

Wednesday February 22, 2017 – 9:00am to 4:00pm

Introduction

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

Elder Gilman Cardinal provided a blessing and smudge for the panel members prior to the meeting, provided the opening prayer for the panel and members of the public and acknowledged the meeting on traditional Treaty 6 territory.

Elder Cardinal spoke of his work with government for over 40 years and his focus of providing a service to the community. The Elder asked the panel to *care for our children* and noted his trust in them to complete this important task and asked that those looking to serve Indigenous peoples do so in consultation with the community to respect and honor the people and get their perspective on working together to make the communities better places to live and increase the capacity of Indigenous peoples.

The Panel heard a presentation and had an opportunity to ask questions about the Children's Services recommendation approach and the recommendations for child death review processes. This was followed by a child death case review presentation that included case scenarios describing typical review processes and effects of trauma for families who are child receiving services when a child or youth dies. This was supported in the afternoon by a community conversation with members of the community and service providers who have supported family and communities who have lost a child or youth and/or have been engaged in the child death review process.

The public were thanked for their attendance and reminded that while questions would not be taken from the floor they could continue to submit their views to CIPanel.submissions@gov.ab.ca or on-site through a written submission to the panel. Twenty-one members of the public attended this session, compared to 37 February 2 and 11 on February 9, 2017. This meeting was supported through an audio livestream available on the panel website <https://livestream.com/mediaco/cipanel>.

Panel Members Present:

Chair Deborah Jabbour, NDP MLA for Peace River

Cameron Westhead, MLA for Banff–Cochrane

Maria Fitzpatrick, MLA for Lethbridge–East

Nicole Goehring, MLA for Edmonton–Castle Downs

Craig Coolahan, MLA for Calgary–Klein (for Graham Sucha)

Heather Sweet, MLA for Edmonton–Manning

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

Key Decisions

The Panel requested previous presenters, including the Statutory Director present again to the panel to answer outstanding questions related to process and/or progress to support the members understanding of the current state of child death reviews, including information related to the child death review statistical analysis provided to the panel members in the binder to support the days Agenda.

Some Panel members expressed concern that government staff may not feel comfortable to provide their full perspective when answering questions. The Chair requested that concerns of this nature be brought forward for the Chair to address. A discussion related to the perception by some Panel members that presenters were prevented from fully answering questions on issues and/or providing opinions related to their personal experience.

Consensus was reached on the agenda item related to information requests. Information requests provided at the meetings, in writing and via the Chair submissions have been captured according to Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Panel's Terms of Reference. Where materials have been provided to address the request the document or presentation has been referenced, any additional questions related to the material already provided to support the information request can be submitted via the Chair. The Secretariat will work with ministry staff and cross-ministry partners to satisfy outstanding information requests and/or provide a status update based on the nature of the requests. Additional questions or requests for information related to Phase 2 will support the development of topical presentations and/or supplemental information. Questions posed that were seen to be appropriate for Panel deliberation were highlighted to facilitate identification. The Chair noted that another information request intake will be identified for the additional information required to complete Phase 1.

Presentations

Recommendations and the Child Intervention System:

Sarita Dighe-Bramwell, Child Intervention

The Panel was provided with information related to the development and implementation of the Children's Services Recommendation Approach, a consistent approach to receiving, reviewing, responding, monitoring and tracking of formal recommendations. Formal recommendations are those that are typically systemic in nature, posted and responded to publicly and have no other quality assurance mechanism to support tracking of progress towards implementation. Public reporting on progress and progress updates to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate are supported through a bi-annual update cycle in March and September each year.

Recommendation progress is reported as ongoing, in progress and implemented.

Implementation can be immediate as is the case with safety issues, or longer terms based on

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the intentional, sequenced implementation of evidence-informed changes to practice which require the development or revision of policy, practice and training for service delivery staff. In addition to the recommendation approach four recommendations made by the 2014 Implementation Oversight Committee, specific to the child death review process, were reviewed and discussed.

Child Death Review Processes and Child Death Case Reviews:

Gillian Colquhoun and Russ Pickford, Child Intervention

The Panel was asked to contrast the experience for an Albertan who loses a child without and then with child intervention involvement. Although the loss of a child is very personal and traumatic for the family, extended family and community the ability to make a number of self-directed decisions is impacted when a child receiving services dies. The level of publicly released information and personal details requires action by families when they are reeling from a loss, as they are required to apply for a publication ban if they wish the name of their child to remain private.

Based on the child having received services (including everything from an initial screening through to the child being in care and the director have guardianship) a number of reviews are initiated based on various government and non-government organization mandates including child intervention, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and Fatality Inquiry. This may also involve a number of other reviews including medical services, police investigations and criminal proceedings, Occupational Health and Safety, Municipal reviews, Agency reviews and other quality assurance processes. These multiple process can result in a number of contacts or interviews with the family, occur simultaneously and/or sequentially over an extended period of time, years in fact, suspending a family in their grief and potentially compounding trauma and/or re-traumatizing the family, their extended supports and community.

While the intent of the reviews is focused on child safety, reducing child death and systemic improvements and learning opportunities the discussion centered around considerations on increased collaboration across review processes and organizations and means to reduce the time and trauma on families.

Community Conversation:

Elder Wil Campbell, Native Counselling services of Alberta
Cheryl Whiskeyjack, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society
Julie Mann-Johnson, Alberta College of Social Workers
Sharon Steinhauer, Blue Quills First Nation College
Terri Pelton, Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
Facilitator: Damien Traverse, Alberta Culture

The Panel members were able to observe and reflect on the facilitated discussion with community members who have supported family who have lost a child and/or support the review of the death of a child.

Three questions were used to guide the process of active and reflective discussion:

1. What has been your experience with families and communities through the Child Death Review (CDR) process? How do you see the process impacting families and communities?
2. What might community supports for families look like in the CDR process?
3. What insights or observations can you offer that may reduce trauma for families, service providers and communities in the CDR process?

A robust discussion highlighted many areas for conversation and consideration including the acknowledgement that each family and circumstance is unique requiring a level of expertise and flexibility to support the family and navigate a process to review the death of that child within the context of the family, in a way that meets their needs, is supportive at the time of the event and continues as long as needed, is respectful of culture and community and is principle based. Specifically for Indigenous peoples, families and communities the use of ceremony for grieving and healing should be further explored to support the review in a holistic and culturally meaningful way. Additionally, families and communities need to see the results of the review, and the impact that their sharing has had, be able to demonstrate the changes and improvements to the system – an element noted to be absent from previous reviews. Overall the participants indicated a need for increase collaboration across review bodies and governments (Indigenous, Federal and Provincial) and a reduction in of the amount of time the various reviews take to complete.

Overview:

Common areas of discussion for the panel members was the impact of recommendations on the system; measurement of outcomes over implementation; how recommendations impact Indigenous communities and service delivery inequities; queries about empathetic approaches to family engagement in review processes versus paper reviews; the number of potential reviews that can be called, their relative value and impact and effects of trauma or re-traumatization on families and communities – regardless of the level of service provided – initial screening through to in care.

Next Steps

The next meeting date will be Tuesday, February 28, 2017 in the Parkland Room of the Federal Building 9820-107 Street NW, Edmonton; all additional meeting dates will be confirmed and posted as soon as possible.

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