



**Ministry of Human Services' Response to the
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
2014-2015 Annual Report**

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Table of Contents

Background3

Ministry Response.....3

Conclusion4

Background

The *Child and Youth Advocate Act* requires the Advocate to report annually to the Legislative Assembly on the work of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA). The ministry is pleased to respond to the Advocate's 2014-2015 Annual Report.

Human Services continues to welcome the Advocate's comments on ways to strengthen the child intervention system and on our shared goal to achieve positive outcomes for Alberta's children, youth and families.

In 2014/2015, Human Services received and responded to 63 recommendations for the child intervention system, including 12 from the OCYA.

Responses to the OCYA reports and recommendations are posted on the [Human Services](#) website. All recommendations are being tracked (with immediate actions taken where necessary in the case of a death or serious injury of a child receiving services) and are analyzed to determine themes, assess work underway, identify current opportunities and options, identify collaborative actions required with partnering ministries and, finally, determine next steps.

Response to Recommendations

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate's 2014-2015 Annual Report did not include formal recommendations for the Ministry of Human Services or the child intervention system; however, it did identify recommendations and systemic issues made to date and indicate the ministry's progress. The report states:

While overall there has been progress, there continues to be a number of outstanding recommendations and ongoing systemic issues in Alberta's child intervention system. The responses and the progress made in addressing systemic issues and recommendations identified by the Advocate are posted on the OCYA's website at www.ocya.alberta.ca.

The ministry continues to work collaboratively with the Advocate and his staff to address systemic level improvements that support better outcomes for children, youth and families in Alberta.

Throughout the 2014/2015 fiscal year, the child intervention system has had the opportunity for growth and improvement based on informed advice and recommendations made to improve the system, internal processes, and collaboration with external stakeholders. The ministry has increased its rigour regarding receiving, reviewing and tracking recommendations. The ministry thanks the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate for their collaboration with ministry staff in supporting our understanding of the intent and expected outcome of recommendations being made. Through this ongoing engagement and sharing of information, the ministry continues to support the implementation of recommendations with the intent of systemic improvement.

At the OCYA's request, the ministry provides updates to recommendations, systemic observations and issues, and works to meet the OCYA's timelines based on their various reporting mechanisms. The ministry respects the Advocate's opinion with respect to his evaluation of progress made on his recommendations. We understand it may not always be feasible to measure and report progress in the same way, based on varying awareness of:

- child intervention policy and practice,
- all the recommendations being made and actioned, and
- actions already taken at the time of an incident to address issues identified at the case or system level.

Actions taken to implement recommendations may not always appear related to specific recommendations made by the Advocate; however, as they have the same intent for systemic improvement, the outcome is often relevant and related to the outcome identified or intended by the Advocate.

Conclusion

The ministry will continue to work with the OCYA and other recommending bodies to incorporate evidence-based leading practice into the child intervention system. It is through the collective efforts of many viewpoints, experts and ongoing research that improvements to child intervention service delivery is made.

Throughout the year, Human Services has maintained a strong working relationship with the OCYA through regular meetings to support ongoing exchange of information and through working groups focused on policy development and revision, program development and design, data and information sharing. The ministry welcomes the OCYA's observations regarding systemic issues, and strives to be proactive in making improvements and being responsive to recommendations made in past reports.

We continue to focus on strengthening practice, tailoring supports and services to meet the challenges of each family, and providing creative and accessible training and development for caregivers, child intervention workers and agency partners that will lead to improved outcomes. We have a shared responsibility with other government ministries, communities, and families to support the safety, security and well-being of Alberta's children.

We thank the Advocate for his ongoing advocacy for Alberta's children and for supporting them to have a voice and express their views and interests. We look forward to continued collaboration to support positive outcomes for children, youth and their families.