

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate Quarterly Report (July 1 to September 31, 2008)

Alberta Children and Youth Services Response

Response to Provincial Overview

As part of the quarterly reporting process the advocate may make generalized observations that are not specific to a particular child or youth or Child and Family Services Authority or Delegated First Nation Agency.

The table below provides ministry responses to these generalized observations.

Concern Reported	Ministry Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about quality of services provided by ministry caseworkers, including difficulty contacting or seeing caseworkers. • Difficulty accessing resources and supports from the ministry and concerns about denying certain services requested by children and youth. • Children and youth disagreeing with decisions by caseworkers, including feeling like their viewpoints are not heard by workers and concerns about placement decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial policies are in place, requiring that caseworkers have contact with a child or youth in care on a monthly basis and face-to-face contact at least every three months, including time spent with the child with no caregiver present. • Provincial practice is for caseworkers to attempt to return calls from children and youth by the end of the next business day. • Criteria and rates for accessing all financial benefits for children and youth in care, including daily living costs, basic needs, clothing allowance, recreation allowance, and camp/vacation allowance, are set in provincial policy. • Orthodontic services are provided based on the approval of a diagnosis and estimate sent to the Alberta Dental Services Corporation. • The criteria for entering into a support and financial assistance agreement with a youth and the supports that may be provided under such an agreement are identified in the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Regulation. Provincial policy identifies the procedures to follow when terminating a support and financial assistance agreement. • All case-specific issues around support and care for children and youth in care in this quarterly report have been addressed to the satisfaction of the advocate. • Placement decisions for children and youth in care are made based on several factors, including meeting the specific needs of the child and the needs of other children in the placement, the skill set of the caregiver, the availability of an appropriate placement, and the number of spaces available in a placement under licensing requirements. In some cases, a child or youth may not be pleased with the placement option that his or her worker feels is in the best interest of the child or youth. • Provincial policy is that caseworkers must ensure that any decisions concerning the placement of a child or youth take into account the benefits of placement with extended family, in their home community, and be respectful of the child or youth's

Report on Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) and Delegated First Nation Agencies (DFNAs)

The tables below include information about how cases where mandatory notifications were made to the advocate were addressed by CFSAs and DFNAs. CFSAs and DFNAs are required by ministry policy to inform the advocate whenever:

- A child or youth is alleged to have suffered physical, emotional, or sexual abuse while in provincial government care.
- A child or youth receiving services, or a significant person in their life, disagrees with the services planned for a child or youth in care.
- It is felt that the viewpoint or interests of a child or youth in care are not being considered or the rights of a child or youth in care are not being respected.

The ministry response section of the table shows the number of such incidents reported to the advocate and whether they were founded or unfounded, based on the facts discovered when the incident was investigated.

When an allegation is verified, the first priority of the ministry is to take immediate steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child or youth in care. The nature of these steps vary, depending on the unique circumstances of each case and can include:

- The permanent closure of a foster home or kinship care home, or the discipline of group home staff, up to and including dismissal. Incidents that are criminal in nature are referred to the appropriate police authorities.
- A requirement that foster parents or kinship caregivers receive additional training before being able to care for children or youth in their home again. In some cases a child or youth in care may remain with the foster parent or kinship caregiver, provided their safety and wellbeing can be assured.
- The need for foster parents or kinship caregivers to take additional steps to ensure the continued safety and wellbeing of children and youth in their care, such as making sure third parties who have placed the safety and wellbeing of the young person at risk are barred access to the child or youth.
- The ministry providing additional supports and services to the foster parent or kinship caregiver and increasing its monitoring activities.
- Forwarding verified cases of abuse to the ministry legal services branch for referral to the Office of the Public Trustee.

Child and Family Services Authorities

CFSA	Concern Reported	Ministry Response
Southwest CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two mandatory notifications involving four children. • Permanency placements for children and youth in care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two allegations of abuse in care were substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One case of sexual abuse by a foster child on the granddaughter of a foster parent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All children receiving counselling and enhanced safety plan put in place in the home. ○ One case of physical and emotional abuse by the kinship caregiver of a youth in care. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Youth moved from the kinship home to a foster home. • A regional permanency committee has been established with membership including parties involved in determining the most appropriate permanency option for children and youth in care (including representatives from the aboriginal community). • The region has two programs that assist in connecting children in care with extended family who are members of the Blood Tribe.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of specialized placements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The region has a monitoring system to help ensure appropriate placements for children in care. Region management also regularly review the length of stays for children in care.
Southeast CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two mandatory notifications involving four children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One allegation of abuse involving three children was substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One case of sexual abuse by one foster child on another with a third as a witness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child responsible moved to a residential treatment facility for enhanced counselling. ▪ Victim and witness remained in the foster home and received counselling.
Calgary & Area CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 mandatory notifications involving 53 children. • Responsiveness of ministry staff. • Lack of or disagreement with a permanency plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six allegations of abuse involving ten children were substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One case of sexual abuse of a foster child by the foster parent's biological adult child. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Victim moved to a new foster home and received counselling. ▪ Criminal charges laid against the perpetrator. ○ Two cases of concerns about the quality of care provided by a foster parent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In one case the foster child was moved and the foster home closed. ▪ In the other case the foster parents were provided with additional supports. ○ Three cases of emotional abuse by a foster parent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In one case the foster child was moved and the foster home closed. ▪ In the other cases the foster children were moved and the foster homes are on hold, with no placements. • Youth have been encouraged to raise communications issues with their caseworker. They have been advised to contact the appropriate team leader or worksite manager if they continue to be dissatisfied with the responsiveness of their caseworker. • Youth are advised that they are welcome to include their advocate or other support people in their discussions with ministry staff. • The development of a permanency plan is completed in collaboration with the child (when it is age and developmentally appropriate). • On occasion a child or youth may disagree with the permanency plan developed for them, however the region makes every attempt to address these differences of opinion, making sure what is in the best interests of the child or youth remains the top priority.
Central CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven mandatory notifications involving 13 children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two allegations of abuse involving four children were substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One case of concerns about the quality of care provided by a foster parent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All foster children were moved and the foster home is on hold with no placements. ○ One case of neglect by a kinship caregiver. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child moved from the kinship home to a foster home.
East Central CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One mandatory notification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The allegation of abuse in care were not substantiated by the facts discovered upon

