

**Deputy Ministers' Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth Recommendations  
Action Planning (MACY-RAP) Committee June Report**

**June 27, 2019**

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In April 2019, the Government of Manitoba provided a report to the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY) on actions undertaken to date in response to recommendations from the October 2019 report titled "*Documenting the Decline: The Dangerous Space between Good Intentions and Meaningful Interventions*" ("Circling Star").

At that time, it was advised that whole-of-government reports would be released twice annually, in June and December, going forward. The following report contains updates and actions undertaken on all MACY reports and recommendations.

**The report on the recommendations from *Documenting the Decline: The Dangerous Space between Good Intentions and Meaningful Interventions* was provided to the MACY on April 23, 2019. Please see updates from that report below:**

**RECOMMENDATION ONE:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that the Province of Manitoba respond to the persistent lack of coordination between services for children and youth by developing and implementing a provincial strategy to train service providers on the requirement to share information across systems and ensure children and youth are at the centre of all service provision. This is to be developed, delivered, and evaluated in consultation with Manitoba Education and Training, Manitoba Families, Manitoba Justice, and Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living.

Summary of activities completed since April 23, 2019 report

Work to better integrate joint training across systems remains ongoing.

**RECOMMENDATION TWO:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that the Department of Education and Training through Healthy Child Manitoba (HCM), and with participation from all school divisions, conduct an urgent review of the current use of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, and develop a province-wide strategy to limit, reduce, and phase-out exclusionary practices, except in situations of imminent safety risk to students and staff. This review and strategy should provide evidence-informed disciplinary alternatives that are in line with the best interests of the child and respect the right of children and youth to education.

### Summary of activities completed since April 23, 2019 report

Manitoba Education and Training (MET) has begun collaboration with the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents to review current practices and policies in the use of suspensions, expulsions and how the incidence rates should be reported to the province. In addition, the collaboration will examine how best to promote positive behaviour planning and safety plans before there is an imminent safety risk to students and staff. These discussions are beginning in June 2019 and data trends and analyses of the use of suspensions will continue throughout the 2019/20 school year.

### **RECOMMENDATION THREE:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living implement, in full, recommendation 5.4, per the Virgo report, as follows: *“Establish a concerted cross-sectoral process to reduce perceived and real jurisdictional boundaries that challenge access to, and coordination of, services. The process of developing this [Manitoba’s Mental Health and Addictions] Strategy, as well as any new opportunities and resources for working together (e.g., through Jordan’s Principle), should be viewed as an accelerator of a new period of trust and collaboration based on shared beliefs and strengths among all partners, and should include an interest in wellness, hope and family/community health.”* (MHA Strategy p.237)

### Summary of activities completed since April 23, 2019 report

Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living (MHSAL) continues to work on implementing the recommendations made in the Virgo report as well as broader system design work to improve the integration and coordination of services. Children and youth are identified as a priority population in the Virgo report and therefore, implementation planning is focused on improving services across multiple sectors for this population. A number of recommendations identified as having potential for immediate or short-term impact have been implemented or are in the process of being finalized.

### **RECOMMENDATION FOUR:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living, together with front-line addiction service providers in Manitoba, Healthy Child Manitoba, Indigenous communities, and subject matter experts on addictions, immediately respond to the lack of effective substance use treatment services for youth by prioritizing the development and implementation of a youth addiction action strategy. This strategy should be based on best practice evidence with the objective of ensuring that children and youth across Manitoba can exercise their right to the highest attainable standard of health.

### Summary of activities completed since April 23, 2019 report

The establishment of Shared Health, provincial clinical services planning and provincial clinical oversight is intended to result in greater accountabilities for health authorities and health services providers as envisioned through the recently-introduced Bill 10, The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act (Health System Governance and

Accountability). These amendments will support government's plan for a more patient-focused, sustainable and better-organized health system that achieves improved outcomes for patients. This new bill will enable assurance of appropriate planning and delivery of mental health and addictions services province-wide.

