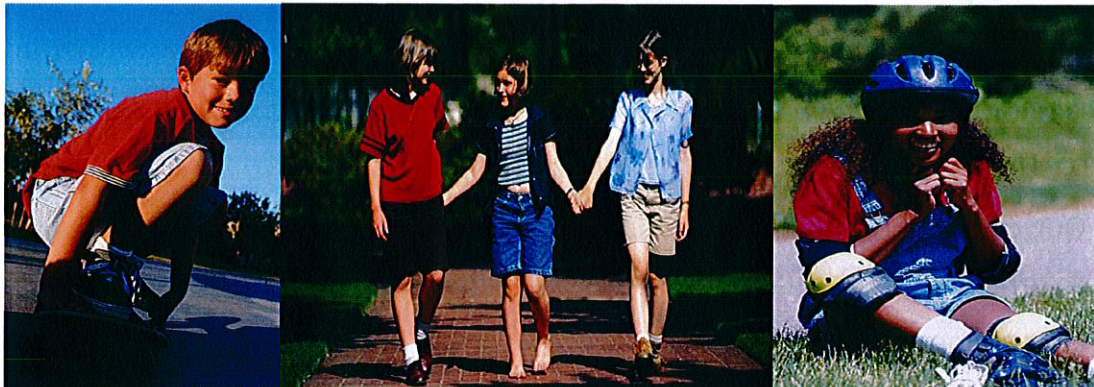




Social Care Facilities Review Committee



Annual Report 2009/2010

Alberta Children and Youth Services

Alberta

Table of Contents

■ ■ ■ Message from the Minister	2
■ ■ ■ Report from the Chair	3
■ ■ ■ Committee Members.....	5
■ ■ ■ Social Care Facilities Review Committee.....	8
■ Review Process.....	8
■ Sample Size.....	10
■ ■ ■ Operating Principles.....	10
■ ■ ■ Day Care Programs	11
■ Highlights of Visits to Day Care Programs	11
■ ■ ■ Out-of-School Care Programs	16
■ Highlights of Visits to Out-of-School Care Programs	17
■ ■ ■ Foster Homes	22
■ Highlights of Visits to Foster Homes	23
■ ■ ■ Child and Youth Facilities.....	30
■ Highlights of Visits to Child and Youth Facilities	31
■ ■ ■ Emergency Shelters for Women	37
■ Highlights of Visits to Emergency Shelters for Women	37
■ ■ ■ Feedback on Visits.....	41
■ ■ ■ Complaint Investigations.....	44
■ ■ ■ Expenditures	44
■ ■ ■ Committee Member Highlights	44
■ ■ ■ Committee Activities.....	45
■ ■ ■ Acknowledgements.....	46

■ ■ ■ Message from the Minister

The 2009-10 Social Care Facilities Review Committee Annual Report is an important document. This report summarizes the Committee's activities and findings for the fiscal year beginning March 31, 2009 and ending March 31, 2010.

Each year, the Social Care Facilities Review Committee conducts interviews with service recipients, caregivers and providers to gather comments, suggestions and concerns that will help guide future policy and program practice within the Ministry.

It is important to note that input from the respondents was generally very positive and highlighted the excellent work taking place in the facilities the Committee visited. The suggestions made by the Committee were in regards to how services could be improved.

The Ministry quickly responded and the following examples show improvement was achieved by:

- Working with women's shelters across the province to create child care spaces that support mothers and children affected by family violence. To facilitate this initiative, Alberta Children and Youth Services allocated approximately \$1 million in 2009-2010 to create almost 300 new child care spaces for families accessing emergency and second-stage shelter services.
- Supporting child care professionals throughout the province through the expansion of the child care accreditation program to licensed out-of-school care programs. This helps parents identify additional programs with high standards of excellence in selecting child care options.
- Establishing a review panel in the summer of 2009 to study the Child Intervention system and make recommendations for program improvements to strengthen and support at-risk children, youth and families in Alberta.

My warmest thank you to the Committee members for your dedication and commitment over the 2009-2010 year. Your participation significantly helped the Ministry create a brighter and sustainable future for all Alberta's children, youth and families.



Yvonne Fritz
Minister
Children and Youth Services

Report from the Chair

As part of its mandate, the Social Care Facilities Review Committee prepares an Annual Report each year, summarizing information gathered from the Committee's visits to day cares, out-of-school care programs, foster homes, child and youth facilities (e.g. group homes, youth emergency shelters) and emergency shelters for women.

During the April 2009 to March 2010 fiscal year, the Social Care Facilities Review Committee conducted reviews of 232 facilities in five Child and Family Services Authorities. Committee members interviewed and/or surveyed almost 2,500 service recipients, foster parents and staff members. Overall, service recipients reported satisfaction with services in each type of social care facility.

The majority of parents whose children attend day care or out-of-school care programs were highly positive regarding the care and services their children received. Parents expressed satisfaction with the rules within the programs, communication with staff and overall impression of the facilities and programs. Several parents reported they had observed bullying in the facilities, but also stated the child care staff handled the situations appropriately.

Interviews with children and youth residing in foster homes or child and youth facilities indicated they were satisfied with their care, accommodations and treatment. Children and youth reported their highest levels of satisfaction with their involvement in social activities, meals and education. They also reported feeling comfortable and well cared for in the homes and facilities in which they live. Some children expressed dissatisfaction with the level of support received during a move to a new facility.

Residents at emergency shelters for women expressed satisfaction with the quality of service they received, the physical environment within the facilities and their relationships with staff. Some of the women expressed concern about the difficulty they experienced accessing affordable housing upon leaving the shelter and lack of awareness about community programs for themselves.

Service providers provided feedback regarding the programs and services provided at their facilities. Overall, day care and out-of-school care staff and operators highlighted several strengths in their programs. Increased space and a desire for higher wages were suggested by a few staff as areas to improve upon. Foster parents expressed satisfaction with the access to services and the support they received from caseworkers, support workers and their agencies. Foster parents shared concerns about the need for improvements to the

recreation allowance, respite resources and foster parent training. Child and youth facility staff members spoke positively about the programs they provided to the children in their care and the training they received. They noted experiencing difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff, as well as the need for higher wages. Staff from emergency shelters for women spoke positively about services provided, the safety of the facilities, and their relationships with residents. Staff also indicated the need for spousal programs, increased outreach services and transitional supports (e.g. housing).

During the April 2009 to March 2010 review period, no investigations were conducted by the Committee nor did they receive any complaints.

Thanks again to the Committee members for all of their hard work. Their commitment to the children, youth and families of Alberta as well as their dedication to the Social Care Facilities Review Committee's process has made this report possible.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of every child, youth and adult who participated in the interviews and surveys. Your comments, experiences and insights provide a collective voice to government and social care facility partners. By sharing your time and feedback, together we can help ensure the quality of services in Alberta's social care facilities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Art Johnston". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Art Johnston
MLA, Calgary-Hays
Chair, Social Care Facilities Review Committee

Committee Members

Art Johnston, Chair, Calgary (July 2008 – Present)

Art Johnston was elected to his second term as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Calgary-Hays on March 3, 2008. In addition to his role as MLA, Mr. Johnston serves as Chair of the Cabinet Policy Committee on Community Services and as a member of both the Standing Committee on Community Services and the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

During his first term, Mr. Johnston was involved in the development of several bills: Bill 52, *Correction Amendment Act, 2007*; Bill 212, *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*; Bill 16 *Peace Officer Act*; and Bill 49, *Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2007*.

This is Mr. Johnston's fifth year as Chair of the Committee.

Lori Brooks, Vice-Chair, Cardston (November 2001 – Present)

Lori Brooks is a music teacher and a member of the Royal Conservatory of Music. She previously worked in the public service and was a foster parent for five years. Ms. Brooks is active in her community as a member of a variety of committees and boards related to community awareness, children's festivals and adult education.

Wayne Doan, Red Deer (October 2003 – Present)

Wayne Doan operates a small farming business in Central Alberta. He completed an undergraduate degree in Education at the University of Saskatchewan, and began graduate studies at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia. Mr. Doan brings over 17 years of experience with various children's programs to his work with the Committee.

Maxine Fodness, St. Paul (October 2007 – Present)

Maxine Fodness previously worked for the Servus Credit Union, where she was responsible for processing financial transactions. In 2004, Ms. Fodness was elected as a Councillor in the County of St. Paul. She is currently a board member of Community Futures and the local Victim Services.

Lydia Graham, Cochrane (February 2004 – March 2010)

Lydia Graham was Mayor and Councillor of Cochrane for 15 years. She received the Community Builder Award and an Alberta Municipalities Association Award of Excellence for Civic Leadership. Ms. Graham is actively involved in many community projects and is serving on several boards and committees. Ms. Graham was a recipient of the 2005 Alberta Centennial Medal.

Laura Hunt, Edmonton (April 2006 – Present)

Laura Hunt has a Bachelor of Science degree in Household Economics from the University of Alberta. She is currently a home economist with the ATCO Blue Flame Kitchen and previously worked as a customer service agent for several airlines, as well as a social worker for the City of Edmonton. Ms. Hunt is actively involved in her community, working with organizations such as Kids with Cancer and the Victoria School for the Performing Arts. She also has served on the Canadian Airlines Charitable Foundation and has been a volunteer aquafit instructor for the YMCA.

Nancy Leishman, Calgary (July 2007 – Present)

Nancy Leishman is an active member in her community. Ms. Leishman has been president of the Midnapore Relief Society, Sundance Young Women and Falconridge Primary. In addition, Ms. Leishman has been a strong advocate for people with physical and mental disabilities throughout her life. She has also been involved in day home activities and has worked with children through Handcrafters Cottage. Ms. Leishman's educational background includes such subjects as book keeping and accounting as well as recreation education, focusing on the disabled.

Kathleen McCalla, Edmonton (July 2007 – Present)

Kathleen McCalla has a Bachelor of Education in Special Education and a Master's of Science in Family Life Education, both from the University of Alberta. She has taught special education for Edmonton Public Schools, the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, and was a sessional lecturer at the University of Alberta. She was the sole proprietor of a writing company called Words Work and Images, and a partner in a design company, Domestic Arts.

Jan Prince, Edmonton (April 2009 – Present)

Jan Prince is the mother of three boys and an active participant in her community and church. She has roots in small-town Southern Alberta, but has lived in Edmonton for the past 22 years. Mrs. Prince helps out with the family business, volunteers with various school parent councils and is President of the Knottwood Young Women's organization.

Kelly Sackley, Calgary (August 2004 – March 2010)

Kelly Sackley studied business at Rick's College and has also enjoyed taking courses online and in her community. She has spent time supporting her church, being involved in the community and working on school councils. Being happily married and staying home to raise four children were her main focus. She still enjoys being involved in her community and church and spending time with her four grandchildren.

Tracey Smith, Calgary (April 2006 – Present)

Tracey Smith has worked 19 years in a family practice medical clinic and is currently the office manager. She is an active volunteer in her community, specifically as a member of several school councils, a playground coordinator and member of the Calgary Home & School Association. Ms. Smith helped to establish a reading literacy program in a local junior high school.

Linda Sutton, Calgary (April 2009 – Present)

Linda Sutton has taught music to children for more than 20 years. She completed training in an Early Childhood Education program at Sault College in Sault Ste Marie and obtained an Orff Teachers Certification from the University of Toronto. Ms. Sutton has been an active volunteer with her church serving as President of the Primary organization for children age two to 12, President of a 150 member women's group, Choir Director, as well as teaching religious studies to children and youth.

Social Care Facilities Review Committee

The Social Care Facilities Review Committee was established in June 1980, under the *Social Care Facilities Review Committee Act*. The mandate of the Committee is to:

- 1) visit social care facilities from time to time to review the quality of services provided in the facilities and the manner in which the facilities are operated; and
- 2) conduct investigations of social care facilities upon the direction of the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

In 2002, an amendment was made to the legislation defining social care facilities as:

- 1) facilities that provide care, treatment or shelter and are funded, wholly or partly, by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services; and
- 2) child care programs licensed under the *Child Care Licensing Act* including day care and out-of-school care programs.

The facilities currently reviewed by the Social Care Facilities Review Committee include: foster homes, child and youth facilities including group homes and emergency shelters for youth, child care programs including day care and out-of-school care programs, and emergency shelters for women.

