

Thursday February 9, 2017 – 9:00am to 4:00pm

Introduction

The second meeting of the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention was held at the Federal Building on traditional Treaty 6 territory.

Elder Leonard Bastien provided the opening prayer, sang the Sacred White Buffalo song and acknowledged we were meeting on Blackfoot traditional territory. Elder Bastien spoke passionately of his work with children in care and families engaged with the system. Elder Bastien reminded the panel of the importance of their task on behalf of *a//* children receiving services, particularly indigenous children; overrepresented as a result of the residential school system, cultural genocide and legislation.

The second agenda for the panel was focused on child death investigation and review mechanisms in Alberta. The public were encouraged to submit their views to CIPanel.submissions@gov.ab.ca or on-site through a written submission to the panel. Minister Larivee commented on the positive deliberations of the panel and the Chair acknowledged the commitment of the panel to work together, focused on the safety and well-being of children.

Panel Members Present:

Chair Cameron Westhead, MLA for Banff–Cochrane (for Deborah Jabbour)
Maria Fitzpatrick, MLA for Lethbridge–East
Nicole Goehring, MLA for Edmonton–Castle Downs
Graham Sucha, MLA for Calgary–Shaw
Heather Sweet, MLA for Edmonton–Manning
Craig Coolhan MLA, Calgary–Klein (alternate for Deborah Jabbour, NDP MLA for Peace River)
Jason Nixon, Wildrose caucus, MLA for Rimbey–Rocky Mountain House–Sundre
Ric McIver, Interim Leader, Progressive Conservative caucus, MLA for Calgary–Hays
Dr. David Swann, Leader, Alberta Liberal caucus, MLA for Calgary–Mountain View
Greg Clark, Leader, Alberta Party caucus, MLA for Calgary–Elbow
Dr. Peter Choate, MSW, PhD, Mount Royal University
Dr. Patti LaBoucane–Benson, PhD, Native Counselling Services of Alberta
Bruce MacLaurin, MSW, University of Calgary
Honourable Danielle Larivee, Minister of Children’s Services and MLA for Lesser Slave Lake

Key Decisions

Based on the panel’s Engagement Process the Chair requested members submit their information requests by February 15, 2017. An inventory of requests will be created for the panel to prioritize using the consensus model.

Presentations

Child Death Investigations and Reviews:

Dr. Elizabeth Brooks-Lim, Chief Medical Examiner

The Chief Medical Examiner presented the work of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) and their role in the investigation of deaths and their collaboration with the Chief Medical Officer for Health. The OCME is mandated through the *Fatality Inquiries Act* and investigates deaths in Alberta to determine the cause and manner of death, the OCME is notified whenever a child in care dies, however does not complete an investigation if the death is considered natural or medical. In the case of an ongoing police investigation the OCME report is not released to support the integrity of the investigation; a consistent practice across Canada.

Alberta Health Services:

Dr. François Belanger, Alberta Health Services

The Panel was oriented to the Quality Assurance and Patient Safety reviews conducted within Alberta Health Services (AHS). The internal review processes generate a significant number of recommendations for systemic improvements which support AHS' development of a culture of quality and safety. AHS internal database supports recommendation management and tracking from internal as well as external recommendations including those from Fatality Inquiries and the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

Child and Youth Services-Council for Quality Assurance:

Donna Boulanger and Kent Henderson – Council for Quality Assurance

The Council members provided the panel with an overview of the work of the council, their focus on Quality Assurance and support to the ministry in providing advice on key initiatives including the Internal Child Death and Serious Incident Review Process presented at the previous meeting. The presenters described the Report Review Committee, a sub-committee of the Council that reviews all serious injuries and deaths of children receiving services. The Council receives notification of death and serious injury from the ministry and works with the Statutory Director to access additional information to support a review of the case and make recommendations. The Council expressed the benefit of the multi-disciplinary backgrounds of Council members and the breadth of expertise that brings to bear in the review process. The Council members did express opportunities to further their work with additional clarity of roles, dedicated resources and timelier access to information.