Additionally, on June 10, 2019, the Minister of Health announced plans to decentralize youth addiction services through the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM). Youth counsellors from AFM are now embedded in nine community agency locations across Winnipeg. In keeping with the priorities highlighted within the Virgo report, this change will facilitate easier access and referrals for service for youth with addictions, and make it easier for youths to access other co-located services they may require. Being based in community service delivery organizations will ensure counsellors are aware of emergent trends, and able to adapt their responses to new or evolving issues. The locations are:

- Access Fort Garry,
- Aikins Street Community Health Centre,
- Centre de Santé Saint-Boniface,
- Eagle Urban Transition,
- Macdonald Youth Services,
- Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre,
- New Directions,
- Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad, and
- the StreetReach program.

#### **RECOMMENDATION FIVE:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that the Department of Justice improve communication across the divisions within its department, including probation services, victim services, and prosecution services, as well as with the legal community (e.g. legal aid), and the courts to ensure that probation orders are relevant, effective, child-centred, realistic (given limitations in remote and rural communities), and achievable. The Advocate further recommends that the Department of Justice evaluate their capacity to provide the programming for youth to meet their probation conditions and determine whether or not existing programs and services are sufficient and accessible to youth living in rural and remote locations. When gaps are identified, strategies for culturally appropriate alternatives and program delivery need to be developed.

#### Summary of activities completed since April 23, 2019 report

The review of the current youth justice system in Manitoba and its connections to the child welfare system remains ongoing and more information will be available in the 2019/20 fiscal year.

#### **RECOMMENDATION SIX:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that the Department of Families in partnership with the Child and Family Services (CFS) Authorities: (1) clarify

training content and expectations of workers and supervisors with respect to CFS minimum provincial standards, and (2) prioritize the development of high quality, culturally appropriate, modernized, and accessible training on the minimum provincial service standards within two years. The Advocate further recommends that all existing workers who have not received training on minimum standards and all new CFS workers be required to complete this training within three to six months.

#### Summary of activities completed in the last six months

Manitoba Families remains engaged with the child and family services (CFS) authorities and work on this recommendation is continuing.

**Manitoba's progress on the recommendations from *In Need of Protection: Angel's Story*, released December 13, 2018, is below:**

#### **RECOMMENDATION ONE:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that Manitoba Education and Training, Manitoba Families, Manitoba Justice, and Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living engage with experts in childhood trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in order to develop a trauma prevention and response plan of action to (a) educate service providers and the public on ACEs, and (b) create appropriate, accessible immediate and long-term evidence-informed interventions to address the trauma crisis that is ongoing in Manitoba.

#### Summary of activities completed since report was released

Further work and collaboration with stakeholders will inform government's next steps related to raising public awareness on ACEs.

In 2018/19, Manitoba Justice provided the Winnipeg Police Service with \$63,900 to work with stakeholders to create a video series to increase awareness of "complex trauma" in children in Grades 7 to 12. The goal is to educate young people in an age-appropriate manner on what complex trauma is and how it can lead to alcohol and illicit drug use, addiction, gang involvement and human trafficking or exploitation. Project funding includes resources to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Significant work is happening throughout government and the broader public service in relation to training specific to trauma. For example, all four CFS authorities offer training on the effects of trauma to their agency staff and both the First Nations of Northern Manitoba Child and Family Services Authority and the Southern First Nations Network of Care include training regarding ACEs. Manitoba Families' interdepartmental training unit offers *The Effects of Trauma* training to all department employees, and this speaks to ACEs. Manitoba Justice is currently implementing *Road to Mental Readiness* training. New Directions provides trauma-informed training for child and youth mental health workers.

Even though trauma-informed practice is being implemented throughout the public service, improvements can be made to include a more integrated training model. Departments will remain engaged in discussing options for better integration across government and government-funded agencies such as CFS authorities, regional health authorities and school divisions.

## **RECOMMENDATION TWO:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that the Department of Families, in collaboration with Manitoba Education and Training, Manitoba Justice, and Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living, in consultation with Manitoba Status of Women, Indigenous and Northern Relations, the Winnipeg Police Service and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, (1) expand StreetReach, Winnipeg Outreach Network (WON), and culturally appropriate services in First Nations and rural and remote communities; and (2) independently evaluate and then update Tracia's Trust: Manitoba's Sexual Exploitation Strategy.