During the 2009-2010 review period, the Committee consisted of one Member of the Legislative Assembly who chaired the Committee, and 11 private citizens who live throughout the province. Members serve the Committee on a part-time basis and contribute a diversity of perspectives due to their varied backgrounds, expertise and work experience. They are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and are not employees of the provincial government.

Review Process

The Social Care Facilities Review Committee conducted reviews in foster homes, child and youth facilities, day cares, out-of-school care programs and emergency shelters for women. Currently, there are approximately 3800 facilities that fall under the Committee's mandate. In order to review a sampling of the facilities, the Committee plans their visits so they are continually in the larger regions and rotating throughout the smaller regions. During this year, reviews took place in five Child and Family Services Authorities:

- Southwest Alberta (Region 1);
- Calgary and Area (Region 3);
- Central Alberta (Region 4);

- Edmonton and Area (Region 6); and
- Northeast Alberta (Region 9).

Facilities were randomly selected in each of the chosen regions to ensure an unbiased, representative sample from the population of facilities and individuals being served and to include a representative selection of communities in each region.

During visits to facilities, participants were encouraged to talk about their experience with the services they received. Committee members asked service recipients open-ended questions around themes relevant to the type of facility and the type of services provided. It is important to note that due to the qualitative nature of the interviews, service recipients were not required to comment on every theme.

Where service recipients were children, consent was obtained from their guardians to participate in the interviews and there were no age limitations on participation in the interviews as long as children were able to understand and respond to questions. As parents were considered to be the service recipients at day care programs, the parents, not the children, participated. Committee members spoke with parents from out-of-school care programs, as well as children, if their parents/guardians had provided consent for the interview.

Committee members also provided an opportunity for foster parents and staff members at the facilities to express their views on the services they provide.

Additionally, survey forms were made available to service recipients and providers who wished to share their views, but were unable to take part in the Committee's interviews. The information provided in this report represents only the perspectives of the people who were interviewed and/or surveyed.

All individuals who participated in interviews or completed surveys were advised that the Committee collects information in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Participants were also made aware their comments could be included in Social Care Facilities Review Committee reports.

This Annual Report provides a provincial overview of the feedback obtained during visits conducted from April 2009 to March 2010. To develop statistics for this report, all comments were analyzed for common themes. Comments were coded positive to indicate satisfaction, neutral to indicate a perception of adequate service or to provide descriptive information, and negative to indicate dissatisfaction.

Additionally, where respondents provided general information and/or indicated a theme was not applicable, comments were classified as neutral. Positive, neutral and negative comments were counted and grouped by theme and reported as percentages. The Annual Report is made available to all participating facilities.

■ **Sample Size**

Two hundred and thirty-two facilities were visited from April 2009 to March 2010:

- 43 day care programs;
- 39 out-of-school care programs;
- 116 foster care homes;
- 29 child and youth facilities; and
- 5 emergency shelters for women.

Committee members spoke with 1,262 service recipients and service providers. An additional 765 service recipients and 412 staff members completed surveys.

■■■ **Operating Principles**

The work of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee is guided by the operating principles below.

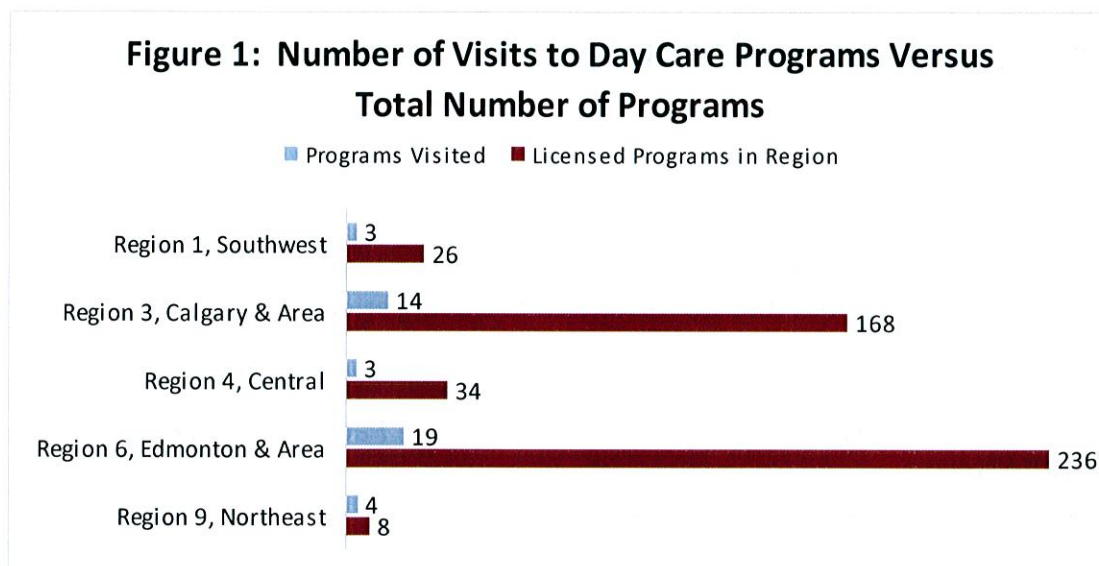
The Social Care Facilities Review Committee will work with clients and their families, service providers and government representatives to:

- facilitate open and neutral communication;
- focus on the current mandate of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee;
- promote awareness of the mandate;
- respect the rights and obligations of all parties;
- empower clients by providing a "voice" for them;
- be objective, open-minded and receptive to all parties;
- be professional in manner and appearance;
- listen to and understand the needs and concerns of clients;
- be observant of the physical and social environment;
- develop and maintain respectful, supportive relationships with government representatives and among Committee members;
- operate in a way that makes optimal use of available resources; and
- respect the right of confidentiality.

Day Care Programs

Day care programs provide child care to seven or more children for four or more hours each day the program is in operation. Children enrolled in day care are under seven years of age and do not attend school, although some may attend early childhood programs for part of the day. Day care programs are licensed under the *Child Care Licensing Act* and are obligated to meet the requirements of the *Child Care Licensing Regulations*.

During the April 2009 to March 2010 review period, the Committee visited 43 licensed day care programs. Figure 1 shows the number of day cares visited compared to the total number of programs in the region at the end of the review period.



HIGHLIGHTS OF VISITS TO DAY CARE PROGRAMS

To coincide with times that parents were at the programs to drop-off and pick-up their children, Committee members scheduled visits to day care programs in the morning and late afternoon. Two hundred and seventy-six parents were interviewed and 463 parents completed surveys. On occasion, some parents who participated in interviews also completed surveys. Due to the young ages of the children in the day care programs, children were not interviewed.

Comments made by parents are organized into eight categories: daily activities, staff-child relationships, communication with staff, parent or guardian involvement, meals and/or snacks, physical environment, rules, and overall feedback. Service providers' comments are discussed separately.

Day Care Themes

Committee members reported 8,843 observations from parents about the care their children receive at day care. Most of the parents' comments expressed satisfaction with services provided; 7,195 comments (82%) were positive, 913 comments (10%) were neutral and 735 comments (8%) were negative. The breakdown of parents' comments, relating to day care themes, is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Responses - Themes at Day Care Programs

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
<i>Daily Activities</i>	654 (89%)	81 (11%)	2 (<1%)	737
<i>Staff-Child Relationships</i>	928 (57%)	54 (3%)	662 (40%)*	1,644
<i>Communication with Staff</i>	918 (89%)	105 (10%)	7 (1%)	1030
<i>Parent or Guardian Involvement</i>	579 (83%)	100 (14%)	22 (3%)	701
<i>Meals and/or Snacks</i>	1,681 (84%)	303 (15%)	21 (1%)	2,005
<i>Physical Environment</i>	997 (85%)	168 (14%)	16 (1%)	1181
<i>Rules</i>	767 (94%)	44 (5%)	4 (1%)	815
<i>Overall Feedback</i>	671 (92%)	58 (8%)	1 (<1%)	730
TOTAL:	7,195 (82%)	913 (10%)	735 (8%)	8,843

*Please refer to page 14 for further explanation.

Choice of Day Care Program

When asked the reasons why parents chose their day care, parents provided a total of 1,766 responses. Reasons most commonly mentioned were location (32%), reputation (17%), hours of operation (11%) and programs offered (10%). The remaining 30% of comments referred to factors such as cost, lack of available day care options and accreditation. While this feedback provides meaningful information regarding the rationale employed by parents when selecting a specific day care program; the information was not included in the figure above because the responses cannot be considered positive or negative.

Daily Activities

Almost all of the parents indicated satisfaction with the daily activities offered in the day cares. Eighty-nine percent of comments were positive. Eleven percent of comments were neutral, where parents rated the activities offered as adequate. In the negative comments (<1%), one parent expressed the need for a shorter nap time and another parent wanted to see less free-time during the day.

Staff - Child Relationships

Questions about staff-child relationships in the day care elicited positive comments (57%). Parents stated that the manner in which staff interact with their children is good and they believed their children felt comfortable with staff. Parents further stated that they had not observed bullying within the day cares, had been informed of any bullying behaviour that had occurred, and when bullying had happened, were aware these situations had been resolved appropriately. Three percent of the comments shared were neutral, indicating parents felt staff interactions were adequate and/or their children did not have strong positive or negative feelings about the day care staff.

Although 40% of comments were negative, it is important to note that almost all of them (99%) were from parents who had observed bullying behaviour between children at one time or another and/or from parents who had not been informed of bullying incidents. The majority of these parents reported the staff handled the situations quickly and effectively. One percent of the negative comments made by parents indicated the bullying incidents had not been resolved (e.g. the situation was "not resolved soon enough", the situation involved repeated incidents involving the same child hurting other children, and when staff do not see bullying incidents, they are unable to solve them). One parent indicated a desire for higher staff to child ratios. All identified concerns were followed-up and the Child and Family Services Authorities confirmed the matters were dealt with appropriately.

Communication with Staff

The majority of comments about communication with staff were positive (89%). Parents described good information sharing between themselves and staff, where staff were responsive to parental feedback and questions, kept parents notified of incidents and/or concerns occurring in the day care setting, and made parents feel heard and respected. Of the neutral comments (10%) reported, parents indicated that general communication and information sharing between parents and staff was adequate. One percent of comments were negative, indicating the need for improved communication (e.g. several parents described language barriers as the reason for poor communication, and two parents stated they had difficulty communicating with staff, but did not provide further clarification).

Opportunity for Parent or Guardian Involvement

Most of the parents stated there were either good or adequate opportunities to become involved in the day cares (97%). Three percent of comments were negative, where parents indicated that the opportunity for involvement was poor (e.g. the majority of these parents stated they were not actively encouraged to participate, several parents did not provide any further information, two parents stated their own work schedules were not conducive to being involved and one parent stated that parents should attend activities in order to meet other parents).

Meals and/or Snacks

In Alberta, day cares have the choice to provide meals and snacks. If they choose not to provide food, day cares must require parents to provide meals

and snacks for children attending the program. Parents expressed satisfaction (84%) with the quality, quantity and variety of meals and snacks provided by the day care. A few parents commented that their respective day care programs accommodate children's allergies. Fifteen percent of parent comments were neutral, indicating the food quality and portion sizes provided were adequate. One percent of the comments were negative, reflecting parents' dissatisfaction with the food quality, quantity and/or variety provided (e.g. "I was expecting more variety", "more healthy choices").

Physical Environment

Almost all of the parents expressed positive (85%) or neutral (14%) comments about the overall environments, play spaces, equipment, toys and maintenance. One percent of comments suggested some improvements could be made to the general physical environment (e.g. increased play space, upgrades to outdoor equipment, minor cosmetic changes and improved cleanliness).

