



# **Ministry of Community and Social Services Response to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate**

Strengthening Foundations: Assessment,  
Information Sharing and Collaboration  
Report

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Ministry of Community and Social Services Response to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate | Ministry of Community and Social Services

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## Background

On September 7, 2021, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA) released the *Strengthening Foundations: Assessment, Information Sharing and Collaboration* report. This report reviewed the circumstances of nine (9) young people who died over a fourteen-month period in 2018/2019, who experienced similar challenges in service provision. The report provides two recommendations to address the limitations in assessments, information sharing and collaboration among service providers.

The death of any child is a tragedy - for friends, family, community and all those involved - and our thoughts are with those who continue to grieve these deaths. It is also a call to action to make improvements to the system where they are needed.

The report makes two recommendations. Recommendation 1 is directed to the children-serving ministries: Children's Services, Health, Education, Justice and Solicitor General, and Community and Social Services (CSS). The second recommendation includes these ministries along with Service Alberta.

CSS' response includes information gathered from the following sources:

- a review of existing Family Support for Children with Disabilities and Persons with Developmental Disabilities policies in consideration of the issues identified in the report;
- a review of current ministry initiatives, program and practice directions related to issues identified in the report; and
- engagement with other divisions and ministries, and the community service delivery sector about opportunities to enhance collaboration, information sharing and service delivery practices.

We welcome the OCYA's recommendations and thank the Advocate and his office for their ongoing commitment to strengthening supports for vulnerable children, youth and families in Alberta.

## CSS Response to OCYA Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

The Ministries of Children's Services, Health, Education, Justice and Solicitor General, and CSS should review and adjust their quality assurance processes to include both qualitative and quantitative measures that regularly evaluate service delivery within their systems.

#### Ministry Response

CSS accepts the intent of this recommendation and will review and update FSCD and PDD quality assurance processes as required to include a greater focus on outcomes rather than targets and the completion of tasks.

#### Action Planned or Underway

The intent of recommendation 1 is for ministries to review and adjust quality assurance processes to include qualitative and quantitative measures to ensure that the delivery of programs and services focuses on more than the completion of tasks.

- CSS will review quality assurance measures as part of our regular continuous improvement cycle, focusing on identifying and strengthening qualitative measures related to assessments, information sharing and collaboration.
- Opportunities to increase public reporting of qualitative measures will be explored and implemented where appropriate.

### Recommendation 2

The Ministries of Children's Services, Health, Education, Justice and Solicitor General, and CSS should collaborate and coordinate with Service Alberta to regularly communicate where to access reference and training materials to those responsible for providing services under the *Children First Act*. Furthermore, these ministries should offer service providers opportunities for ongoing interactive cross-systems training on the act.

**Ministry Response**

CSS accepts the intent of this recommendation and shares the Advocate's desire for improved outcomes for children, youth and families.

The applicability of *Children First Act* is limited and does not include service provision. That said, other existing legislation (such as the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and the *Health Information Act*) do allow for what is intended in this recommendation.

All CSS staff are required to complete training specific to Information Sharing and related legislation and practices upon employment, and to update this training on a regular basis. This training includes:

- Information Sharing
- Information Sharing in Practice
- Information Sharing under the *Children First Act*

The online course for Information Sharing under the *Children First Act* is also publicly available.

**Action Planned or Underway**

CSS will continue to work with other ministries, stakeholders and community service delivery sector to encourage improved communication and collaboration, and make the reference and training material related to information sharing and collaboration available to all those responsible for providing services under the *Children First Act*.

CSS will ensure all CSS staff are current in their mandatory training related to information sharing.