### Summary of activities completed since report was released

On January 30, 2019, the Families minister released a research report, *Collaboration and Best Practices to End Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking in Manitoba*. ([https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/traciustrust/pubs/tracias\\_trust\\_report\\_2019.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/traciustrust/pubs/tracias_trust_report_2019.pdf)).

It provides key findings and opportunities to address sexual exploitation through the Tracia's Trust Strategy. The report contains evidence-based analysis, combined with feedback from focus groups. The report reflects quantitative analysis of 282 cases over a five-year period (2011-2016), as well as collaboration with 84 participants representing:

- front-line service providers,
- community members and Elders,
- law enforcement; government officials, and
- survivors and experiential voices with lived experience in the sex trades.

The key findings were shared with the Tracia's Trust Knowledge Keepers, seeking feedback and outlining a draft plan that will be reviewed by stakeholders to inform the next steps of the strategy.

The province is examining opportunities to augment the services of StreetReach and possible additional partnerships. On February 20, 2019, the province announced that the proceeds of crime fund will be used to bring members of the Winnipeg-based StreetReach team to Thompson every two months to work with RCMP and identify at-risk and vulnerable youth.

Transformation within child and family services provides an opportunity to collaborate and review and renew ongoing data collection processes, build program models that will be reflected in service purchase agreements, enhance training and redevelop specialized group care placements for sexually exploited youth.

This is also an opportunity to work with the current review of the youth justice system and its connections to the child welfare system. Details of this review were noted in the response to Recommendation #5 of the Circling Star report.

### **RECOMMENDATION THREE:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that Communication Services Manitoba, Manitoba Education and Training, Manitoba Families, Manitoba Justice, Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living, Manitoba Status of Women, and Manitoba Indigenous and Northern Relations collaborate with youth advisory groups, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, Winnipeg Police Service, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Indigenous and community organizations, and the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth to carry out ongoing public education via awareness campaigns that (a) denounce the sexual exploitation of children and youth and (b) raise awareness about the ongoing demand for purchasing sex and/or sexually exploiting children and youth in Manitoba.

#### Summary of activities completed since report was released

The Tracia's Trust Strategy has included past and ongoing work on public awareness. Twelve regional teams receive funding for public education and to increase awareness of this issue. This regional approach reflects how sexual exploitation presents differently in different areas of the province and allows for responding quickly to local needs and the community. The research report will inform the ongoing work of the regional teams.

Examples of their work include:

- an online initiative to raise awareness among students and youth on issues of sexual exploitation through Snapchat filters,
- presentations on online safety for students, parents and the community,
- creating a Facebook page focused on sexual exploitation, human trafficking and sex work, and
- creating an online tool that allows trafficked or exploited people and sex workers to connect, post warnings and remain safe.

The research report identifies the key finding of the importance of increasing public understanding about the abuse of children through sexual exploitation. Some participants indicated support for renewing the "Stop Sex With Kids" campaign. Others shared concerns about the need to ensure any campaigns are effective. There was debate among participants in the research group whether funds are most effectively used in public awareness campaigns as compared to assisting people who have been exploited.

The work and consultations that led to the research report, as well as its release and related media coverage, all form part of increasing knowledge and public awareness through discussion and dialogue.

In 2018/19, staff from the province's sexual exploitation unit presented the research report's findings to Manitoba Keewatin Okimakanak, University of Winnipeg Global College student advisory council, Manitoba Hydro, Tracia's Trust regional teams and the Child Abuse Committee Conference. Further work and collaboration with stakeholders will inform and support ongoing direction specific to raising regional public awareness.

In addition to work completed in Tracia's Trust, Manitoba Justice announced funding in 2018/19 for the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, including \$20,000 for a pilot project that provides educational materials and training to schools, families and the community in the St. James School Division on how to protect children from sexual exploitation and abduction. For more details, please see:

<https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=44662&posted=2018-10-02>

#### **RECOMMENDATION FOUR:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that the Minister of Families, through the Child and Family Services Division (CFSD), in collaboration with the four child and family services Authorities, (1) conduct an evidence-informed review and update of existing provincial service standards, and (2) establish province-wide measures of service accountability through a provincial quality assurance framework. Both the service standards and the quality assurance measures must be consistent throughout the province, culturally appropriate, and supported and enforced by the governing child and family services Authorities within their child and family services agencies. As per provincial legislation, quality assurance measures at the authority level must then be assessed and monitored by the Minister of Families.