Rules

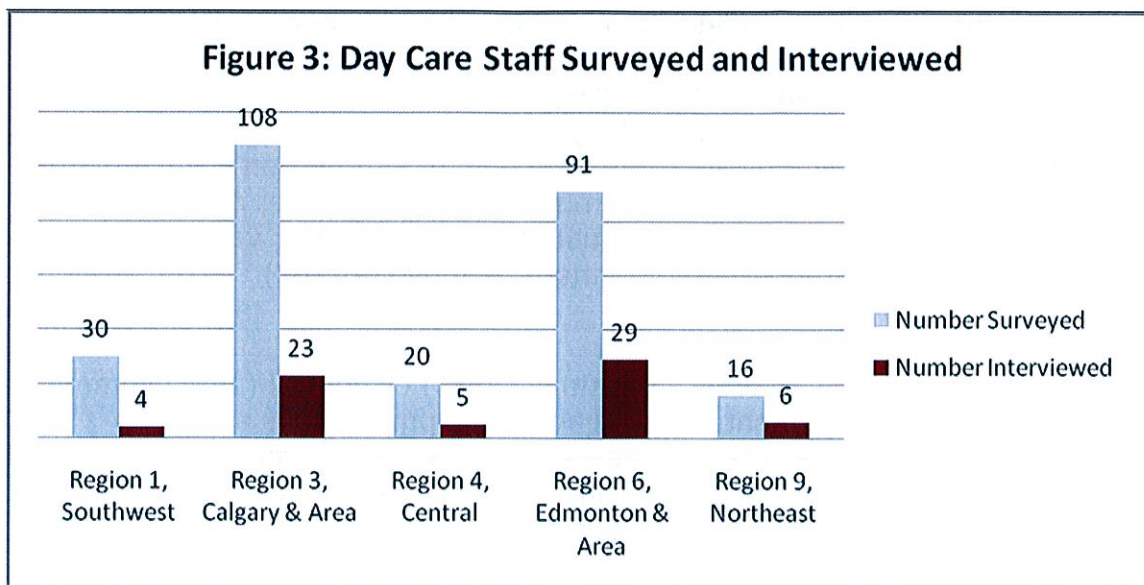
Comments made regarding rules, child guidance, security measures and response to concerns within the day cares were highly positive (94%). Five percent of comments were neutral, where parents described the rules, child guidance and security measures as adequate. In one percent of comments, parents indicated the need for improved child guidance and security measures (e.g. the need for more routine in the pre-kinder room, better control over child behaviours, need for adult escort to the children's bathroom).

Overall Feedback

When asked about the overall quality of care their children receive at day care, the majority of parents expressed satisfaction. Ninety-two percent of parents stated the overall quality of care their children received at day care was good, while eight percent of parents rated the overall care as adequate. One negative comment (<1%) was made where the parent expressed concern about the overall cleanliness of the facility (follow-up indicated the concern was appropriately resolved).

Service Providers' Comments

Day care staff were given the opportunity to comment on the services they provide. The Committee spoke with 67 staff in 43 day cares. In addition, 265 staff completed surveys. Day care owner/operators and managers also participated in interviews; their feedback is separate from the staff comments. The number of day care staff who were interviewed or completed surveys in each Child and Family Services Authority is illustrated in Figure 3, on the next page.



Many of the comments made by service providers reflected satisfaction with the services they provide. Of the 5,224 comments reported, 4,295 comments (82%) were positive, 865 comments (17%) were neutral and the remaining 64 comments (1%) were negative. The main topics of discussion are listed below.

Physical Environment

Most of the day care staff spoke positively about the physical environment of the day care programs, describing good play areas for children and a workable layout. Some staff reported the physical space as adequate. Of the few negative comments made, most referred to the need for improvement to the day care layout and increased space.

Meals and/or Snacks

Comments about meals and snacks were highly positive. Almost all of the staff stated the quality, quantity and variety of the food provided was good or adequate. A few negative comments were made regarding the quality, variety and/or quantity of food provided (e.g. healthier options, increased portions and more variety).

Daily Activities

High levels of satisfaction were reported by staff with regard to the daily activities provided to children at their day cares. Activities were described as age-appropriate and based on the children's interests. No negative comments were made.

Staff - Child Relationships

When asked about staff-child relationships, staff remarks were highly positive. Day care staff reported good relationships with the children in their programs and described their day care programs as safe, secure and positive. No negative comments were heard.

Rules

Almost all of the feedback from staff was positive. Staff stated there was consistent application of policy within the day cares and child care staff were effective in assisting children to come up with solutions. Only two negative comments were made and suggested more assistance be given to children in order to teach the children how to work out solutions with each another.

Overall Feedback from Staff

Day care staff were given the opportunity to comment on the overall service and care they provide within the day cares. All but a few comments were positive. Staff indicated that job responsibilities are clear, the programs are safe, medications are safely stored, staff are aware of appropriate staff-child ratios, diversities are respected, and parents are encouraged to spend time with their children. Of the few negative comments heard, most referred to parents not being encouraged to spend time with their children in the programs.

Overall Feedback from Managers/Owners/Operators

Managers, owners, and operators provided positive feedback regarding their programs. Committee members heard comments regarding appropriate staff-child ratios, respect for diversity, safe storage of medication, the encouragement of parents to spend time with their children, clear job responsibilities, a good process for addressing concerns, and a safe facility. Many managers and owners also indicated their participation in the Accreditation program and have kept staff informed of the program. A few negative comments were heard (e.g. programs that did not accept children with disabilities, high staff turn-over, and a desire for increased staff wages).

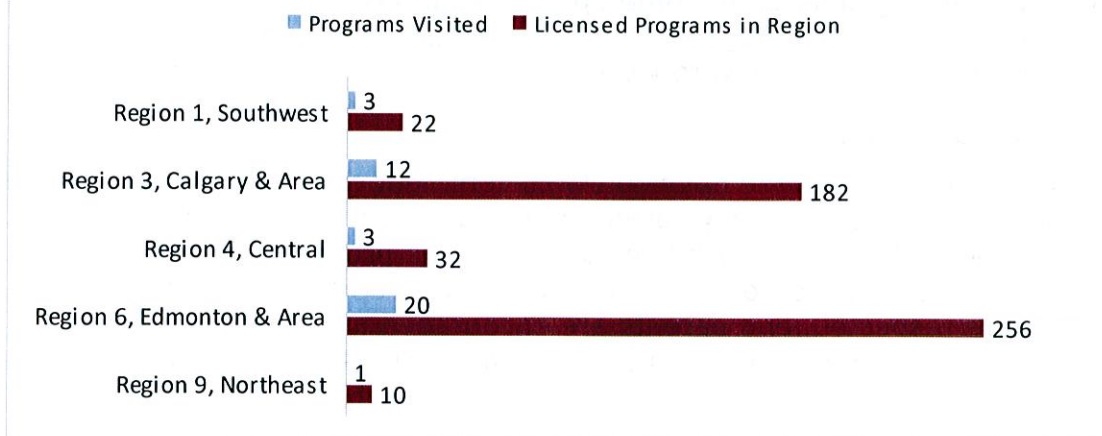
Out-of-School Care Programs

Out-of-school care programs provide care before and after school or at other times schools are closed.

Some out-of-school care programs are co-located with day cares. The majority of out-of-school care programs visited by the Committee during this review period were independent programs.

The Committee visited 39 licensed out-of-school care programs during the April 2009 to March 2010 review period. Figure 4, on the next page, shows the number of out-of-school care programs visited, compared to the total number of programs in the region at the end of the review period.

Figure 4: Number of Visits to Out-of-School Care Programs Versus Total Number of Programs



HIGHLIGHTS OF VISITS TO OUT-OF-SCHOOL CARE PROGRAMS

To facilitate interviews, Committee members scheduled visits to out-of-school care programs in late afternoon to coincide with times that parents came to pick-up their children. One hundred and sixteen parents were interviewed and 302 parents completed surveys. In some cases, parents who participated in interviews also completed surveys. Children attending out-of-school care programs were invited to take part in the interviews if their parent or guardian was present or had provided a signed consent form. Two hundred and sixty-four children participated in interviews.

Parents' comments were compiled in eight categories: daily activities, staff-child relationships, communication with staff, parent or guardian involvement, meals and/or snacks, physical environment, rules, and overall feedback. Children's comments have been included with the parents' comments in the following five categories: daily activities, staff-child relationships, meals and/or snacks, rules, and overall feedback. Service providers' comments are discussed separately.

Out-of-School Care Themes

Committee members reported 7,436 observations from parents and children about the care children receive in out-of-school care programs. Overall, parents' and children's comments expressed satisfaction with services provided; 6,366 comments (86%) were positive, 805 comments (11%) were neutral and 265 comments (3%) were negative. The breakdown of parents' and children's comments, relating to out-of-school care themes, is shown in Figure 5 on the next page.

Figure 5: Responses – Themes at Out-of-School Care Programs

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
<i>Daily Activities</i>	658 (69%)	267 (28%)	29 (3%)	954
<i>Staff-Child Relationships</i>	1,565 (90%)	38 (2%)	137 (8%)	1,740
<i>Communication with Staff</i>	456 (92%)	40 (8%)	2 (<1%)	498
<i>Parent or Guardian Involvement</i>	291 (78%)	71 (19%)	13 (3%)	375
<i>Meals and/or Snacks</i>	1,419 (87%)	199 (12%)	11 (1%)	1,629
<i>Physical Environment</i>	450 (80%)	101 (18%)	9 (2%)	560
<i>Rules</i>	943 (94%)	46 (5%)	13 (1%)	1,002
<i>Overall Feedback</i>	584 (86%)	43 (6%)	51 (8%)	678
TOTAL:	6,366 (86%)	805 (11%)	265 (3%)	7,436

Choice of Out-of-School Care Program

When parents were asked why they chose their out-of-school care program, 915 comments were elicited. The most frequently mentioned reasons were location (40%), hours of operation (16%), reputation (14%) and transportation (8%). The remaining 22% of comments referred to factors such as programs offered, cost, supports for children with special needs, and limited choice of local out-of-school care options. While this feedback provides meaningful information regarding the rationale employed by parents when selecting a specific day care program; the information was not included in the figure above because the responses cannot be considered positive or negative.

Daily Activities

Almost all the parents stated there were either good or adequate daily activities offered in the out-of-school care programs (97%). Parents indicated the adequacy of the activities and/or felt their children enjoyed the activities provided. Several parents were pleased with the opportunities provided for the children to plan activities. Three percent of the comments were negative. All but one comment referred to children not being given the opportunity to choose activities. One parent commented that the daily activities were poor, but did not provide further information.

Staff - Child Relationships

Comments regarding the relationships between children and staff in out-of-school care were highly positive (90%). Parents and children described positive interactions between children and staff, lack of bullying incidents, and a safe and comfortable environment. Children further indicated they liked attending the program. Two percent of comments were neutral, as parents indicated staff

interactions with children were adequate. In the remaining 8% of comments, some children reported having experienced bullying, some parents said they had observed bullying and/or had not been informed of bullying, a few children reported they did not like attending the program and/or did not feel safe and comfortable, and one parent indicated a bullying situation had not been resolved (this parent expressed that a bullying incident should have been resolved sooner). All significant concerns were forwarded to the appropriate Child and Family Services Authority for follow-up.

Communication with Staff

Feedback from parents about communication with staff was highly positive (92%). Parents stated they were informed of incidents/concerns and felt staff were responsive and aware of their children's needs. Neutral comments (8%) described communication as adequate. Two negative comments (<1%) were made, stating communication with staff could be improved (e.g. one parent noted the out-of-school care program association staff needed to improve their communication style and one parent indicated that language was a barrier).

Opportunity for Parent or Guardian Involvement

Ninety-seven percent of parents stated there were good or adequate opportunities for involvement in the out-of-school care programs. Three percent of comments were negative, indicating a lack of opportunities for parental involvement (e.g. a few parents indicated they did not have the time to be involved, did not understand why they should be involved and several did not provide any further information).

Meals and/or Snacks

Meals and snacks are a requirement for any out-of-school care program in Alberta. These meals and snacks can be provided by the out-of-school facility or the facility may require the parents to provide food for their children. Feedback from parents regarding the quality, quantity and variety of meals and/or snacks provided by their facility was positive (87%). The majority of children also stated they liked the food provided and received enough to eat. A few parents stated the programs accommodate children's allergies. Twelve percent of parents' and children's comments were neutral, indicating food quality, variety and portion sizes provided were adequate. One percent of the comments were negative where a few parents and children reported dissatisfaction with the quantity, quality and variety of food provided (e.g. "...sometimes I just don't like what we have", "I don't like bananas...I would like Alphagetti more often and less fruits and vegetables", "portion sizes are too small", "my child has a very healthy appetite, but often comes home hungry", and one parent indicated dissatisfaction with the food, but did not provide further information).

