

SUMMARY: FILE REVIEW

Of the Death of a Youth in the Care of the Ministry

A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the File Review (FR) was to examine the Ministry of Children and Family Development's (the Ministry) response to reports and requests for service and to determine whether the services were adequately identified, provided, and able to meet the youth's needs according to policy and service standards.

For the purposes of the FR, Ministry files and BC Coroners Service documents were reviewed. The FR focused on the period of time of Ministry involvement until the youth's death.

B. BACKGROUND

The Ministry had long-standing involvement with the youth's family. High risk issues existed that affected how the parent functioned in the parental role. Support services were provided to the family; however, unresolved child protection concerns led to the youth's removal from the parent's care and the granting of a continuing custody order. While in care, the youth participated in high risk behaviours; although efforts were made to engage the youth in Ministry and community support services, there was resistance to such services. The youth experienced multiple placements and when the final placement (a supported independent living situation) ended, the youth declined further foster care or supported living arrangements and resided primarily with the step-parent. The youth was Aboriginal.

C. ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

File documentation indicated that Integrated Case Management planning meetings occurred regularly and were well-documented. Planning continued to take place regardless of the youth's participation. The youth was able to advocate for support services through the social workers and maintained contact with them even when absent from placements.

Plans of care and reviews of planning were comprehensive, as were case notes and correspondence. The FR identified the determined efforts of the youth's support team in their ongoing, and at times, creative planning approach to providing safe care and

guidance towards healthy independence. The support team included Ministry social workers, Ministry Program staff, foster parents, and service providers.

The identification of the youth's Aboriginal heritage on coming into care may have supported a more positive sense of identity and offered planning alternatives to foster care. The youth may have had more opportunity for stability with healthy role models if all contact with the parent had discontinued at the time of the continuing custody order.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Community Services Manager (CSM) will advise the Director of Integrated Practice (DIP) that the results of the report have been reviewed with the teams in the District Offices.
2. The Regional Practice Analyst will be assigned to further explore the youth's ancestry and that the Analyst will report the findings to the DIP and the Deputy Director of Aboriginal Services.
3. The DIP will offer the teams in the District Offices a training event on completing Reportable Circumstances. The CSM will advise staff that participation is required.
4. The Deputy Director of Aboriginal Services in collaboration with the DIP will set a date to present a forum to the teams in the District Offices to discuss the importance of conducting thorough assessments and promoting a best practice approach to permanency planning for all Aboriginal children in care. The forum will identify resources available to assist staff in developing assessments and plans of care that achieve the best possible outcomes for children in care. The importance of determining culture and identity and the requirement to regularly explore all options for the child to live safely with family, extended family, or others who are willing to establish a healthy long-term placement for a child will be emphasized.
5. Standards related to integrated, collaborative assessments and permanency planning will be reviewed monthly and documented in Team Leader meeting minutes. The CSM will advise the DIP that this recommendation has been and will continue to be implemented.