#### Summary of activities completed since report was released

See the information provided in the April 23, 2019 report to MACY regarding Circling Star Recommendation #6. The circumstances and background information remain unchanged.

Anticipated changes to legislation would in turn result in required changes to regulations and standards. Once the legislation is passed and regulations in place, Manitoba Families will work with the four child welfare authorities on an updated standards manual and to coordinate training for agency staff. While this legislative work is being completed, standards will continue to be updated incrementally by the department and the authorities.

The current standards training, as outlined in the previous response, remain in place with the following updates:

- The First Nations of Northern Manitoba Child and Family Services Authority advises they are in the process of developing a two-day standards training for staff. They are working toward a goal of this training being available in Fall 2019 and quarterly going forward.
- The Southern First Nations Network of Care advises the case management standards training is still being developed, with anticipated delivery beginning in Fall 2019 and

then available quarterly and as requested. The transitional planning training remains in development, anticipated to be two days of training, and is planned to begin in Fall 2019 and then available quarterly and as requested.

### **RECOMMENDATION FIVE:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living and Department of Families, in collaboration with the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, (1) review and reform the province's treatment programs for children and youth and (2) create safe and secure facilities for youth in Manitoba who are sexually exploited and harmfully involved in substance misuse.

#### Summary of activities completed since report was released

The Manitoba mental health and addictions system strategy and design project is a whole-of-government approach to ensuring services are accessible to Manitobans who need them. This includes work related to the implementation of recommendations made in the Virgo report, as well as broader system design work to improve the integration and coordination of services. Part 1 of this recommendation closely aligns with the Virgo report, therefore it is anticipated it will be addressed through the implementation planning process. Please see the details provided in Recommendation #4 in the Circling Star response about the embedding AFM youth counsellors in nine community-based organizations to improve access.

Additionally, this recommendation aligns with a key finding from the Tracia's Trust research report, *Collaboration and Best Practices to End Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking in Manitoba*, which also identifies the importance of specialized placements and resources to support exploited youth including addressing factors such as addictions and mental health. As noted under Recommendation #2, the key findings were shared with Knowledge Keepers, seeking feedback and outlining a draft plan that will be reviewed by stakeholders to inform the next steps of the strategy.

### **RECOMMENDATION SIX:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living, in collaboration with the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba and other stakeholders, amend The Youth Drug Stabilization (Support for Parents) Act so that longer warrants or successive warrants are possible to ensure children and youth get the medically supported withdrawal management services they need based on evidence-informed treatment best practices for addictions (e.g. methamphetamine, alcohol, opioids).

#### Summary of activities completed since report was released

In February 2019, the government announced a review of the current youth justice system in Manitoba and its connections to the child welfare system, with the aim of ending cycles of crime for at-risk youth. A team of senior staff from Manitoba Justice



and Manitoba Families will report back to government, with recommendations and an implementation plan to be made public later in 2019/20.

Significant progress has been made in this work and the review team has completed an analysis on leading practices throughout the country. In addition, the review team has assessed several pieces of legislation, including The Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act (Alberta) and The Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (Alberta) as recommended by MACY in previous reports, as well as The Child, Youth and Family Services Act (Ontario).

Upon completion of the review, the departments will collaborate with MHSAL to implement recommendations, align with recommendations in the Virgo report and pursue opportunities for legislative changes as appropriate.

**Manitoba's progress on the recommendations from *Learning from Nelson Mandela: A Report on the use of Solitary Confinement and Pepper Spray in Manitoba Youth Custody Facilities*, released February 21, 2019, is below:**

#### **RECOMMENDATION ONE:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that the Manitoba government and Manitoba Justice amend *The Correctional Services Act* to prohibit the solitary confinement of youth for a period exceeding 24 hours, per the Nelson Mandela Rules.

