

**DIRECTOR OF DELEGATED ABORIGINAL AGENCIES CASE
PRACTICE AUDIT REPORT**

**METIS FAMILY SERVICES
(IGA & IGB)**

Fieldwork completed June 18-29, 2012

Audit completed by Aboriginal Programs and Service Support, MCFD

|

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. PURPOSE	1
2. METHODOLOGY	1
3. AGENCY OVERVIEW	2
a) Delegation.....	2
b) Demographics	2
c) Professional Staff Compliment	3
d) Supervision & Consultation.....	4
4. STRENGTHS OF AGENCY.....	4
5. CHALLENGES FACING AGENCY	6
6. DISCUSSION OF THE PROGRAMS AUDITED.....	6
a) Child Service Files	6
b) Resources.....	7
7. COMPLIANCE TO THE PROGRAMS AUDITED.....	7
8. RECOMMENDATIONS	10

DIRECTOR OF DELEGATED ABORIGINAL AGENCIES CASE PRACTICE AUDIT REPORT

Métis Family Services (IGA & IGB)

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the audit is to support and improve child service, guardianship and family service practice. 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. This is the third audit of the agency since 2006.

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.

Aboriginal Programs and Service Support (APSS) is conducting the audit using the Aboriginal Case Practice Audit Tool (ACPAT). Audits of delegated agencies providing child protection, guardianship, family services and resources for children in care are conducted according to a three-year cycle.

2. METHODOLOGY

This was a practice audit and C6 operational readiness assessment of the agency. There was one quality assurance analyst from MCFD Aboriginal Programs and Service Support (APSS) who conducted the practice audit. The scope of the practice audit of Métis Family Services (MFS) was three years. The audit of the physical files focused on the time frame of June 2009 to June 2012.

The quality assurance analyst conducted field work from June 18 – 29, 2012. ACPAT was used to collect the data and generate summary compliance reports as well as a compliance report for each file audited. There were a total of 128 open child service files and 38 open resource files at the time of the audit. A sample size of 26 child service files and 7 resource files were audited or approximately 20% of the open child service and resource files. These files were

randomly selected to ensure that a cross representation of files from each team member was reviewed.

Upon arrival at the agency, the auditor met with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to review the audit purpose and process and to discuss the operational readiness assessment. A separate meeting was held with the CEO and the guardianship team to review the audit purpose and process. At the conclusion of the fieldwork, an exit meeting was held with the CEO to provide some preliminary findings and discuss the next steps in the audit process.

3. AGENCY OVERVIEW

a) Delegation

Métis Family Services was established in 1998 and received C4 delegation in April 2001. This level of delegation enables the agency to provide the following services:

- Permanent guardianship of children in continuing custody;
- Support services to families;
- Voluntary Care Agreements;
- Special Needs Agreements;
- Establishing Residential Resources

Métis Family Services signed their initial delegation agreement in April 2001. A Delegation Confirmation Agreement has been extended to March 2013.

b) Demographics

Métis Family Services is located in Surrey, a community in the Coast Fraser Region. The agency's geographic service area covers the municipalities of Surrey, Delta, White Rock, Langley, Maple Ridge, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, New Westminster, Burnaby and Pitt Meadows.

Traveling from MFS to the outlying communities can be very time consuming due to distances, traffic and weather. Different strategies have been implemented in the past to reduce travel times, however the complexities of changing resources, caregiver turnover and CCO participation in planning has resulted in the social workers having to manage files in all the communities.

In addition to the delegated services, MFS provides the following non delegated programs:

- Personal Healing and Parenting;
- Community Kitchen;

- Tool Time;
- Youth and Community Healing Circles;
- Rapid Response Workers;
- Community Mentors;
- Elders;
- Culture and dance; and
- Culture night for youth.

Métis Family Services utilizes many different services in the communities of the Coast Fraser Region, depending on the placement of the child or youth in care. MFS is able to utilize the MCFD Child and Youth Mental Health services offered in the various communities. MFS and MCFD also share services when necessary; for example, Aboriginal Youth Mental Health, S.O.S Children's Village and counseling services. MFS has excelled in the guardianship agency protocols standard due to these arrangements for services.

c) Professional Staff Complement

The agency continues to be co-located with the MCFD child protection team. The five delegated staff on this team are now MFS employees who have been reverse seconded to MCFD in preparation for the transfer of C6 delegation to the agency. MFS employs a CEO, a guardianship team leader, a resources team leader and eight delegated social workers, six on the guardianship team and two on the resources team. All of the delegated staff and the CEO hold C4 delegation. The Programs Manager position is currently vacant and recruitment is underway to hire or second an MCFD employee who is able to be C6 delegated. In addition to the delegated staff, there is one team assistant for the guardianship and resources teams, a Tool Time Coordinator, a Cultural Program Supervisor, a youth worker and four Rapid Response workers.