Physical Environment

Comments regarding the physical environment of the out-of-school care programs were positive (80%). Parents reported satisfaction with the play space, equipment, toys, and overall environment. Neutral comments (18%) described the physical environment of the out-of-school care program as adequate. Two percent of comments were negative and related to a few

concerns parents expressed about the general physical environment (e.g. need for more indoor and outdoor play space, toys, equipment, kids should play outdoors more, and lack of fresh air).

Rules

Parents reported high levels of satisfaction with the rules and regulations within out-of-school care programs (94%). Parents were pleased with the child guidance policies, security measures and consistency. Comments by children indicated they were aware of the rules in the program and considered the rules fair. Neutral comments (5%) related to situations where parents described the rules, child guidance, application of rules and security measures as adequate. No parents provided negative comments, but in one percent of the responses, children reported that they were unaware of the rules and/or felt the rules were unfair (e.g. three children stated they were not allowed to have any fun, two children reported that a staff member did not appreciate their "singing", one child wanted more gym time, two children did not know the rules, and one child commented, "we can't kick the soccer ball inside and that's not fair").

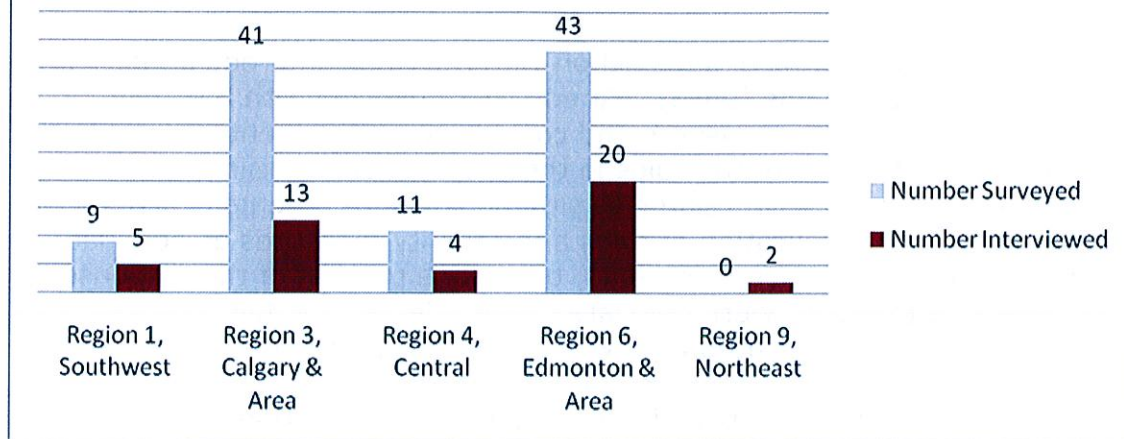
Overall Feedback

When given the opportunity to comment on the overall quality of care received in the out-of-school care programs, parents and children provided positive feedback (86%). Parents were highly satisfied with the care their children received at out-of-school care programs. Many children reported liking the programs and stated they did not want anything to change. Six percent of the parents said the overall quality of care was adequate. All of the negative comments (8%) were made by children who wanted changes to the program. The suggested changes made by the children appeared to be less about concerns and more about desires (e.g. more field trips, "getting to do what we want to do," "newer and cooler toys", "pizza Friday", "be able to sing", "more popcorn and candy for snack", "no adults...so we can make a mess and do whatever we want", "more gym time", "more snacks", "change the mean ones [children] into nice ones", "I would change the hockey game", re-design the play space, make the facility bigger, more games, more toys).

Service Providers' Comments

Committee members gave out-of-school care staff the opportunity to comment on the services they provide. Overall, the Committee spoke with 44 staff in 39 out-of-school care programs. In addition, 104 staff completed surveys. Out-of-school care owner/operators and managers also participated in interviews; their feedback is separate from the staff comments. The number of out-of-school care staff who were interviewed or completed surveys in each Child and Family Services Authority is illustrated in Figure 6, on the next page.

Figure 6: Out-of-School Care Staff Surveyed and Interviewed



Staff comments expressed satisfaction with the services they provided; 2,081 comments (86%) were positive, 218 comments (9%) were neutral and the remaining 109 comments (5%) were negative.

Physical Environment

The majority of staff spoke positively about the layout of their out-of-school care programs, stating that the physical environment allowed for individual, small and large group activities. Some neutral statements were reported indicating the physical space was adequate. No negative comments were heard.

Meals and/or Snacks

Staff expressed high satisfaction with the food provided to children in the out-of-school care programs. Some staff commented the food quality, quantity and/or variety were adequate. The one negative comment made referred to a staff member who stated the food could be improved.

Daily Activities

Comments made about daily activities provided at out-of-school care programs were highly positive. Staff stated children have opportunities to participate in the planning, development and implementation of activities and that activities are based on the children's interests. Some of the comments were neutral, where staff described the daily activities as adequate. Three negative comments were made (e.g. one staff stated improvements to daily activities were underway and two other staff did not elaborate further).

Staff - Child Relationships

Staff comments referring to staff-child relationships were either positive or neutral. Staff talked about methods of redirecting behaviour, modelling respectful relationships and encouraging positive relationships with others. No negative comments were heard.

Rules

Almost all of the comments made about the rules in out-of-school care programs were positive. Staff indicated they help children to solve their own conflicts when appropriate and ensure rules are consistently applied. One neutral comment was made by a staff member who stated the consistent application of policy was adequate.

Overall Feedback from Staff

When given the opportunity to comment on the general services and care they provide to children attending out-of-school care programs, the vast majority of staff made positive comments. Staff reported that job responsibilities are clear, medications are kept secure, staff are knowledgeable about staff-child ratios, diversities are respected, staff are aware of children who carry emergency medication and know when children self-medicate. One staff commented that training is adequate. Negative comments included a few staff who are unaware of children who carry emergency medication and/or when a child self-medicates. Identified concerns were sent for immediate follow-up to the appropriate Child and Family Services Authority.

Overall Feedback from Managers/Owners/Operators

Managers, owners, and operators were asked to comment on the services they provide, and their feedback was highly positive. Manager/owner/operators noted their processes for addressing concerns, the provision of before school care, and awareness of amended child care regulations. Further comments discussed the respect their programs have for diversity and awareness of staff-child ratios. No neutral comments were made. Of the negative comments heard, children not assisting with planning the menus, the challenges of sharing staff between the out-of-school care program and the co-located day care program, and not getting parental consents signed topped the list of concerns.

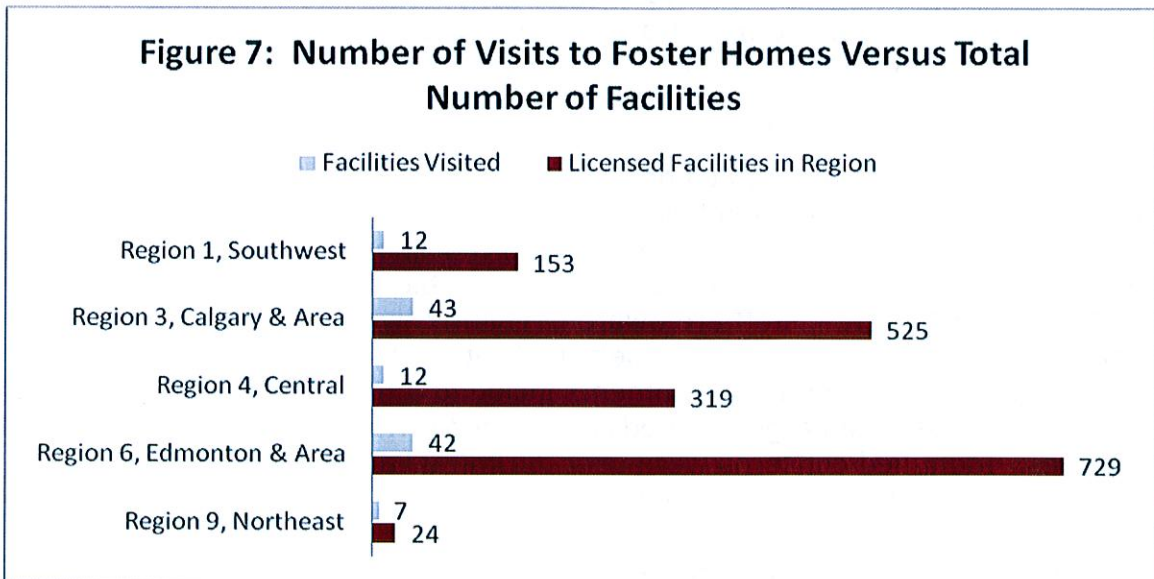
Foster Homes

Foster homes provide temporary care to children under the care of Alberta Children and Youth Services who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to remain in their natural family home. Children are placed with foster parents who have the expertise and training required to meet the particular needs of the children in their care.

Whenever a child comes into care, the goal is to return the child to his or her natural family as soon as possible when it is safe to do so. Foster parents are part of the team working to achieve this goal. When a return to the natural family is not feasible, an alternate permanency plan is made for the child. This may include adoption, private guardianship, or kinship care.

The *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* requires the licensing of all foster homes.

The Committee visited 116 foster homes during the April 2009 to March 2010 review period. The number of foster homes visited, as well as the total number of facilities in each region, is shown in Figure 7.



HIGHLIGHTS OF VISITS TO FOSTER HOMES

Committee members scheduled visits to foster homes around the families' schedules, to ensure as many foster children as possible were available for interviews. Of the 295 children residing in the 116 foster homes visited, 178 children and youth (60%) participated in interviews. In addition, Committee members observed 82 children (28%) who were pre-verbal and/or non-verbal.

Foster children's comments are organized into three main categories: care, treatment and accommodation. Foster parents' comments are discussed separately.

Care

In the course of interviews, Committee members gathered 2,748 comments from foster children regarding the care they receive in their foster homes. In general, children and youth expressed satisfaction with the care provided; 2,138 comments (78%) were positive, 519 comments (19%) were neutral and 91 comments (3%) were negative. The breakdown of foster children's comments, relating to care themes, is shown in Figure 8 on the next page.

Figure 8: Responses - Care Themes at Foster Homes

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
<i>Education</i>	385 (90%)	9 (2%)	35 (8%)	429
<i>Summer Activities</i>	184 (95%)	10 (5%)	0 (0%)	194
<i>Social Activities</i>	724 (99%)	0 (0%)	10 (1%)	734
<i>Foster Parent-Child Relationships</i>	253 (49%)	266 (51%)	1 (<1%)	520
<i>Rules</i>	299 (56%)	232 (43%)	3 (1%)	534
<i>Overall Care and Comfort Level</i>	293 (87%)	2 (1%)	42 (12%)	337
TOTAL:	2,138 (78%)	519 (19%)	91 (3%)	2,748

Education

The majority (90%) of children's comments about education were positive. Foster children talked about how much they liked school, the types of schools they attended (e.g. public, private and special needs programs), and their plans for their futures. Twenty percent of the comments indicated foster children had plans to graduate from high school and nine percent referred to plans for post-secondary education. Some youth commented about the Advancing Futures Bursary program, stating they looked forward to accessing this in the future.

Two percent of the comments were neutral and referred to youth who were employed part-time and/or had neutral feelings about school. Negative comments (8%) referred to children who said they disliked school and/or youth who were unaware of the Advancing Futures Bursary program. (Committee members informed the youth interviewed about the Advancing Futures Bursary program). One youth disclosed that he/she had been expelled from school.

Summer Activities

When asked about summer activities, children and youth made a number of positive comments (95%) about the vacations and day trips they had taken and/or were planning to take with their foster or natural families. Some children spoke about attending summer camps. Neutral comments (5%) referred to foster children who have not lived at their current home long enough to participate in summer activities. No negative comments were made.

Social Activities

Almost all of the foster children interviewed expressed great satisfaction with their participation in social activities (99%). The majority of those interviewed reported having friends and participating in a wide range of leisure activities. Unstructured entertainment (e.g. hanging out with friends, playing game systems), and activities with the foster family topped the list of fun things foster children and youth talked about. Many of the children reported they received an allowance. There were no neutral comments.

Of the negative comments (1%), nine children and youth reported they did not receive an allowance and one child stated he/she did not have any friends. In each case where a child/youth reported they did not receive an allowance, follow-up revealed the children were unaware (e.g. due to age, cognitive ability or how the foster parents dispensed the allowance) that the monies they were receiving were actually allowances. The one child who indicated he/she did not have any friends recently moved into the home and was trying to make friends. He/she was actively involved in activities with the foster family.