#### Summary of activities completed since report was released

Manitoba Justice does not practice solitary confinement, according to the accepted definition of solitary confinement and meaningful human contact. Youth interaction with staff are meaningful and intended to address the issues that led to placement in segregation.

Segregating youth for periods exceeding 18 hours is prohibited in current provincial policy, which was implemented in April 2018. While the policy exceeds expectations outlined in the Nelson Mandela Rules, the department continues to strive for minimizing the use of segregation as much as possible.

The department will be considering appropriate legislative changes in the course of our continued work on the youth justice review with Manitoba Families.

#### **RECOMMENDATION TWO:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that the Manitoba government and Manitoba Justice restrict the use of any form of segregation under 24 hours in youth custody facilities through an amendment to *The Correctional Services Regulation*.

### Summary of activities completed since report was released

Manitoba Justice restricts the use of segregation through its current policy, which was implemented in April 2018. While the policy is comprehensive and includes a formal review process, the department continues to strive for minimizing the use of segregation as much as possible.

As noted in Recommendation #1, the department will be considering appropriate legislative changes related to the youth justice review.

### **RECOMMENDATION THREE:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that Manitoba Justice collect, track, analyse, and report on incidents of segregation across youth custody facilities to ensure transparency and accountability.

### Summary of activities completed since report was released

The department implemented this recommendation prior to the public release of the report and currently tracks the time in and out of segregation, Indigenous status, gender, mental health and reason for placement in segregation.

### **RECOMMENDATION FOUR:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that Manitoba Justice immediately prohibit the use of pepper spray in youth custody facilities except in situations of immediate risk to life\* to correctional staff or other youth in custody by amending *The Correctional Services Regulation*.

### Summary of activities completed since report was released

The department shifted policy direction in relation to the use of OC (pepper) spray several years ago, as is evident from the significant reduction in use over that time. For example, OC spray was used only once in each youth facility in 2018 and only once total in 2019 as of the date of this report.

The current policy on the use of OC requires authorization by the facility head. It is only authorized in circumstances of serious physical threat to the individual, staff or other youth. Additionally, the department has voluntarily implemented a practice to notify the MACY in circumstances where OC spray is used.

### **RECOMMENDATION FIVE:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that Manitoba Justice respond to the overrepresentation of youth with mental illnesses, cognitive vulnerabilities, and childhood trauma by developing an action plan with Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living and Manitoba Families for the implementation of evidence informed and culturally-safe therapeutic behavioural management alternatives to solitary confinement and pepper spray, with the goals of enhancing the rehabilitation

and successful reintegration of youth into Manitoba communities, reducing recidivism, and improving the public safety of all Manitobans.

#### Summary of activities completed since report was released

Manitoba Justice provides extensive training to staff working in youth custody facilities. In addition to the support provided by juvenile counselors, youth placed in youth custody facilities also have access to a significant amount of other resources such as chaplains, Indigenous spiritual caregivers, nurses, correctional psychiatric nurses, psychologists and psychiatrists to help meet their mental health needs.

As noted in the response to Recommendation #6 of *In Need of Protection: Angel's Story*, the government is undertaking a review of the current youth justice system in Manitoba and its connections to the child welfare system, with the aim of ending cycles of crime for at-risk youth. Significant progress has been made in this work and the review team has completed an analysis on leading practices throughout the country. More information about this work is available in the section noted above.

#### **RECOMMENDATION SIX:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that Manitoba Justice and Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living immediately embark on the development of a specialized health facility led and run by mental health professionals to provide evidence-informed programming for youth with mental illnesses or cognitive vulnerabilities in custody, including youth who are found not criminally responsible.

#### Summary of activities completed since report was released

MHSAL is working across departments to explore evidence-based models of care for this population, which includes looking at residential treatment programs. Progress updates on this work will be made going forward.

As noted in the response to Recommendation #6 of *In Need of Protection: Angel's Story*, the government is undertaking a review of the current youth justice system in Manitoba and its connections to the child welfare system, with the aim of ending cycles of crime for at-risk youth. Significant progress has been made in this work and the review team has completed an analysis on leading practices throughout the country. More information about this work is available in the section noted above.

