

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate Quarterly Report: October 1 to December 31, 2009

Alberta Children and Youth Services Response

Report on Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) and Delegated First Nation Agencies (DFNAs)

The tables below include information about how cases where mandatory notifications were made to the advocate were addressed by CFSAs and DFNAs. CFSAs and DFNAs are required by ministry policy to inform the advocate whenever:

- A child or youth is alleged to have suffered physical, emotional, or sexual abuse while in provincial government care.
- A child or youth receiving services, or a significant person in their life, disagrees with the services planned for a child or youth in care.
- It is felt that the viewpoint or interests of a child or youth in care are not being considered or the rights of a child or youth in care are not being respected.

The ministry response section of the table shows the number of such incidents reported to the advocate and whether they were founded or unfounded, based on the facts discovered when the incident was investigated.

When an allegation is verified, the first priority of the ministry is to take immediate steps to ensure the safety and well-being of the child or youth in care. The nature of these steps varies, depending on the unique circumstances of each case and can include:

- The permanent closure of a foster home or kinship care home, or the discipline of group home staff, up to and including dismissal. Incidents that are criminal in nature are referred to the appropriate police authorities.
- A requirement that foster parents or kinship caregivers receive additional training before being able to care for children or youth in their home again. In some cases, a child or youth in care may remain with the foster parent or kinship caregiver, provided the safety and well-being of the young person can be assured.
- The need for foster parents or kinship caregivers to take additional steps to ensure the continued safety and well-being of children and youth in their care, such as making sure third parties who have placed the safety and well-being of the young person at risk, are barred access to the child or youth.
- The ministry providing additional supports and services to the foster parent or kinship caregiver and increasing monitoring activities.
- Forwarding verified cases of abuse to the ministry legal services branch for referral to the Office of the Public Trustee.

Report on Child and Family Services Authorities

CFSA	Concern Reported	Ministry Response
Southwest Alberta CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory notifications involving nine children or youth. • Challenges working with Kainai Child and Family Services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two allegations of abuse involving four children or youth were substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the Advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Three foster children being physically disciplined and one child being physically assaulted by a foster parent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children moved from foster home, foster home closed, matter referred to police, and police laid charges. ○ Youth in foster care physically assaulted by his biological sibling, outside of the foster home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The youth no longer has unsupervised visits with his sibling. ▪ The youth assaulted refused to support the laying of charges against his sibling. • Southwest Alberta CFSA's Board has met with the Kainai CFS Board to establish and maintain stronger relationships. The region continues to support aboriginal language and cultural programs,

CFSA	Concern Reported	Ministry Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges meeting the needs of high-risk youth. 	<p>as well as the permanent placement of aboriginal children, through its regional permanency committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The region is continuing to work in collaboration with other community agencies to enhance placement options for high-risk children and youth.
Southeast Alberta CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notifications involving three children or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One allegation of abuse involving two children or youth were substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the Advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prospective adoptive parents physically assaulted two children. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children were moved from the home, and prospective adoption was cancelled.
Calgary and Area CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notifications involving 97 children or youth. Children in care disagreeing with placement changes. Concerns about being separated from family and community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five allegations of abuse involving six children or youth were substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the Advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inappropriate discipline technique used on a foster youth who was displaying resistant and defiant behaviours. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional training and support was provided to the foster parent. Increased visits to foster parent by foster care support worker, to reinforce training. Foster child accidentally ingested medication in a foster home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> License for foster home has been reduced to one child, to enhance supervision. Authority staff have increased monitoring and unscheduled visits to the home. Foster parent is taking additional training. Unapproved homeopathic medicine technique used on a foster child. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The two children in the foster home were moved. Foster home has been placed on hold with no children. Neglect of a child and use of an illegal substance by a kinship caregiver. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The two children were moved from the home and the home was closed. Inappropriate sexualized behaviour by one foster youth on another foster youth. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The youth responsible for the inappropriate behaviour was moved from the home. The youth affected by the behaviour was provided with counselling support. The region works toward finding placements for children and youth that meet their needs, including involving the child or youth in decisions about their placement and developing plans to successfully transition to adulthood. The region is expanding its capacity to provide youth with a voice and a choice by working with adolescents across the region through the collaborative model used at the region's Multi-Risk Youth Hub. The region works toward finding placements for children and youth that meet their needs, and is refining its placement planning and discharge processes. The region endeavours to keep youth in their community when such a placement is in the young person's best interest and meets their needs.