In the past year, one of the resources workers accepted a temporary assignment on the guardianship team which left the resources team with one social worker and the team leader. The resource worker has now returned to the resources team so that team is back to being fully staffed. With the recent vacancy of the Programs Manager position, the CEO has had to be more involved in the provision of supervision to the team leaders and for overall case consultation. It is expected that once the Programs Manager position is filled, the CEO will be able to return to overseeing the administration of the agency and will be involved in case consultations when necessary.

d) Supervision and Consultation

Both team leaders have an open door policy and staff report that they are able to readily access their supervisors or the CEO in the office and by phone or email when they are out of the office. The resource team leader meets weekly with the team as well as provides weekly individual case tracking and consultation. In addition to case discussions, the team meeting also provides opportunities for training, agency updates and guest speakers. Given that the resource team is small, when the weekly meeting does not occur, the team is easily able to update each other as needed. One of the resource workers participates in the weekly guardianship team meeting to provide placement updates. The team leader attends the weekly placement meeting with the MCFD Circle 5 resource team and then provides an email to the MFS guardianship and resource staff with all the updates from the meeting. The resource team leader also provides supervision to the four non-delegated rapid response workers as well as manages all of the specialized resource contracts.

The guardianship team meets weekly and the team leader provides individual case tracking and consultation on a weekly to bi-weekly basis. In addition to case discussions, the team meeting also provides opportunities for training, agency updates and guest speakers. The guardianship social workers are encouraged to develop case plans to propose to the team leader so that they are continuously strengthening their clinical skills. The guardianship team also utilizes integrated case management meetings for serious, complicated cases.

With the Programs Manager's position vacant, the CEO has been providing supervision and consultation to both team leaders and also provides backfill for the team leaders when necessary

All of the staff of the agency meet on a monthly basis to discuss agency and union updates and overall issues that affect all of them.

4. STRENGTHS OF THE AGENCY

One of the significant strengths of MFS is the support and cooperation required to manage some very complex files. The staff demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of the needs of the children and youth in their care and seek out services, supports and when necessary, additional consultations from other professionals, to ensure the needs are met. Some of the files audited reflected a thorough and collaborative response to children and youth with special needs, street entrenched youth involved in high risk activities, involvement with the Representative for Children and Youth and the Public Guardian and Trustee.

The agency has made a commitment to focus on the permanency planning for the children and youth in their care. From some of the files audited there was a

great deal of planning regarding identification of the child's extended family and determining if there are any suitable potential placement options, transfer of custody through Sec. 54.1, rescinding a CCO and adoption planning. The agency supports adoption as one of the permanency planning options and has established a relationship with Wendy's Wonderful Kids, through the Adoptive Families Association of B.C., which focuses on finding adoptive families within a child's immediate network. Further to this, the agency was featured in the June/July 2012 edition of the "Focus on Adoption" magazine.

The agency has formalized their relationship with the Federation of Aboriginal Foster parents to deliver pre-service training as of August 2012. Previously, the pre-service training had been delivered by the resource workers which resulted in a high number of overtime hours. With the Federation providing the training, this will allow the resource workers to focus on their delegated duties.

The agency has a very strong, positive and collaborative relationship with MCFD Circle 5 team as well as other MCFD offices in the Surrey area. The team leaders and the CEO participate in many regional meetings and tables. Further, this collaborative relationship extends to the front line staff of both the agency and MCFD. Both offices share files, resources and ideas in order to ensure the best services are available for the children and families they serve. The ministry has been very good to the agency in helping them move forward with their C6 delegation and this relationship is viewed as very important and mutually beneficial. The MFS resource team and MCFD Circle 5 share residential resources with the agency completing all of the home studies for all restricted resources for both MCFD and MFS.

The auditors identified several strengths of the agency and of the agency's practice over the course of the audit:

- Staff Commitment – most of the staff have been at the agency for a number of years and they are extremely committed to the children and families they are working with. This was evident when speaking to them as well from the documentation of involvement on the files. Many of the staff are willing to help in areas that are outside of their own responsibilities.
- The staff reported feeling very happy and supported by each other and by the management of the agency. The work environment is described as being very respectful and welcoming.
- Promotion of culture – the agency has program, staff and access to support the Métis culture.
- Diverse backgrounds – the social workers have varied educational, cultural and experiential backgrounds which promotes problem solving through the sharing of ideas.
- Referrals for service – the agency social workers are determined to find the appropriate services for the children, youth and caregivers they serve. The social workers effectively utilize the services provided by the agency

as well as outside sources to refer their caregivers and children/youth in care to.