**Manitoba's progress on the recommendations from *A Place Where it Feels Like Home: The Story of Tina Fontaine*, released March 12, 2019, is below:**

#### **RECOMMENDATION ONE:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that Manitoba Education and Training ensure its recently established *Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education* review the measurement of and response to absenteeism across Manitoba. It is further recommended that the Commission review the use of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, with the goal of developing a province-wide strategy to

limit, reduce, and phase-out exclusionary practices, except in situations of imminent safety risk to students and staff. This review and strategy should provide evidence-informed practices that are in line with the best interests of the child and respect the right to education for children and youth.

#### Summary of activities completed since report was released

The minister of Education and Training shared this recommendation with the Manitoba Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education in April 2019. The minister's letter is attached to this report as an appendix.

#### **RECOMMENDATION TWO:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living expedite the public release of a clear implementation plan to address the child and youth-specific recommendations contained in the report on *Improving Access and Coordination of Mental Health and Addiction Services: A Provincial Strategy for all Manitobans* ("Virgo Report").

#### Summary of activities completed since report was released

Children and youth are identified as a priority population in the Virgo report. As such, implementation planning is focused on improving services, including those related to substance use and addictions, across multiple sectors for this population. The broader approach to implementing the 125 recommendations in the report includes identifying actions that can be taken immediately, as well as recommendations that require planning but that may be achieved in the short-term, and those that require system or structural-level changes to achieve their full impact.

We also know that simply increasing service funding is not the answer. We must look at short-, medium- and long-term projects critically, so we can address the issues of today and the needs of people seeking treatment now while building a stronger system in the months and years ahead.

A number of recommendations identified as having immediate or short-term impact have already been implemented that will contribute to the broader implementation of the Virgo report. For example, the partnership with Bell Let's Talk to fund the Strongest Families Institute (SFI) to provide mental health services to children, youth and their families in Manitoba was announced in January 2019, with additional enhancements announced on June 10, 2019. This funding will allow SFI to provide telephone-based coaching services (up to 17 sessions) to approximately 700 families per year who are experiencing mild to moderate mental health challenges.

Additionally, on June 11, 2019, the government announced that AFM was in the process of co-locating and embedding youth counsellors within community-based organizations. These efforts are consistent with the recommendations in the Virgo report on improving access and coordination of mental health and addictions services.

### **RECOMMENDATION THREE:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that Manitoba Justice evaluate the continuum of Victim Support Services for children and develop quality control measures to ensure that services are child centred and provided in a timely manner.

#### Summary of activities completed since report was released

Manitoba Justice's victim services (VS) branch sought clarification from the MACY on this recommendation and was advised the details section inform the basis of this recommendation. However, general comments include:

- VS has a child victim support service dedicated to assisting child victims of crime directly. These staff also attend Snowflake Place for Children and Youth to assist children with their initial statements early in the process.
- VS workers always connect with a child's parent or legal guardian to offer support and information. This approach is taken as VS recognizes and respects the relationship between parents and their children, including the parent's ability to make decisions for their children. VS often meets with children at the request of either the parent or the child specifically when preparing and supporting them during court proceedings.
- In matters involving domestic violence where the victim is a youth, it is preferred to have parental involvement to enhance the safety of the youth who may be at risk for future violence. VS workers acknowledge that a youth has a right to express their position on any given matter as it relates to domestic violence but also acknowledges that parent/guardian input is valuable from a safety perspective.
- VS is a voluntary program. However, if a parent was impeding a child's access to victim services' support that threatened the child's well-being, VS would engage with child and family services. The MACY office has also offered to assist in advocating for children in these matters.

The MACY requested that Manitoba Justice examine the criteria regarding how child benefits are approved or denied and subsequently distributed to victim applicants.

- The compensation for victims of crime program has developed template letters to ensure that information provided to victims about benefits is clear and consistent. Policy direction has been provided to staff to ensure template letters are used in all circumstances.
- Staff with the compensation for victims of crime program have been granted access to the VS case management system. This will allow for increased coordination between program areas and assist with quality control.
- The compensation for victims of crime program offers counselling benefits to every eligible claimant, proactively offering it even if the applicant does not request it in their application.