	involving one child.	ministry investigation.
Edmonton & Area CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 mandatory notifications involving 124 children. • Access to parents, siblings, friends. • Group homes. • Number / suitability of placements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six allegations of abuse involving twenty-six children were substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One case of physical abuse by a foster parent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Additional monitoring and support to ensure ongoing safety of the children. ○ Five cases of concerns about the quality of care provided by a foster parent or group home (inappropriate discipline strategies used, inadequate level of supervision). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In the cases involving foster homes, the foster home was either closed or placed on hold, or the foster parents are required to receive additional training and education. ▪ In the cases involving group homes, additional training is being provided to staff and the CFSA has increased its monitoring. • The region continues to make a concerted effort to ensure that children and youth are able to have contact with individuals that are significant to them. • In some cases, a child may not be permitted contact with someone for reasons including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Contact could place the physical, emotional, or psychological safety/wellbeing of the child or youth in care at risk. ○ The individual with whom the child or youth wishes contact does not want contact with the child or youth in care. • The increase in the number of children referred results from the region making sure that if a concern about one child in a group home or foster home setting comes forward, mandatory notifications are completed for all children residing in the home, regardless of whether they were involved in the concern. • In some cases, younger children were placed in group care designed for sibling groups, to ensure the siblings could stay together until a permanent placement was secured. "Very young" children are not usually placed in a group care setting where they would be mixed with older youth, unless they are part of a sibling group. • The region strives to ensure that suitable placements are found in a timely fashion. • The region has secured more group care beds than in the past to meet specific needs. • The region is involved in a provincial campaign to recruit additional foster parents and aboriginal caregivers.
North Central CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six mandatory notifications involving nine children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two allegations of abuse involving four children were substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One case of sexual abuse by a foster parent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All foster children moved from the home, the foster home was closed, and the matter was referred to police.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One case of sexual abuse perpetrated by another youth in the same group home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Youth was moved from the group home, additional supervision was put in place, and the matter was referred to police for investigation.
Northwest CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One mandatory notification involving five children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry follow-up determined that the allegation of abuse was not verified by the facts discovered during the investigation into the allegation.
Northeast CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No mandatory notifications or concerns reported by the advocate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A.
Métis Settlements CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two mandatory notifications involving four children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry follow-up determined that the allegation of abuse was not verified by the facts discovered during the investigation into the allegation.

Report on Delegated First Nation Agencies

Delegated First Nation Agency (DFNA)	Concern Reported	Response
Akamkispatinaw Ohpikihawasowin Child & Family Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One mandatory notification involving one child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The allegation of abuse was substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One case of physical abuse by a kinship caregiver. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child moved from the home and matter referred to police.
Blood Tribe Child Protection Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two mandatory notifications involving eight children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One allegation of abuse was substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One case of physical abuse by a foster parent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Foster children moved from the home and the foster home was closed.
Kasohkowew Child Wellness Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three mandatory notifications involving four children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency follow-up determined that the allegation of abuse was not verified by the facts discovered during the investigation into the allegation.
Kee Tas Kee Now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two mandatory notifications involving two children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency follow-up determined that the allegation of abuse was not verified by the facts discovered during the investigation into the allegation.
North Peace Tribal Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One mandatory notification involving one child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One allegation of abuse was substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One case of a youth in a group home sexually assaulting another youth in the home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Youth responsible and the victim were moved to other separate placements and the matter was referred to police.
Siksika	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four mandatory notifications involving eight children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One allegation of abuse was substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One case of a foster child being sexually assaulted by the adult biological child of the foster parent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Foster child was moved from the home and the foster home was closed.
Stoney Child & Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two mandatory notifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency follow-up determined that the allegation of abuse was not verified

Services	involving five children. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitional issues. • Specialized placement. 	by the facts discovered during the investigation into the allegation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff have completed work on developing transitional plans (in consultation with youth). On occasion there will be differences of opinion between the agency and youth, however the agency makes every attempt to address these differences of opinion, making sure what is in the best interests of the child or youth remains the top priority. • In some cases specialized placements are in the best interests of the child or youth, even when such a placement is not what the child or youth wishes.
Western Cree Tribal Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One mandatory notification involving one child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency follow-up determined that the allegation was not an allegation of abuse in care.

* The Child and Youth Advocate did not receive any mandatory notifications or have additional observations regarding the Delegated First Nation Agencies not listed in the table above.