Foster Parent-Child Relationships

The topic of relationships with foster parents evoked many positive (49%) and neutral (51%) comments by children and youth. Positive comments referred to children and youth who described good relationships with their foster parents. Neutral comments described those individuals with whom the children and youth would feel comfortable speaking with if they needed someone to talk to about concerns or problems. Seventy-one percent of neutral comments referred to children and youth who felt comfortable talking to their foster parents about needs or concerns. The remaining comments referred to other individuals with whom a child or youth felt comfortable speaking with (e.g. natural family, teacher, caseworker, school counsellor) and/or described adequate relationships with foster parents.

Negative comments (<1%) related to one child who stated he/she experienced difficulties in his/her relationship with a foster parent (e.g. "[the foster parent] likes me, but I don't like [him or her]...[the other foster parent] and I get along great"). Follow-up revealed no concerns.

Rules

Almost all of the children and youth made positive (56%) or neutral remarks (43%) about the rules in the foster homes. Positive comments referred to knowing the rules and believing the rules to be fair. Neutral comments outlined the consequences for breaking the rules, such as having privileges revoked, time-out or grounding. Negative comments (1%) related to two children who said the rules were unfair (e.g. not being able to have a boy/girlfriend due to young age, limitations on amount of make-up worn due to young age) and one child who stated he/she did not know the rules.

Overall Care and Comfort Level

Eighty-seven percent of children's comments about their overall care and comfort in the foster homes were positive. Children reported a good level of comfort, stated they were treated fairly and felt safe in their foster homes. Two neutral comments (1%) were made stating the level of comfort was adequate. Of the negative comments (12%), the majority (88%) referred to children or youth who experienced bullying at one time or another, but these matters had already been resolved. Additionally, one child stated he/she did not report a bullying incident and it therefore had not been resolved (follow-up revealed the child was the one initiating aggression and the matter was being addressed). Two children reported a poor level of comfort in the foster home (follow-up revealed both children are doing well in their placements. One child misinterpreted a "firm voice" to be a "mean" voice. The foster care support

worker assisted the foster child in learning the difference. The other child reported being happy in his/her home, but due to his/her highly inappropriate behaviours, he/she often felt in conflict with the foster parent).

Treatment

Committee members reported 1,277 observations from foster children about the treatment they received in foster homes. Children made 907 (71%) positive comments, 207 (16%) neutral comments and 163 (13%) negative comments. The breakdown of foster children's comments, relating to treatment themes, is shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Responses - Treatment Themes at Foster Homes

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
<i>Transition</i>	153 (43%)	120 (34%)	82 (23%)	355
<i>Medical/Dental Needs</i>	524 (88%)	62 (10%)	13 (2%)	599
<i>Contact with Natural Family</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Case Plans</i>	98 (55%)	25 (14%)	55 (31%)	178
<i>Keepsakes</i>	132 (91%)	0 (0%)	13 (9%)	145
TOTAL:	907 (71%)	207 (16%)	163 (13%)	1,277

Transition

Foster children and youth were asked about their experiences of moving into their foster homes and how they felt at the time of the transition. They were also given the opportunity to comment on their present feelings toward their placements. Forty-three percent of the comments relating to transition were positive where children described being satisfied with their transition experience, indicated that they were given a pre-placement visit, reported that they were advised in advance of the move, and/or were given good support during the move. Thirty-four percent of the comments about transition were neutral. The majority of neutral comments referred to the last placement the children resided in prior to their current home. Some of the children stated they had no memory of or were unable to recall the transition.

Twenty-three percent of comments about transition were negative. Children who expressed dissatisfaction said they felt scared at the time of the move, were not provided with a pre-placement visit, or felt sad at the prospect of moving. One child reported still being angry about the transition, because he/she was not given an opportunity to say good-bye to friends. This child reported he/she was happy in his/her current placement. (It is not always possible to provide advance notice or a pre-placement visit in circumstances where children are taken into care from their home on an emergency basis). Although a few children said they were happy at the time of their move, many more declared they were happy now.

Medical/Dental Needs

When asked about medical, dental and optical care, foster children made many positive comments (88%). Children stated their dental, medical and optical needs were attended to and felt they were well cared for when ill. Neutral comments (10%) described having visited a doctor, dentist or optometrist within the past year. Negative comments (2%) referred to situations where children said they had not yet seen a doctor, dentist or optometrist (e.g. many of these children had recently come into care and their foster parents and caseworkers were working to obtain the necessary medical and optical appointments and dental treatment. A few children were experiencing delays in dental/orthodontic treatment due to questions about funding. These matters were forwarded for follow-up).

Contact with Natural Family

Children were asked about their contact with natural family members to determine whether or not contact was occurring. Committee members do not explore the reasons for limitations on, or the appropriateness of contact. For reporting purposes, family contact is not classified in the positive or negative, as family contact and/or reunification with natural family members is not always possible or desirable given individual children's circumstances.

In response to questions about contact with natural family, some of the children indicated they maintain contact with natural family members and/or mentioned they were happy with the level of contact they have with their natural family members. Most children identified specific family members they had contact with and/or the frequency of visits with family. The level of contact described ranged from regular to limited, but regular contact was most frequently reported. In a few cases, comments were made referring to situations where a child did not have contact with natural family or where a child expressed dissatisfaction with the level of contact they had with natural family members.

Case Plans

Fifty-five percent of comments about case plans were positive. These comments indicated children were aware they had a case plan and/or had input into the plan's development. Neutral comments (14%) offered by children and youth referred to how often they had contact with their caseworker and when they last discussed their case plan with their caseworker.

The majority of negative comments (31%) referred to children who were unaware of a case plan. (Very young children and/or children with comprehension difficulties may not have readily recognized conversations with caseworkers as case planning).

Keepsakes

Most children and youth indicated they had photographs, memory books and/or keepsakes (91% of comments). There were no neutral comments. Negative responses (9%) were made by children who indicated that they did not have a memory book, photographs or keepsakes. (Committee members realize that due to the manner in which some children and youth come into care, it is not always possible to bring pictures and/or keepsakes).

Accommodation

Committee members heard 825 comments by foster children related to accommodation, including meals and the physical environment of the home. Foster children and youth expressed high levels of satisfaction with their accommodation; 722 comments (87%) were positive, 79 comments (10%) were neutral and 24 comments (3%) were negative. The breakdown of foster children's comments related to accommodation themes is shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Responses - Accommodation Themes at Foster Homes

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
<i>Meals</i>	487 (96%)	2 (<1%)	21 (4%)	510
<i>Physical Environment</i>	235 (75%)	77 (24%)	3 (1%)	315
TOTAL:	722 (87%)	79 (10%)	24 (3%)	825

Meals

When asked about meals, children and youth expressed satisfaction with the food provided in their homes (96%). Children stated that not only the quantity and quality of food provided was good, but they liked the food, and could list favourite meals. Several children also mentioned that they helped with meal preparation.

Two neutral comments (<1%) were made stating that meals were of adequate quality. The majority of negative comments (4%) referred to children who reported that they did not help prepare meals. (Participation in meal preparation is considered an opportunity to develop life skills; as a result, a lack of participation is classified as negative). Two children stated the food was poor (e.g. "I hate tomatoes", "...the majority of food I don't like") and one child reported not getting enough to eat (e.g. "[I am] sometimes hungry, can't go into the fridge...there is a fruit bowl right there for snacks").

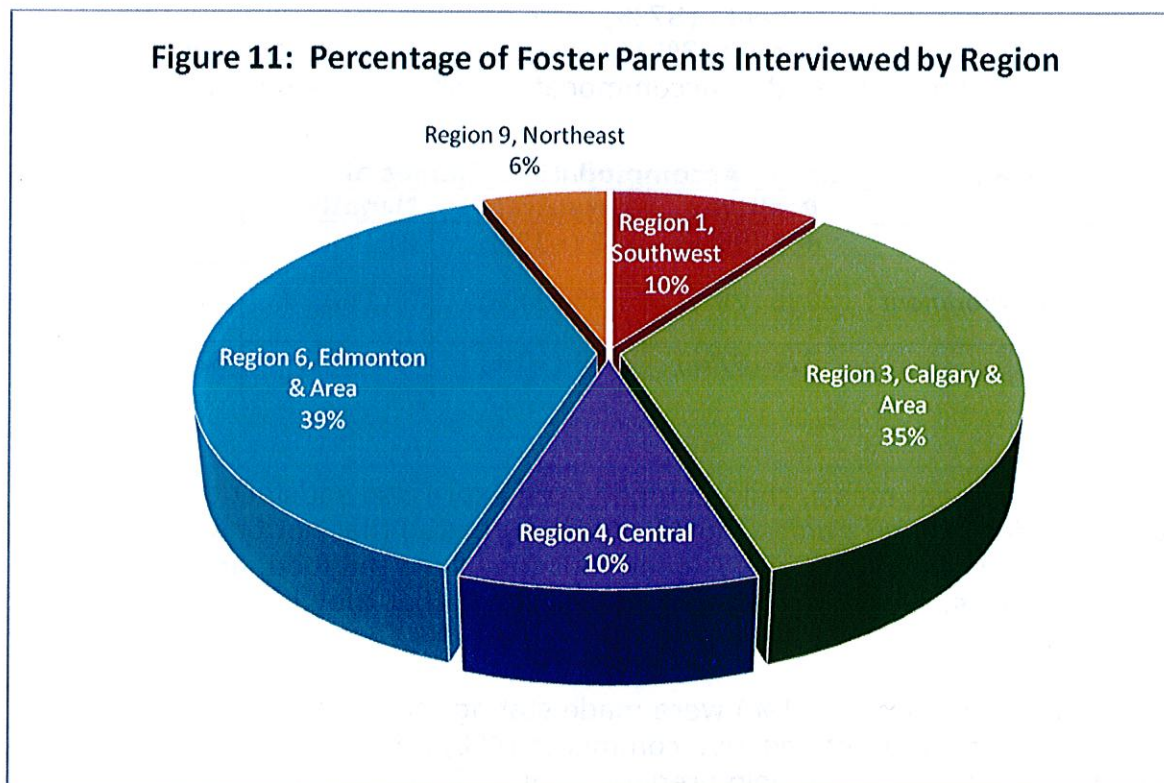
Physical Environment

Children and youth were given the opportunity to describe their foster homes, the chores they were responsible for and what changes, if any, they would like to make. Seventy-five percent of comments were positive, where children and youth indicated they liked their homes and participated in chores. Neutral comments (24%) referred to foster children who said they did or did not have pets in the home. Three negative comments (1%) were made where a child indicated he/she did not participate in chores (chores are considered opportunities to develop life skills; as a result, a lack of participation is classified as negative) and two children stated they did not like their home (e.g. "have to share a room", "they have a dog, he's cute, but I like cats").

Foster Parents' Comments

Committee members gave foster parents an opportunity to comment on the services they provided to the children in their care and the supports they received to assist them in their role as foster parents. As well, foster parents had the chance to express concerns of their own. Members spoke with 158

foster parents in 116 foster homes. Foster parents expressed different views, depending on their experiences, perceptions and geographic location. The percentage of foster parents who participated in interviews, broken down by Child and Family Services Authority, is shown in Figure 11.



In general, foster parents' comments expressed moderate satisfaction; 68% of the total comments were positive, 8% of comments were neutral and 24% of the total comments were negative.

Services

The majority of foster parents reported satisfaction with the access to treatment and services for the children and youth in their care. Foster parents also spoke about having good communication and assistance from health, dental, and educational professionals, as well as access to recreational services and programs.

Areas of dissatisfaction highlighted in the interviews included comments about the children's recreation funds not covering the actual costs of some recreational activities. A few also commented that the clothing allowance does not adequately cover actual clothing costs. A few foster parents stated they had difficulty accessing treatment and services. (Upon follow-up, regional staff assisted the foster parents in acquiring the necessary services).

Agency Support

Comments from foster parents about general support and services received from foster care agencies were positive. Foster parents highlighted their satisfaction with agency services, foster care support workers, training, and

respite support. Of the few negative comments made, foster parents identified a need for increased respite resources, improved support provided by support workers and/or changes to their training (e.g. courses provided online, an increase of advanced level courses for experienced foster parents and greater variety of material).