- Template letters in child victim matters have been modified to ensure that CFS is aware and encouraged to apply for compensation for victims of crime benefits (specifically counselling) on behalf of the child, in cases where they are the child's guardian.
- The compensation for victims of crime program has implemented a tracking system to monitor when information is missing from applications, and to follow up with claimants whose applications do not specifically identify the benefits for which they are applying.
- VS will continue to enhance supports for children of homicide victims by exploring ways to confirm that parents/children are aware that they are able to access counselling resources.

The MACY requested that Manitoba Justice clarify current legislation and policies that are contradictory related to access to compensation services and benefits. VS clarified with the MACY that this request refers to The Victims' Bill of Rights, Section 51(2), which states:

**Extension of time**

[51\(2\)](#) The director may, before or after the expiry of the one year period, extend the time for making an application if he or she considers it appropriate.

In practice, compensation for victims of crime program staff always extend the time for making an application in relation to children. This is reflected in the program's policy as noted below:

Extension of time

The manager or claims adjudicator reviews each application on a case-by-case basis to determine if an extension is warranted. Primary consideration should be on the impact that the delay in applying may have had on the Program's ability to properly investigate and adjudicate a claim. Factors that may support a decision to approve an extension include:

- Applicant was a minor or was mentally incompetent – an extension may be granted where the applicant's parent, guardian or committee had failed to make application for compensation on the minor's behalf.

**RECOMMENDATION FOUR:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that the Manitoba government, through its Deputy Ministers of Health and Social Policy and Priorities (DMHSPP) committee, work with the government's Legislation and Strategic Policy Branch to analyse the province of Alberta's *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act* and Alberta's *Drug-Endangered Children Act* to determine how safe and secure treatment facilities can be introduced in Manitoba. It is further recommended that the

DMHSPP committee develop a plan to ensure the continuum of services for children and youth includes safe, secure, home-like settings for treatment and programming when children and youth are at imminent risk of harm or death.

#### Summary of activities completed since report was released

Please refer to response to Recommendations #5 and #6 in In Need of Protection: Angel's Story.

#### **RECOMMENDATION FIVE:**

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that Manitoba Families, in consultation with other government departments and relevant stakeholders, create a new protocol to ensure that response plans are created for missing youth in general, and sexually exploited youth in particular who are at risk of imminent harm.

#### Summary of activities completed since report was released

MHSAL and Families have been working with service delivery organizations to address the perceived and real gaps in services for this population. Work is underway to make policy and process changes at a service delivery level to reduce barriers and increase accessibility.

Additionally, Families has worked with Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) to provide clarification to placement resources and CFS agencies when children should be reported missing and the role of agency and placement staff in attempting to locate missing or absent children. The WPS missing persons unit attended a quarterly meeting of executive directors of group care facilities to discuss the issue. The department also distributed the police service's *Standard Child in Care Missing Person's Report Questionnaire* to be used by facilities as a guide for follow-up to missing children in care.

Furthermore, as part of the collaboration with the Block by Block Community Safety and Wellbeing Initiative, Families undertook an analysis of the most frequently missing children in care. Collaborative work now underway includes three main areas:

- work with placements and CFS agencies to develop plans to address the needs of children who are repeatedly late in returning to placements (under six hours),
- work with placements and CFS agencies on how to do case planning to minimize risk and work with children who are repeatedly absent from their placements and are in a known location, and
- continue to work with WPS to focus on dedicated resources to focus on the needs of children who are assessed as high-risk when they are absent from placements.

Work is also underway to strengthen relationships and practices to help missing youth, in particular youth who are at risk of sexual exploitation, across the province. As previously noted under Recommendation #2 in In Need of Protection: Angel's Story, the province is actively looking at opportunities to augment the services of StreetReach.

The consultation respecting the Tracia's Trust research report key findings, outlined earlier under Recommendations #2 and #3 from In Need of Protection: Angel's Story will help inform further responses to this recommendation.