 Level 12)** - 8 files (73%) compliant; 3 files (27%) non-compliant.
20. **Standard 35: The social worker's relationship and contact with a child in care (AOPSI Standard 6)** – 2 files (18%) compliant; 9 files (82%) non-compliant
21. **Standard 36: Case transfer (AOPSI Standard 39 Level 12)** – 2 files (100%) compliant; 9 files not applicable.
22. **Standard 37: File closure (AOPSI Standard 20)** – no files applicable.
23. **Standard 39: Recording and documentation of children in care files (AOPSI Standard 21)** – 7 files (64%) compliant; 4 files (46%) non-compliant.
24. **Standard 21: Investigating allegations of abuse or neglect of child in care in family care homes (AOPSI Standard 20 Level 12)** – 1 file compliant; 10 files not applicable.
25. **Standard 22: Quality of care review of a family care home (AOPSI Standard 21 Level 12)** – no files applicable.

b) Compliance to Resource File Practice

Ten (10) resource files were audited. There were a total of 23 open resource files. Overall compliance to the resource standards was 65%. The files were audited for compliance to the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicator, Level 13 or C4 resources including:

- Application and orientation of caregiver
- Home study of caregiver
- Training of caregiver
- Signed Agreement with caregiver
- Providing caregiver with written information regarding child
- Monitoring and reviewing homes

The following provides a breakdown of the compliance ratings:

1. **Standard 14: Application and orientation (AOPSI Standard 14 Level 12)** – 9 files (90%) compliant; 1 file non-compliant.
2. **Standard 15: Homestudy (AOPSI Standard 15 Level 12)** – 5 files (56%) compliant; 4 files (44%) non-compliant; 1 file not applicable.

3. **Standard 16: Training of caregivers** (AOPSI Standard 16 Level 12) – 7 files (78%) compliant; 2 files (22%) non-compliant; 1 file not applicable.
4. **Standard 17: Signed agreement with caregivers** (AOPSI Standard 17 Level 12) – 7 files (88%) compliant; 1 file non-compliant; 2 files not applicable.
5. **Standard 18: Providing information on the child** (AOPSI Standard 18 Level 12) – 7 files (100%) non-compliant; 3 files not applicable.
6. **Standard 19: Monitoring and reviewing homes** (AOPSI Standard 19 Level 12) – 5 files (63%) compliant; 3 files (38%) non-compliant; 2 files not applicable.
7. **Standard 20: Investigating allegations of abuse or neglect of children in care in family care homes** (AOPSI Standard 20 Level 12) – no files applicable.
8. **Standard 21: Quality of care review of a family care home** (AOPSI Standard 21 Level 12) – no files applicable.
9. **Standard 22: Closure of the family care home** (AOPSI Standard 22 Level 12) – no files applicable.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Present: Julie Dawson – Director, Aboriginal Services Branch
 Gary McDermott – Deputy Director, Aboriginal Services Branch
 Marika Czink – Practice Analyst, Aboriginal Services Branch
 Denise Connell – Practice Analyst, Aboriginal Services Branch
 Maurice Squires – Director, Nisga’a Family and Child Services
 Renata Moore – Supervisor, Nisga’a Family and Child Services
 Louise Reimer – Contract Practice Analyst (auditor)

Date: June 14, 2006

The following recommendations were developed in consultation with Nisga’a Child & Family Services, and MCFD Aboriginal Services Branch. A written response to the audit report will be provided within 30 days of July 25, 2006 to MCFD Aboriginal Services Branch.

Since the audit, which was completed in January 2006, the agency has already begun to address a number of the identified areas of improvement.

1. MCFD Aboriginal Services Branch will support the agency in connecting with other Aboriginal agencies as well as MCFD offices so as to observe other methods of operation.

2. Nisga'a Child & Family Services will ensure that required documentation is completed.
3. Nisga'a Child & Family Services will ensure that documents are placed on the physical files in a timely manner.
4. Nisga'a Child & Family Services will open Family Services files only when the agency is actually providing services to the family.
5. Nisga'a Child & Family Services will address identified safety issues in the offices so as to ensure that workers feel safe in their work environment.

Julie Dawson
Director, Aboriginal Services Branch
Ministry of Children & Family
Development

Maurice Squires
Executive Director
Nisga'a Child & Family Services

APPENDIX 1: AGENCY AUDIT COMPLIANCE REPORTS