

# B&L Review Summary Report

In November 2018, a review of B & L Resources for Children, Youth and Families (B&L) was called when Manitoba Families became aware of sexual abuse allegations in two foster homes operated by B&L. There were two phases to the review. Phase I focused on immediate child safety and foster home licensing and was completed immediately. Phase II focused on practice, policy, and a program and funding review with the expectation that this review would guide the renewal of the service purchase agreement, including accountability and reporting requirements.

## FINDINGS

### Phase I

In Phase I, no further allegations of sexual abuse were found, but two key opportunities were identified to improve service delivery. These key areas were:

- the need for a communications protocol based on clarified roles, and
- responsibilities and improvements to licensing procedures.

The development of a communication protocol between placing agencies, licensing agencies and community care providers was identified as a priority action item.

The review team identified opportunities to clarify and strengthen policies and processes related to the licensing of foster homes managed by community care providers.

### Phase II

Phase II of the B&L review focused on a review of practice, policy, programs and funding to inform a new contractual relationship based on clear accountability and reporting requirements.

The findings in Phase II identified the following areas of improvement for B&L:

- Foster parent training is required to develop cultural competencies.
- File organization improvements are required, related to standardization and overall structure.
- The communication between managed agencies, CFS placing and licensing agencies was poor due to lack of role and responsibility clarity.
- The quality of the initial home study assessments requires a shift towards a standardized framework, focused on caregiving capacity of the foster parents and standardized licensing review procedures.

- Documentation related to licensing standards would be improved with new audit and review requirements to ensure continuous improvement and oversight.
- All publicly-funded programs are to be included in a service purchase agreement.

There are other third-party community care providers that manage foster homes. The findings of the B&L review identified a gap in existing policies and procedures for the management of these foster homes. The review also recommends developing provincial standards and procedures to ensure minimum standards are established and monitored effectively.

## **ACTION TAKEN**

### **Communication Protocol**

During Phase I of the B&L review, it became evident early on that there was a breakdown in communication between community care providers, the licensing agency, and the placing agency. As a result, a communication protocol has been developed to mitigate barriers. The purpose of the protocol is to facilitate clear and timely communication (such as verbal, written, electronic, etc.) between the various workers involved when children are placed in foster care. Implementation of this protocol begins early December.

### **Foster Home Study Model**

It became evident that foster home studies varied and that both standardization and a foster home study practice model was warranted. The General Child and Family Services Authority worked with B&L to support the implementation of the SAFE model. SAFE is a structured home study methodology that allows child welfare agencies to effectively and systematically evaluate prospective families for foster and adoptive placement, using research-based tools and processes. The structured nature of SAFE mandates a step-by-step process throughout the home study. The final step of SAFE creates a template to evaluate an applicant's strengths and issues.

The CFS authorities and other community care providers will be engaged to consider the best approach to standardizing structured home study methodology province-wide.

### **Standardization across the Foster Care System**

The province completed an audit of all available foster parent training across the system to determine training currently offered, gaps in training, and opportunities to develop provincial minimum standards, with a key focus on cultural training for all foster parents.

Work is in progress to address file organization, archiving and clarity on CFS record maintenance and storage, relevant to Section 76 as it pertains to confidentiality and access to records.

## Next Steps

A collaborative system-wide approach, with engagement from CFS authorities and community care providers, will be undertaken to apply the lessons learned through this review and to improve third party foster care management. The key areas of focus include:

- communication between managed agencies, CFS placing and licensing agencies, including on-going training, implementation of the communication protocol;
- file organization standardization;
- equitable foster care rate structures;
- foster parent training to meet minimum standards, with a key focus on cultural competency; and
- standardized evidence-based foster home assessment.

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