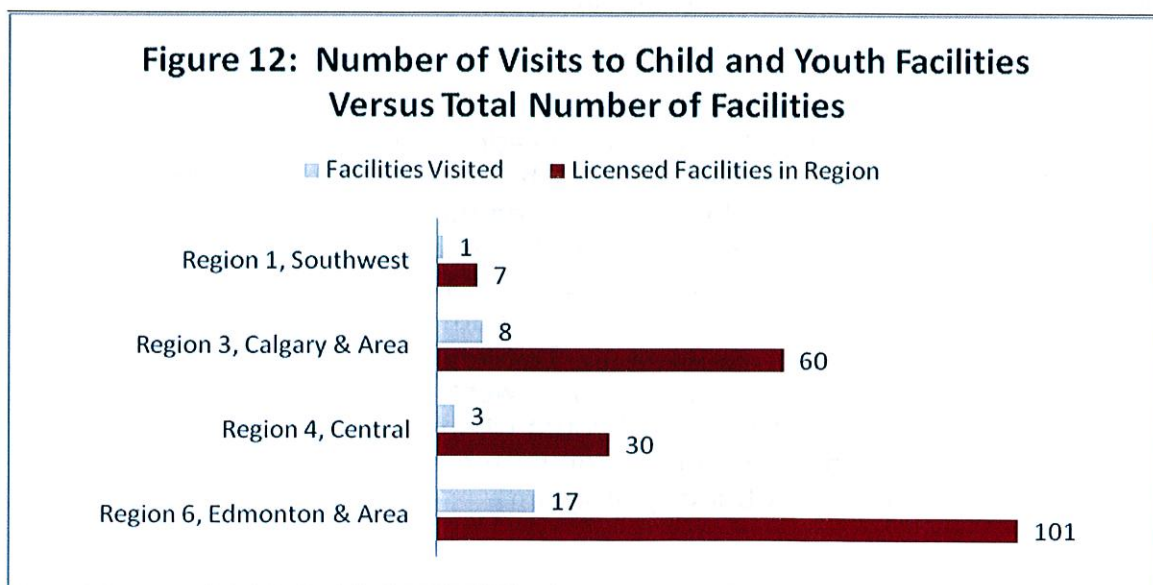
Support from the Ministry and Child and Family Services Authorities

In regards to Ministry services, foster parents said they received good support from regional staff (e.g. caseworkers, foster care support workers) and the Ministry. They further indicated that they received good foster parent training. The few neutral comments described Ministry supports as adequate. Negative comments included statements regarding the need for improved communication with regional staff (e.g. caseworkers), foster parent training (e.g. need for more flexibility, online or distance friendly courses, less redundancy and specialized training), and more available respite resources. Foster parents also indicated the need for better consistency in the application of regional policies.

Child and Youth Facilities

Child and youth facilities provide care to children and youth in the custody or under the guardianship of the director under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*. This also includes children and youth in the care of other provincial child welfare authorities. A range of facilities including receiving and assessment homes, group homes, secure services, youth shelters and emergency shelters are classified as child and youth facilities and are licensed under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*. Most of these facilities are operated by not-for-profit or profit organizations; however, some are government operated. During this review period, the majority of Committee visits took place in group homes.

The Committee visited 29 child and youth facilities between April 2009 and March 2010. Figure 12 shows the number of child and youth facilities visited, as well as the total number of facilities in each region.



HIGHLIGHTS OF VISITS TO CHILD AND YOUTH FACILITIES

Committee members scheduled visits to child and youth facilities late in the afternoon, after school hours or early in the evening to ensure as many children and youth as possible were available for interviews. Sixty-two children and youth, from 29 facilities, participated in the interviews.

Children and youth comments are organized into three main categories: care, treatment and accommodation. Service provider's comments are discussed separately.

Care

Committee members reported 895 comments from children and youth about the care they received at their facilities. Overall, children and youth expressed satisfaction with the services provided; 668 comments (75%) were positive, 165 comments (18%) were neutral and 62 comments (7%) were negative. The breakdown of children's comments, relating to care themes, is shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Responses – Care Themes at Child and Youth Facilities

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
<i>Education</i>	133 (84%)	6 (4%)	20 (12%)	159
<i>Summer Activities</i>	38 (65%)	15 (26%)	5 (9%)	58
<i>Social Activities</i>	240 (97%)	0 (0%)	7 (3%)	247
<i>Staff-Child/Youth Relationships</i>	57 (44%)	70 (53%)	4 (3%)	131
<i>Rules</i>	92 (53%)	73 (42%)	8 (5%)	173
<i>Overall Care and Comfort Level</i>	108 (85%)	1 (1%)	18 (14%)	127
TOTAL:	668 (75%)	165 (18%)	62 (7%)	895

Education

The majority of comments (84%) about education were positive, with children and youth indicating they attended public school, facility programs or a special needs program. Some of the children indicated they liked school (26%), planned to graduate (23%) and a few said they intended to pursue post-secondary education (11%). In neutral comments (4%), youth mentioned having full-time or part-time jobs, and a few youth stated they were awaiting an educational placement or assessment. Twelve percent of comments were negative and included children who said they were unaware of the Advancing Futures Bursary program, children and youth who disliked school, and one youth who was not attending school. (Committee members informed the youth about the Advancing Futures Bursary program).

Summer Activities

Questions about summer activities elicited many positive comments (65%). In positive comments, children and youth described vacations with facility staff and/or natural family members, summer camp and day trips. Comments made by children living in placements not conducive to summer activities (e.g. short-term, emergency shelter placements) were classified as neutral (26%). Five youth stated they did not participate in any summer activities (e.g. "I was in a treatment facility", "I was in secure [treatment]", "I stayed home...did not go anywhere").

Social Activities

Most (97%) of the children and youth expressed satisfaction with their social activities. The most popular comments included receiving an allowance, participating in unstructured activities (e.g. hanging out with friends, playing game systems), participating in activities with facility staff, having friends, and being involved in unstructured sports. Seven negative comments (3%) were heard. Five youth stated they did not have friends (e.g. three of these youth recently moved into the placement, so they had not yet made new friends, and two youth entered their current placements from jail: one youth is actively staying away from previous negative relationships, and the other youth is court ordered to stay away from his/her friends). The remaining two negative comments referred to two youth who indicated they were involved in only limited activities (e.g. one youth released from jail is trying to limit activities, the other youth is under a restrictive court order).

Staff - Child/Youth Relationships

When asked about their relationships with staff, 44% of comments described good relationships with staff and good in-house support. Fifty-three percent of comments were neutral, where children and youth described who they talked to when they have a concern (e.g. staff, caseworker, teacher). The majority of children and youth stated they felt comfortable talking with staff. Three youth described their relationships with staff as adequate. In the four negative comments (3%) made, youth expressed dissatisfaction with the staff-child relationships and/or reported that they did not talk to anyone about concerns (e.g. "I don't talk to anyone, I usually keep everything inside", "I don't like [one staff member], I feel [he/she] has high expectations for me").

Rules

In just over half of the comments (53%), children and youth indicated knowing the rules and consequences at their respective facilities and described them as fair. Forty-two percent of the comments were neutral in nature and referred to the types of consequences used in their facilities (e.g. having privileges revoked, grounding, time-out). In five percent of the comments, seven children and youth reported the rules to be unfair (e.g. youth complained about curfews, bedtimes, having to hand cell phones in before bed, losing television and gaming privileges as a consequence) and one youth stated he/she did not know the rules. (Upon follow-up, all the rules described by the children and youth were deemed appropriate).

Overall Care and Comfort Level

Eighty-five percent of children and youth provided positive responses when asked about their overall care and comfort in the facilities. These children and youth stated their level of comfort was good, they were treated fairly and felt safe. One percent of the comments were neutral and referred to one child who stated his/her level of comfort was adequate. The remaining 14% of comments were negative. Twelve youth stated they had experienced bullying but reported these matters had been resolved, four youth stated they were treated unfairly (e.g. one youth did not provide further information, but stated he/she felt comfortable in the placement, one youth felt a staff member treated him/her differently), and two youth expressed a poor level of comfort (e.g. one youth was under a court order and the restrictions were uncomfortable, the other youth reported that not all of the staff in his/her placement were as caring as they should be).

Treatment

Committee members reported 485 comments from children and youth about the treatment they received at child and youth facilities. Of those comments, 334 (69%) were positive, 87 (18%) were neutral and the remaining 64 (13%) were negative. The breakdown of children and youths' comments, relating to treatment themes, is shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Responses - Treatment Themes at Child and Youth Facilities

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
<i>Transition</i>	99 (55%)	42 (23%)	39 (22%)	180
<i>Case Plans</i>	51 (66%)	8 (10%)	19 (24%)	78
<i>Contact with Natural Family</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Medical/Dental Needs</i>	184 (81%)	37 (16%)	6 (3%)	227
TOTAL:	334 (69%)	87 (18%)	64 (13%)	485

Transition

Children and youth were asked about the transition to their current placement. In response to this question, 55 percent of comments were positive, where children and youth stated they are happy with their placements, were happy at the time of the move, were advised of the move, had a pre-placement visit, and/or received good support during the transition. The majority of neutral comments (23%) referred to the type of placement the children and youth resided in prior to entering their current placement.

Twenty-two percent of comments were negative. Some children and youth indicated they were not provided with a pre-placement visit and/or advised in advance of the move. Some children and youth remembered feeling scared, angry, or sad about the transition. (As previously noted, in specific situations, Committee members realize that it is not always possible to provide advance notice or a pre-placement visit in circumstances where children are taken into care from their home on an emergency basis). One youth reported he/she was

angry because “kids make fun of me”. This youth reported feeling comfortable in the home, described being treated fairly and did not want to leave the placement.

Case Plans

Sixty-six percent of comments made about case plans were positive. These comments indicated children and youth are aware they have a case plan, know what the plan is, and/or have input into the development of their plans. Ten percent of comments were neutral and referred to the frequency of updates to case plans and those who contributed to the plans (e.g. facility staff, caseworker). The remaining 24% of comments were negative and referred to children and youth who said they were not aware of their case plans. (As previously noted, very young children or children with comprehension difficulties may not have readily recognized conversations with caseworkers as case planning and/or did not have much input into the case plan).

Contact with Natural Family

Questions about the contact children and youth have with natural family members were designed to determine whether or not contact occurs. These questions do not explore the reasons for, limitations on, or appropriateness of contact. For reporting purposes, family contact is not classified in the positive or negative, as family contact and/or reunification with natural family is not always possible or desirable given individual children’s circumstances.

The majority of comments made by children and youth indicated they have contact with natural family and possessed memorabilia and keepsakes such as photographs or memory books. Many children described who they had contact with (e.g. natural parents, siblings) and how often they had contact (e.g. regular, occasional). A few children and youth stated they did not have contact with natural family members, were dissatisfied with the level of contact and/or did not have keepsakes. (Committee members realize that due to the manner in which some children and youth come into care, it is not always possible to bring pictures and/or keepsakes).

Medical/Dental Needs

Almost all (97%) of the children and youth reported positive or neutral comments about their health care. The majority of children and youth (81%) stated that their medical, dental and optical needs were met and that they felt they were well cared for in the facility when they were ill. In the neutral comments (16%), children and youth described having visited a doctor, dentist or optometrist within the past year. Three percent of comments were negative, where four children and youth indicated their dental or orthodontic needs had not been met, one youth stated his/her optometry needs had not been met and one youth reported he/she was experiencing a delay in receiving dental services. (In these cases, follow-up occurred by the youths’ caseworkers to ensure the matters were dealt with appropriately).

Accommodation

Committee members reported 285 comments from children and youth on issues relating to accommodation at child and youth facilities. Residents expressed satisfaction with the services provided; 262 comments (92%) were positive, four comments (1%) were neutral and 19 comments (7%) were negative. The breakdown of residents' responses, relating to accommodation themes, is shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Responses - Accommodation Themes at Child and Youth Facilities

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
<i>Meals</i>	168 (90%)	4 (2%)	14 (8%)	186
<i>Physical Environment</i>	94 (95%)	0 (0%)	5 (5%)	99
TOTAL:	262 (92%)	4 (1%)	19 (7%)	285

Meals

Questions about meals evoked many positive comments (90%) among the children and youth interviewed. Children and youth expressed satisfaction with the quantity and quality of food provided in their facilities. Respondents also reported that they helped with meal preparation. In neutral comments (2%), children and youth reported that the quality of meals was adequate. The remaining comments were negative (8%) and referred to children who reported they did not help prepare meals (as previously mentioned, participation in meal preparation is considered an opportunity to develop life skills, and as a result, a lack of participation is classified as negative), felt the food quality was poor (e.g. "I don't like yogurt", "we repeat meals", "it's mostly chicken every night", "the staff are not good cooks"), and wanting more choices available when hungry.