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate – Investigative Reviews:

Del Graff, Child Advocate

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The Advocate walked the panel through the role and mandate of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA) including the Investigative Review and resultant recommendations process. The OCYA presented their statistical assessment of the number of deaths they are aware of through Children's Service, Justice and Solicitor General and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, and noted they have been notified of twice as many deaths of children receiving service in parental care compared the notifications of deaths of children in care.

Death Investigations of Children in Care:

Chief Rod Knecht, Edmonton Police Services

Edmonton Police Services (EPS) Chief presented to the panel police response to child death investigations, including children in care. Information exchange is governed by legislation, including the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Valuable partnerships with Children's Services through initiatives like the Zebra Child Advocacy Center and the Child and Risk Response Teams (CARRT) facilitate positive relationships, expertise and increased awareness of roles and information sharing to support the safety of children. Chief Knecht stressed the priority of child safety and advised that clearer legislation would support increased information sharing.

The Role of Police Services in the Investigation of Deaths of Children in Care:

Associate Commissioner Marlin Degrand, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) K Division

The RCMP provides contractual policing services within Alberta and is the contracted police force for 44 communities in Alberta. Like the Edmonton Police Services (EPS), the authority for death investigations is governed under the *Fatality Inquiries Act*, however unlike the EPS, RCMP members are more likely to be the medical examiner on the scene and provide a preliminary report to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. The RCMP is also partnered with the Child Advocacy Centers in Alberta (Cariboo, Zebra and the Sheldon Kennedy Center) and leverage this partnership to support members across the province with access to information and expertise. The panel members were advised that RCMP have an electronic system for file exchange, and when a file transfer is unsuccessful immediate steps are taken to address the issue and gain access to the information, including accessing the paper file and imaging for their use in investigations. The RCMP is notified of child deaths, either through a call at the time of the incident, from the hospital where the child was taken or from the local Children's Services office. In response to questions about the history of the relationship between the RCMP and First Nation peoples the panel was advised of the Aboriginal Advisory Panel established to support the RCMP in navigating relationships and protocol.

Alberta Fatality Review Board:

Don McDermid, Chair of the Alberta Fatalities Review Board

The panel received an overview of the Board, the legislative mandate of the Board under the *Fatality Inquiry Act*, and their mandate to make recommendations to the Minister for Justice and

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Solicitor General whether to proceed or not to proceed with a public Fatality Inquiry with the intent to prevent similar deaths, increase public confidence or for public safety. The rationale to proceed to a public Fatality Inquiry is provided to counsel, and is considered as the public inquiry proceeds. Discussions with the panel included issues related to the nonbinding nature of the recommendations as a result of a Fatality Inquiry, Children's Services is legislatively mandated to respond to Fatality Inquiry reports with recommendations directed at the child intervention system.

Family Violence Death Review Committee:

Dione Kennedy, Prevention of Family Violence

The Panel was presented with information related to the Family Violence Death Review Committee (FVDRC) process and mandate under the *Protection Against Family Violence Act*. The FVDRC is a multi-disciplinary, arms-length internal committee with the autonomy to conduct in depth reviews of deaths as a result of family violence. The Committee was formed out of a need for a single source of aggregate data for Family Violence related deaths in Alberta and to date has conducted 7 case reports, 2 with the Minister of Community and Social Services for review and 5 nearing completion. The enabling legislation supports the committee to gather information from public and non-public bodies, which is reviewed by Committee members to determine systemic improvements. Public facing reports are non-identifying to protect the privacy of surviving family members, ministry staff and the committee monitor recommendation implementation.

Recommendations and the Child Intervention System:

Sarita Dighe-Bramwell, Child Intervention

Deferred

Overview:

Common areas of discussion for the panel members across all of the presentations was the perception of overlap, or duplication of processes as well as questions and concerns raised regarding barriers, real or perceived, resulting from privacy legislation in the timely sharing of relevant information.

Next Steps

The next meeting date will be Wednesday, February 22, 2017 in the Rocky Mountain Room of the Federal Building 9820-107 Street NW, Edmonton; all additional meeting dates will be confirmed and posted shortly.

The website childinterventionpanel.alberta.ca and e-mail CIPanel.submissions@gov.ab.ca are available for the public to get information and/or make submissions to the Panel.