

Ministry of Children and Family Services' Response to Mandatory Reviews into Child Deaths

April 1, 2022 – September 30, 2022

On March 28, 2023, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA) released a report titled “Mandatory Reviews into Child Deaths April 1, 2022 – September 30, 2022”. This is the ninth report released as a result of the *Child Protection and Accountability Act*, proclaimed on March 30, 2018. The purpose of the report is to identify whether services and supports were appropriate, provide public assurance, and identify systemic issues that might have been present.

The death of any child is a tragedy for friends, family, community, and all those involved. Our thoughts are with those who continue to grieve the deaths of these 18 young people. It is also a call to action to make improvements to the system where they are needed. The inquiry report made two recommendations directed to the Ministry of Children's Services.

Children and Family Services' response includes information gathered from the following sources:

- a review of existing policies; and
- a review of current ministry initiatives, practice, and program directions related to issues identified in the report.

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



Recommendation	Ministry Response	Actions Planned or Underway
<p><i>The Ministry of Children’s Services should examine the connections for each Indigenous child in the care of the Director and identify tailored actions that build and strengthen connections with their family, community, and culture.</i></p> <p>Expected Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indigenous children and youth will have lifelong, meaningful connections with their families, communities, and cultures - Indigenous young people will say that they have a strong identify and that they feel a sense of belonging - Young people will have the confidence and support needed to connect with and build relationships with their families. 	<p>Children and Family Services (CFS) accepts the intent of this recommendation.</p> <p>All children in care are already required to have a cultural plan. As of March 2023, 93 per cent of all children had a plan on file.</p> <p>As the Advocate acknowledges, CFS has robust policy and practice procedures dedicated specifically to ensuring Indigenous children in care have connections to their family, community, and culture.</p>	<p>CFS will establish a working group to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing policy and practice guidance focused on family, community, and cultural planning and connections to ensure clarity for practitioners while identifying any impediments to adherence to policy. • Conduct targeted file reviews as required to better understand how policy and practice guidance is translated into frontline practice, which will help identify barriers and successes and determine what actions are required to strengthen cultural plans for all children in care. <p>The working group will complete this work by the end of the 2023-24 fiscal year.</p>
<p><i>The Ministry of Children’s Services should publicly report on summary findings from their examination of all Indigenous children and their unique connections to their families, communities, and cultures within 12 months and provide ongoing annual updates.</i></p> <p>Expected Outcomes:</p>	<p>Children and Family Services (CFS) accepts the intent of this recommendation.</p> <p>CFS agrees on the importance of transparency and already makes child intervention data specific to Indigenous children publicly available through a variety of reporting products, including</p>	<p>Based on findings from targeted file reviews (from the first recommendation), CFS will explore reporting options.</p> <p>CFS will continue to report publicly on Indigenous children receiving services through child intervention.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Public updates will provide transparency so that Indigenous peoples can determine if their children are meaningfully connected with their families, communities, and cultures.</i>- <i>Collaboration with Indigenous communities for cultural planning will be strengthened and meaningful actions will be taken to uphold young people’s rights and to make certain each Indigenous child has connection with their family, community and culture.</i>- <i>An annual update will ensure these practices are ongoing for Indigenous young people.</i>	online reports, an interactive tool, and the Annual Report.	
--	---	--