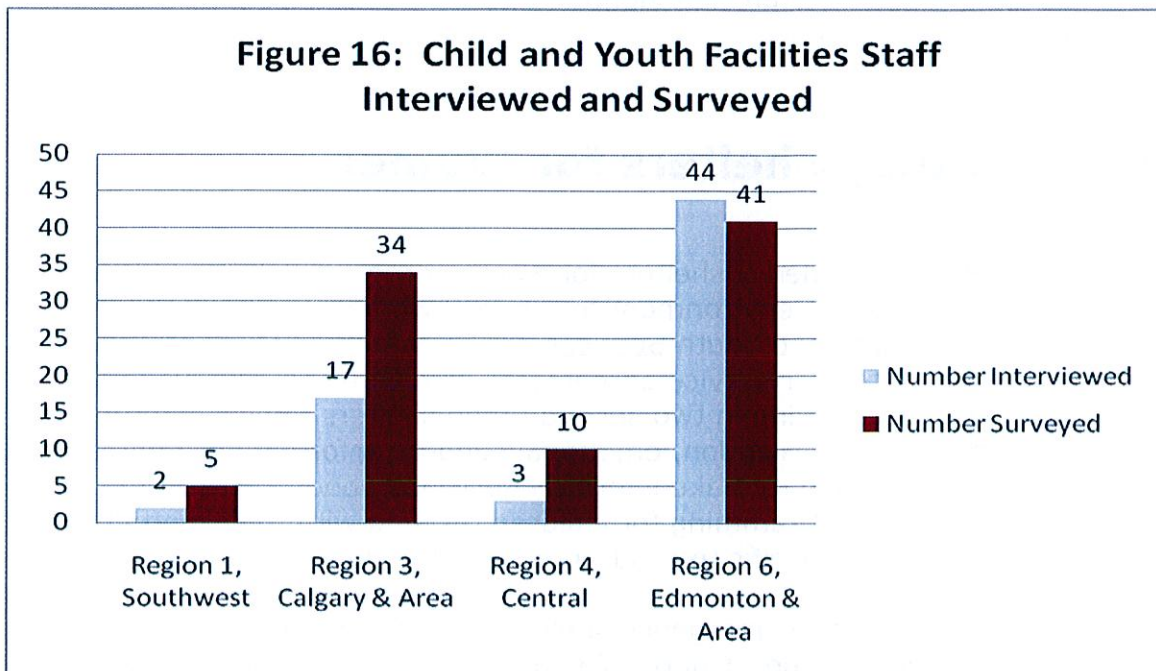
Physical Environment

Most of the comments made about the physical environment of the facilities were positive (95%). Children and youth stated they liked their facilities, participated in daily or weekly chores and/or had pets. There were no neutral comments. Negative comments (5%) referred to two youth who did not have chores (chores are considered opportunities to develop life skills; as a result, a lack of participation is classified as negative) and three youth who indicated they did not like their facilities. Of the three youth who did not like their facilities, two stated it was because they did not have pets, and one youth stated it was because he/she did not like having to share a room.

Staff Comments

Committee members talked to 66 staff members within 29 child and youth facilities to give them an opportunity to comment on the services they provide and to voice any concerns. An additional 90 staff completed surveys. Comments made by staff differed depending on their experiences, perceptions and location (e.g. travel time, access to resources and services). More than half of the responses in the interviews and surveys expressed satisfaction; 52% of comments were positive, 40% were neutral and the remaining 8% were

negative. Figure 16 shows a breakdown of staff who participated in interviews or completed surveys.



Education and Training

High levels of satisfaction with the opportunities given to access additional training were reported by staff in child and youth facilities. Staff also indicated they had received sufficient training to deal with the situations they encounter in their work. A few staff described the training as adequate. Two negative comments were reported indicating that training could be improved.

Staffing/Facility Programs

When talking about their programs, staff highlighted their satisfaction with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, good relationships between staff and youth, positive relationships between staff, low staff turnover, and good staffing levels. Among neutral comments, staff identified additional strengths within the programs. Some staff also described the staffing levels and staff turnover within their facilities as adequate. The main challenges identified by staff within their facilities included maintaining appropriate staffing levels, retaining and recruiting staff, and a need for higher wages.

Supports from the Ministry, Agencies and Community

Staff made positive comments about the assistance they received from regional Children and Youth Services offices. Neutral comments indicated that Ministry services were adequate. Of the negative comments heard, most of the comments indicated that the access to treatment and services for the children in care could be improved.

Director's Comments

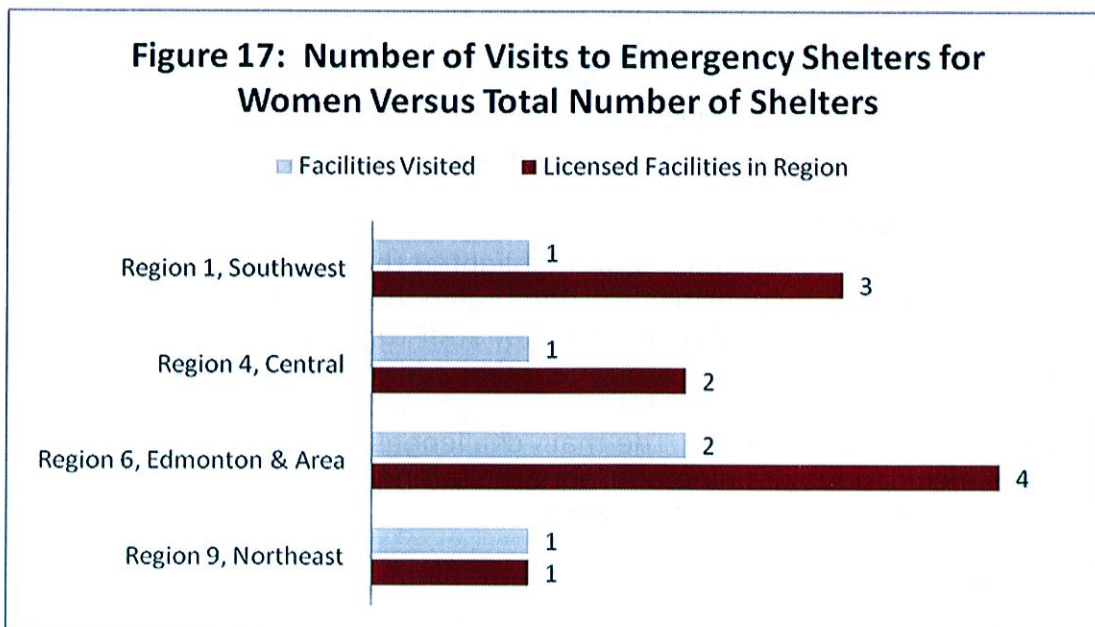
When asked about their programs, directors made many positive comments. Directors described their facilities as having good programs for residents, with good supports for transition to adulthood, and community support. In the

neutral comments, directors further identified their staff and their unique programs as the main reasons for the programs' success. Dissatisfaction with the wages paid to facility staff was identified as the key challenge facing child and youth facility directors.

Emergency Shelters for Women

The purpose of the emergency shelters for women program is to provide a short term, safe and supportive environment for abused women and their children. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services provides funding to 29 emergency shelters for women, fee-for-service agreements with three on-reserve shelters and funding for programming in two second-stage shelters. Basic emergency services include crisis intervention, emotional support, information, referral and advocacy to assist women to make informed decisions about their future. Shelters also provide programming for children residing with their mothers, including programming specific to children exposed to domestic violence.

The Committee visited five emergency shelters for women during the April 2009 to March 2010 review period. Figure 17 shows the number of shelters visited in comparison to the total number of funded facilities per region.



HIGHLIGHTS OF VISITS TO EMERGENCY SHELTERS FOR WOMEN

To facilitate interviews, Committee members make every effort to schedule visits to emergency shelters for women at times of the day when it is most

convenient for residents and staff. Eleven residents and 20 staff participated in interviews, while 13 staff completed surveys.

The total interview response rate of the 59 residents living in the five facilities visited was 19%. The low participation rate is likely related to the unique situation of these residents, who typically spend time away from the facility to search for jobs, permanent accommodations or attend counseling appointments. Children residing at emergency shelters for women did not participate in interviews.

Residents' comments are organized into two main categories: care/treatment and accommodation. Staff comments are discussed separately.

Care and Treatment

Committee members reported 90 comments from residents about the care and treatment they receive at emergency shelters for women. Seventy-nine comments (88%) were positive, one comment was neutral (1%), and the remaining ten comments (11%) were negative. The breakdown of residents' comments, relating to care/treatment themes, is shown in Figure 18.

Figure 18: Responses - Care and Treatment Themes at Emergency Shelters for Women

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
<i>Program Awareness</i>	24 (83%)	0 (0%)	5 (17%)	29
<i>Staff-Resident Relationships</i>	36 (88%)	1 (2%)	4 (10%)	41
<i>Quality of Services Received</i>	19 (95%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	20
TOTAL	79 (88%)	1 (1%)	10 (11%)	90

Program Awareness

The majority of comments were positive (83%), where residents described being aware of the types of programs offered by their shelters, both for themselves and their children. Respondents mentioned receiving information and referrals to community services, as well as receiving additional supports for addictions and mental health. Among the negative comments (17%), a few residents described needing assistance in finding affordable housing prior to leaving the shelter and one woman stated she was unaware of programs for herself.

Staff-Resident Relationships

Eighty-eight percent of comments made about staff-resident relationships were positive. Residents expressed appreciation for staff members' teamwork, assistance, support, understanding, resourcefulness and knowledge. A few women also reported that staff facilitated positive relationships among residents, and cultural diversity was respected within the facilities. One neutral comment (2%) indicated the knowledge and resourcefulness of staff was adequate. Negative comments (10%) included two residents who reported the need for additional staff, one resident who felt staff could be more

understanding and one resident who believed staff needed to better facilitate positive relationships among residents.

Quality of Services Received

When asked about the quality of services received, almost all of the comments were positive (95%). Residents stated services were helpful and the programs for children were good. One negative comment was heard (5%) where a resident reported the need for improvement to the children’s program in the evening.

Accommodation

Committee members reported 181 comments from residents about the accommodations provided at emergency shelters for women. Overall, residents expressed satisfaction with their accommodations; 126 comments (70%) were positive, 42 comments (23%) were neutral and the remaining comments 13 comments (7%) were negative. The breakdown of residents’ comments, relating to accommodation themes, is shown in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Responses - Accommodation Themes at Emergency Shelters for Women

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
<i>Physical Environment</i>	33 (92%)	1 (3%)	2 (5%)	36
<i>Meals</i>	30 (71%)	12 (29%)	0 (0%)	42
<i>Rules</i>	31 (70%)	11 (25%)	2 (5%)	44
<i>Support Services</i>	32 (54%)	18 (31%)	9 (15%)	59
TOTAL	126 (70%)	42 (23%)	13 (7%)	181

Physical Environment

When asked about the physical environment of the shelters, 95% of comments were either positive or neutral. Residents talked about feeling safe and secure. They also expressed satisfaction with the privacy, comfort, design, and size of the facilities. Two negative comments (5%) were made, stating the size of the facility was small (e.g. “it is kind of small, but better than nothing”).

Meals

Satisfaction with the quality, quantity and variety of the food provided in the shelters comprised 71% of the statements about meals. The remaining responses were neutral (29%) where residents said they either did or did not participate in preparing meals. One resident commented that the quality of meals was adequate. No negative comments were made.