- Professional development – the agency provides many opportunities, both internally and externally, for professional development.
- Organization of physical files – the physical files were in good order with the documents being grouped into sections, in chronological order. Many of the key documents were brought forward to the current volume, additional special sections have been created for documents that are accessed on a regular basis, e.g. assessments and filing was up to date. The team assistant is extremely organized and manages the files with a great deal of knowledge and care for each child or youth.

5. CHALLENGES FACING THE AGENCY

The auditor identified some challenges to the agency and of the agency's practice over the course of the audit:

- Recruitment of Métis/Aboriginal caregivers – Like other Aboriginal agencies and MCFD, the ongoing recruitment and retention of Métis foster homes is an area of focus for this agency. Given the small size of the resource team, recruitment is very challenging with only one of the resource social workers identified as the lead on recruitment. The agency relies on MCFD to recruit caregivers and then the resource is shared by both offices.
- Staff identified the need for a dedicated supervisor for the non-delegated programs' staff as currently the resource team leader supervises the rapid response team and the MCFD child protection team leader supervises the youth worker and the reconnect worker. Staff reported that they feel heard by the agency management regarding this issue and also see this as a positive sign of the agency's growth.

6. DISCUSSION OF THE TWO PROGRAMS AUDITED

The audit reflects the work done by the delegated staff of the agency over the past three years.

a) Child Service files

The current casework of the guardianship team reveals a significant improvement in documentation of the overall case practice including consultations, approvals, plans of care, transfer recordings, initial reportable circumstances and a more consistent use of the Titameg case documentation system.

As stated earlier, 26 out of 128 open child service files were audited. The audit revealed excellent compliance to many of the guardianship standards with 13 of the 21 applicable standards met with 100% compliance. The compliance within this program area showed a significant improvement from the 2009 findings. A number of positive aspects found included: documented efforts to preserve the Aboriginal identity and providing culturally appropriate services, monitoring and reviewing the child's comprehensive plan of care, documenting supervisory approval for guardianship services, discussing the rights of children in care with the child and caregiver, involving family and community when deciding where to place a child, meeting the child's needs for stability by ensuring there is continuity in their relationships, planning a move for a child in care, interviewing the child about their care experience, preparation for independence and documentation of the social worker's knowledge of the existing interagency protocols in the communities.

In some of the files, documentation missing from the files included: the social worker's relationship and contact with the child and overall case documentation.

b) Resource files

The resource program has grown significantly in the last two years with the agency accepting many resource transfers from MCFD, conducting limited resource recruitment for their own caregivers, utilizing the RAP system and in April 2012, accepting the transfer of thirteen specialized resource contracts from MCFD. As the resource team is small and the team leader also supervises four non-delegated staff, all members of this team are currently seen to be working at maximum capacity. Finally, adjustments are being made to the agency's case documentation system, Titameg, so that the resource social workers are able to enter their case information into this system.

As previously stated, 7 of 38 open resource files were audited. The compliance within this program area showed a slight increase from the 2009 findings with 8 of the 9 applicable standards met with 100% compliance. Many positive aspects were found in the resource files including: documenting supervisory approval, completing application and orientation, home studies, training offered to and taken by caregivers and signed agreements with caregivers.

In some of the files, missing documentation included the monitoring and reviewing of the family care home.

7. COMPLIANCE TO PROGRAMS AUDITED

One quality assurance analyst audited the guardianship child service and resource files at MFS. The 'not applicable' scores were not included in the total.

a) Compliance to Child Service Practice

The files were audited for compliance to the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators, C4 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; and,
- The level of file documentation.

Twenty six (26) open child service files were audited for team IGA. The overall compliance was **89%**.