Rules

Most of the comments about rules were either positive or neutral (95%). Residents stated they were informed of the rules, described the rules as fair and reasonable, and indicated the regulations were enforced in their respective

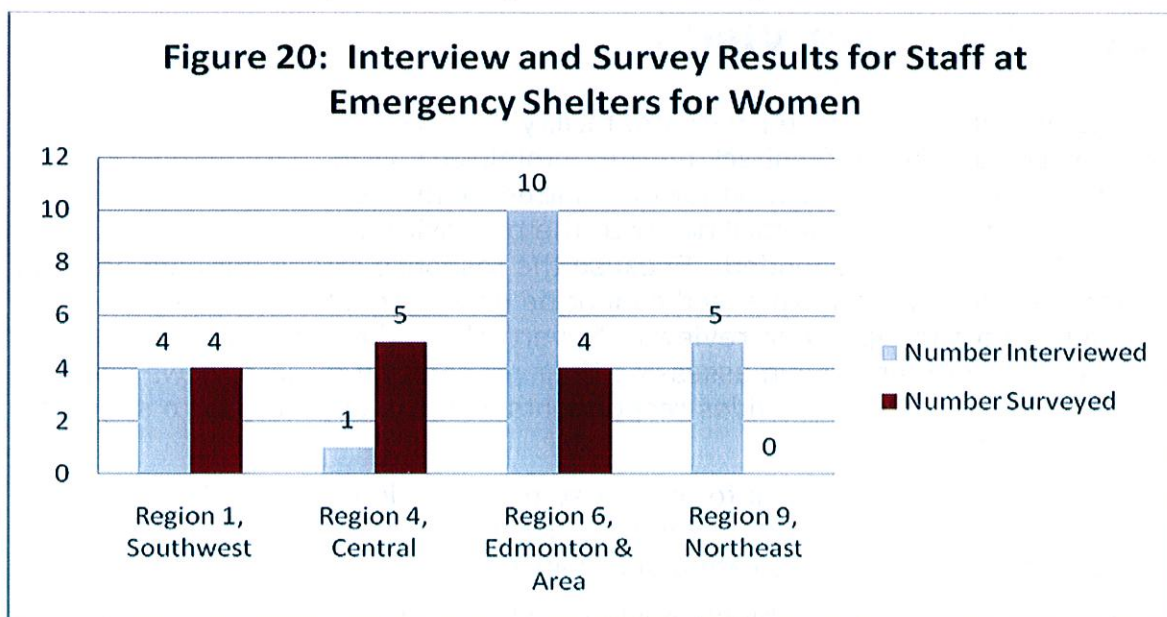
shelters. Two negative comments (5%) were made (e.g. one resident did not like the “no overnight” rule, as her child was unable to stay with his/her grandparent on weekends and one resident would like to see better enforcement of rules in the facility).

Support Services

Fifty-four percent of comments regarding support services were positive. Women said they would recommend the facility to others, were impressed with the services received, and were aware of community support services. Thirty-one percent of comments were neutral describing how residents came to know about the facilities (e.g. community, media, police, social services). Of the negative comments (15%) reported, three residents indicated they were unaware of community supports and six comments were made suggesting improvements to the programs and/or physical environment (e.g. increasing the length of stay in the shelter, provide nicer feminine hygiene products, provide evening activities for children in the shelter, and healthier meals).

Staff Comments

Committee members talked to 20 staff in five emergency shelters for women to give them an opportunity to comment on the services they provide. An additional 13 staff completed surveys. A breakdown of staff who participated in the interviews or completed surveys is shown in Figure 20.



Sixty-four percent of staff feedback was positive, 20% was neutral and the remaining 16% was negative.

Facility - Staffing

Staff reported having sufficient training to provide services to women and children served by the shelters. They further stated that staffing levels, relationships with colleagues, and cooperation between staff were good. Roles and responsibilities were described as clearly defined. Of the neutral comments, staff indicated that additional training was available, relationships with colleagues were adequate, and one staff stated the workload was

adequate. A few responses were negative. Areas of dissatisfaction highlighted a need for improved staffing levels, training, and more clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Facility – Building/Services Provided

The majority of staff interviewed and surveyed reported satisfaction with the services provided to women and children in the shelters. Staff described a safe and secure facility, positive relationships with residents, and good programs for residents and their children. Some described the services provided as adequate. The lack of services for spouses, transitional supports (e.g. housing), and outreach services were identified by staff as areas for improvement.

Overall Feedback

While commenting on their overall satisfaction with the supports provided to residents during and after their stay at an emergency shelter for women, staff had many positive responses. Staff highlighted the reflection of culture and ethnicity in their services, and further indicated that staff and their focus on clients made the programs successful. The need for transitional supports (e.g. housing) for residents topped the list of negative comments made by staff.

Feedback on Visits

Service providers (e.g. foster parents, facility staff, facility owner/operators) were invited to provide feedback on the Committee's visits. This feedback is an important method of evaluation for Committee members. Visit feedback forms were mailed to each of the facilities with the pre-visit package. Of the 232 visits, 51 individuals responded. Because the response rate is not high enough, the results and opinions expressed cannot be generalized to all service providers who participated in reviews. Nevertheless, the information gathered is useful to the Committee in assessing their preparation for interviews and visits in general. It also provides respondents with the opportunity to suggest areas for improvement.

The results from the feedback forms are summarized in Figure 21 (located on page 44). Responses were provided on a five-point scale, with one indicating very dissatisfied and five indicating very satisfied.

The feedback provided was highly positive. Most of the respondents (94%) appreciated the visits and commented on how pleased they were with how the visits were conducted. Many commented that Committee members were patient, accommodating, professional, and willing to listen. Service providers also indicated that the visits were informative and they appreciated being able to share their experiences and concerns. Several stated they believed their feedback would be used to improve services to children and families. A few respondents voiced the hope that their input would assist in improving services to children and families.

When asked whether anything could have been done differently with the Committee's visits, 94% percent of respondents marked "no". These responses

suggest that most respondents were satisfied with the visits in general. One individual found the visit "awkward", as he/she did not understand when he/she was being interviewed during the visit, and this person had difficulty understanding some of the questions. One respondent suggested that surveys could be emailed to parents of children in day cares to improve response rate.

Service providers reported they had been sufficiently informed about the purpose of the visit and received enough information in the pre-visit packages to understand what the Committee's visit would involve. One respondent also stated that the phone call he/she received prior to the visit was helpful in further clarifying the purpose of the Committee's visit.

Ninety-two percent of respondents indicated they had adequate time to speak with Committee members and felt Committee members were well informed of their jobs.

Typical Comments:

- *It was empowering for us and our foster children as well as myself to have an unbiased and confidential Committee where positive/negative opinions could be expressed.*
- *It was nice to know that there is an interest in our program and that information has a way of getting to the government about how we are doing.*
- *The process was easy and flexible.*
- *The Committee members were very accommodating and patient.*
- *Members of the Committee were very professional to the staff and parents.*

Figure 21: Service Provider Feedback

Question	Tone	Number of Responses	Percentage
1. How was the visit? How satisfied were you with the visit process?	Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
	Dissatisfied	0	0%
	Neutral	3	6%
	Satisfied	11	22%
	Very Satisfied	37	72%
			51
2. Was the visit useful?	Very Dissatisfied	1	2%
	Dissatisfied	2	4%
	Neutral	14	28%
	Satisfied	16	31%
	Very Satisfied	18	35%
			51
3. Is there anything that we could have done differently?	Yes	3	6%
	No	48	94%
			51
4. Did you understand and receive enough information about the purpose of the visit?	Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
	Dissatisfied	0	0%
	Neutral	4	8%
	Satisfied	16	31%
	Very Satisfied	31	61%
			51
5. Did you have enough time to speak to the Committee Members?	Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
	Dissatisfied	1	2%
	Neutral	3	6%
	Satisfied	15	29%
	Very Satisfied	32	63%
			51
6. Did you feel the Committee members were well informed about their job?	Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
	Dissatisfied	1	2%
	Neutral	3	6%
	Satisfied	13	25%
	Very Satisfied	34	67%
			51

Complaint Investigations

The Social Care Facilities Review Committee conducts investigations into matters relating to a facility, as specified by the Minister. The Minister did not request any investigations in the April 2009 to March 2010 review period.

Expenditures

Total expenditures for the April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010 review period were \$266,499. This total includes: honoraria, travel, accommodations, printing, courier, long distance and Internet expenses for the Social Care Facilities Review Committee.

Each team of two Committee members spent between one and three hours planning and conducting each facility visit and an additional two to six hours summarizing feedback. The average cost per visit was \$1,149.

Committee Member Highlights

As Committee members, we have had the privilege of visiting various facilities including foster homes, child and youth facilities (e.g. group homes), emergency shelters for women, day care programs, and out-of-school care programs over the last year. It is an honour to interview service providers who demonstrate care, commitment, and advocacy for children and youth in Alberta. We have also had the opportunity to glimpse some of the successes that services are having in the lives of children and youth.

In visiting the diverse settings where children are cared for across this province, we have been allowed to observe environments where these children are finding pathways to prosperous futures. Highlights from conversations with children and youth residing in foster homes, and child and youth facilities, as well as their caregivers (e.g. foster parents, group homes staff) included:

- It appears the Advancing Futures Bursary program is becoming more widely known among youth and service providers as evidenced by the many comments made in the interviews and surveys. Youth and service providers spoke positively about the opportunities this program affords youth who are transitioning to adulthood.
- Many foster parents talked positively about their relationships with caseworkers whom they said were supportive and committed to the children in their care.
- Many children and youth stated how much they felt loved and nurtured by their caregivers and believed that their foster parents/child care workers not only cared for them, but were committed to help them. Several youth in group care reported feeling safe, well-respected and supported in their placements.

- Several group home staff and foster parents said they were well supported in their roles.

It is humbling to visit women in emergency shelters who have experienced crisis and upheaval. As we listened to their stories, we were impressed with their resilience and heard them comment positively about the “safe place” shelters provide them and their children during a difficult time in their lives.

During visits to Alberta day care programs and out-of-school care programs, we had the opportunity to listen to parents, children, child care staff and operators talk about the quality of care received and delivered in these facilities.

Satisfaction with the programs included:

- The confidence parents have in the day cares and out-of-school care programs.
- The pride staff and operators feel towards their work.
- The benefits of accreditation:
 - staff and operators spoke positively about the additional funding that accreditation provides and how that has improved wages, reduced staff turnover, and encouraged staff to further their learning and training; and
 - staff and operators feel accreditation has raised the standard of care within day cares and out-of-school care programs across the industry.

Once again, this year has been a gratifying experience for all Committee members. We continue to be amazed by the children and youth who have experienced immense difficulty and trauma, but who forge ahead to become strong and resilient individuals. Their success is achieved through the support and advocacy of the dedicated caregivers and Ministry staff who come alongside these children, youth, and families. We have appreciated the opportunity to highlight the work being done by Children and Youth Services to improve the lives of Albertans.

Committee Activities

Several changes, new initiatives and achievements took place for the Social Care Facilities Review Committee during the April, 2009 to March, 2010 review period.

The Committee was pleased to welcome Jan Prince and Linda Sutton as its newest members in April, 2009. The Committee bid farewell to two members, Lydia Graham and Kelly Sackley, in March, 2010. The Committee would like to thank them for their contribution and wish them the best in their future endeavours.

Earlier in the year, the Committee developed a new assessment process for assessing the Committee as a whole, as well as the Chair, Vice-Chair, and individual Committee members. Assessments were completed in February, 2010.

To ensure compliance with the future *Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act* (APAGA), the Committee completed core governance documents including a Code of Conduct, Mandate and Roles, and Position Profiles.

Lastly, as part of their ongoing learning and development, Committee members completed two training modules:

- Building an Effective Team; and
- Report Writing and Coding.

They also heard presentations on:

- Foster Parent Training Program;
- Outcomes-Based Services;
- Transitioning Youth to 18;
- Foster to Adopt Program – Region 6; and
- Out-of-School Care Accreditation.

Acknowledgements

The Social Care Facilities Review Committee would like to extend their sincere thanks to each child, youth and adult who shared their experiences and insights through the interviews and surveys. Their willingness to participate and provide feedback makes this report possible, and has provided the Ministry with a rich source of information to draw upon.

Committee members would also like to thank the Chief Executive Officers and staff in the Southwest, Calgary and Area, Central, Edmonton and Area and Northeast Child and Family Services Authorities. Without their assistance in coordinating visits within their regions, the Committee could not effectively perform its responsibilities.

Additionally, the Social Care Facilities Review Committee wishes to thank each person who provided training and information sessions to support the Committee's ongoing professional development. Last, but not least, the Committee extends their gratitude to the staff from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services for their work and unwavering support.