The following provides a breakdown of the compliance ratings:

AOPSI – Standard Guardianship and Voluntary Services (VS)	IGA
Standard 1 Preserving the Identity of the Child in Care and Providing Culturally Appropriate Services (VS 11)	26 files(100%) compliant
Standard 2 Development of a Comprehensive Plan of Care (VS 12)	No files applicable
Standard 3 Monitoring and Reviewing the Child’s Comprehensive Plan of Care (VS 13)	19 files compliant 6 files non compliant 1 file not applicable
Standard 4 Supervisory Approval Required for Guardianship Services (Guardianship 4)	26 files 100% compliant
Standard 5 Rights of Children in Care (VS 14)	24 files compliant 1 file non compliant 1 file not applicable
Standard 6 Deciding Where to Place the Child (VS 15)	25 files (100%) compliant 1 file not applicable
Standard 7 Meeting the Child’s Need for Stability and continuity of Relationships (VS 16)	26 files (100%) compliant

Standard 8 Social Worker's Relationship & contact with a Child in Care (VS 17)	5 files compliant 2 files non compliant with factors 19 files non compliant
Standard 9 Providing the Caregiver with Information and Reviewing Appropriate Discipline Standards (VS 18)	20 files compliant 1 file non compliant 5 files not applicable
Standard 10 Providing Initial and ongoing Medical and Dental Care for a Child in Care (VS 19)	26 files (100%) compliant
Standard 11 Planning a Move for a Child in Care (VS 20)	12 files (100%) compliant 14 files not applicable
Standard 12 Reportable Circumstances (VS 21)	4 files (100%) compliant 22 files not applicable
Standard 13 When a Child or Youth is Missing, Lost or Runaway (VS 22)	2 files (100%) compliant 24 files not applicable
Standard 14 Case Documentation (Guardianship 14)	20 files compliant 6 files non compliant
Standard 15 Transferring Continuing Care Files (Guardianship 14)	7 files compliant 2 files non compliant 17 files not applicable
Standard 16 Closing Continuing Care Files (Guardianship 16)	1 file (100%) compliant 25 files not applicable
Standard 17 Rescinding a Continuing Care Order and Returning the Child to the Family Home	No files applicable
Standard 19 Interviewing the Child about the Care Experience (Guardianship 19)	4 files compliant 22 files not applicable
Standard 20 Preparation for Independence (Guardianship 20)	10 (100%) files compliant 16 files not applicable
Standard 21 Responsibilities of the Public Guardian and Trustee (Guardianship 21)	9 files (100%) compliant 17 files not applicable
Standard 24 Guardianship Agency Protocols (Guardianship 24)	26 files (100%) compliant

b) Compliance to Resource File Practice

The files were audited for compliance to the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators, C4 resources including:

- Application and orientation of caregiver;
- Home study of caregiver;
- Training of caregiver;
- Signed Agreements with caregiver;
- Providing caregiver with written information regarding child; and,
- Monitoring and reviewing homes.

Seven (7) open resource files were audited for team **IGB**. Overall compliance to the resource standards was **86%**.

The following provides a breakdown of the compliance ratings:

AOPSI – Voluntary Services Standards	IGB
Standard 28 Supervisory Approval Required for Family Care Home Services	7 files (100%) compliant
Standard 29 Family Care Homes – Application and Orientation	1 file (100%) compliant 6 files not applicable
Standard 30 Home Study	1 file (100%) compliant 6 files not applicable
Standard 31 Training of Caregivers	7 files (100%) compliant
Standard 32 Signed Agreement with Caregivers	7 files (100%) compliant
Standard 33 Monitoring and Reviewing the Family Care Home	1 file compliant 4 files non compliant 2 files not applicable
Standard 34 Investigation of Alleged Abuse or Neglect in a Family Care Home	No files applicable
Standard 35 Quality of Care Review	1 file (100%) compliant 6 files not applicable
Standard 36 Closure of the Family Care Home	No files applicable

8. RECOMMENDATIONS:

On September 10, 2012, a teleconference was held jointly with Métis Family Services and MCFD Aboriginal Programs and Service Support for the purpose of discussing the outcome of the Practice Audit.

During the teleconference, the following agency responses were discussed. The agency is in agreement with the findings and continues the work on the following responses:

Child Service:

1. St 8 Social Worker's relationship & contact with a child/youth: The agency recognizes the challenges in meeting the compliance for this standard. Factors considered are the social workers have children placed across a large geographical area from Vancouver to Chilliwack, are managing larger caseloads as well as daily caseload demands. The agency has implemented the following strategies for seeing the children and youth privately and/or in a group setting:

- having the caregiver and child come to the office to see the social worker;
- sibling group reunions;
- sibling visits;
- assigning one social worker for sibling groups or one social worker for all of the children in the same resource; and
- providing a food cupboard in the office for youth to drop in and have a snack while visiting their social worker.

Resources:

1. St 33 Monitoring and reviewing the family care home: The agency has developed and will be implementing a package of information to be provided to and reviewed with the caregiver at the time of the annual review which includes the discipline policy and the rights of children in care.

The resource team will be utilizing the agency's Titameg database system for recording all resource information and this system will provide notifications to the social workers for various items like an annual review.