CFSA	Concern Reported	Ministry Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns about quality of care at group and residential placements. Concerns about the responsiveness of caseworkers. Youth in care requesting a new caseworker. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of care provided to youth at group and residential placements is being reviewed as part of the region's 2010-11 Operations Plan. The need to respond to calls from youth in a timely manner has been reinforced with staff. Youth in care are provided with information about how to contact the supervisor of their caseworker if they are having difficulty reaching their caseworker. In accordance with a directive recently issued regarding administrative reviews, the region is working with caseworkers to manage conflict and resolve issues with youth, such as requests for a new caseworker, prior to the youth needing to lodge a formal complaint.
Central Alberta CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notifications involving seven children or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two allegations of abuse involving two children or youth were substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the Advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inappropriate restraint used by a foster parent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All foster children were removed from the home and the home was closed. Concerns about the neglect of a child and the physical cleanliness of a kinship home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child was moved from the home and the home was closed.
East Central Alberta CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notification involving one child or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A review of the information regarding the mandatory notification determined that it was not related to abuse in care.
Edmonton and Area CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notifications involving 85 children or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twelve allegations of abuse involving twenty three children or youth were substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the Advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inappropriate touching incident involving a foster parent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alleged perpetrator moved out of the home and cannot have contact with the youth (the youth wanted to stay in the foster home with the foster mother). Counselling provided, safety plan implemented, and monitoring increased. Matter was referred to police. Foster parent charged with an offense related to inappropriate use of a firearm, outside of the foster home and not involving the foster children. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other foster parent ensured all firearms were removed from the foster home. Monitoring of the foster home and visits with the foster children have increased. Inappropriate discipline techniques used by foster parents (four cases /nine children). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Case 1 (three children)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of children allowed to be placed in the foster home was reduced. Foster parent provided with additional training on alternate discipline techniques. <u>Case 2 (one child)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster child with extreme behavioural difficulties was moved to another foster home. Foster parent provided with additional training and support. More frequent monitoring of the foster home. <u>Case 3 (one child)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster parent threatened to spank, but did not follow through with the threat. Foster parent provided with additional training on appropriate discipline techniques. <u>Case 4 (four children)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster parent poked children leaving a mark.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns from some youth that they are not being involved in day-to-day and case planning decisions, that they are not listened to, and that they want a new caseworker. • Concerns about support provided through assistance agreements and providing basic necessities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children moved to another home. ▪ No children to be placed in the home. ○ Physical confrontation between a kinship caregiver and kinship youth. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Youth moved from the kinship home and the home was closed. ○ Inappropriate sexualized behaviour between children/youth (two cases). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Case 1 (two children)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Foster parent successfully resolved the issue through changes to supervision and there have been no further incidents. <u>Case 2 (one youth)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The youth was provided with counselling support. ▪ Matter was referred to the police. ○ Inappropriate restraint of a foster youth applied by a group home staff member. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff member no longer works at the group home. ○ Inappropriate behaviour toward youth by a staff member in a group home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff member no longer works at the group home. ▪ De-escalation technique training provided to remaining group home staff. ○ Unequal treatment between foster children and biological children in the foster home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children moved to another home. ▪ Foster parents provided with additional training. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseworkers strive to involve youth in care in their case planning as much as possible and try to honour the wishes of the youth when it is in the best interests of the youth, but caseworkers do not agree to wishes that are not in the best interests of the youth or that are unsafe. <p>Sometimes, a caseworker develops a draft care plan to discuss it with the youth, but the youth feels this means that the caseworker has already made up their mind, causing the youth to feel they do not have a say in the decisions affecting them. Staff have been reminded that they must be mindful of how this planning process can be interpreted by youth.</p> <p>Youth who disagree with a decision are provided with the option of raising their concerns with a supervisor or a manager, requesting an administrative review, lodging a formal appeal, or asking for support from the Child and Youth Advocate.</p> <p>If a youth is not satisfied with the supports provided by their caseworker, and cannot resolve the matter by speaking with the caseworker, they can contact the caseworker's supervisor or regional authority management to discuss the matter further.</p> • Decisions about financial assistance or supply of basic necessities are not related to attempts to reduce costs. <p>The region is adhering to direction that it has been given to not take steps that would reduce the level of support provided to children and youth in care.</p>

CFSA	Concern Reported	Ministry Response
	<p>requested by youth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety and wellbeing of children/youth in placement resources. 	<p>The criteria for entering into a support and financial assistance agreement with a youth and the supports that may be provided under such an agreement are identified in the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Regulation.</p> <p>At times, there are disagreements about the appropriate level and nature of supports, and caseworkers will speak with youth about the need to take care of their belongings, however the region ensures that no youth is without shelter and basic necessities. Youth who disagree with decisions about the services they will be receiving are encouraged to speak with their worker, the worker's manager, or the Advocate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans were developed to meet the needs of the youth in each of these cases, through discussions between the youth, regional staff, and advocate staff. The issues have been resolved.
North Central Alberta CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notifications involving 11 children or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three allegations of abuse involving five children or youth were substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the Advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical and verbal argument between foster parent and foster youth. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The youth said they felt safe and expressed a desire to remain in the foster home. The youth is attending counselling to manage their behaviour. Additional training regarding responding to youth with more defiant behaviours is being provided to the foster parents. Foster parent charged by police regarding a matter not affecting the foster children. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring of the foster home and caseworker contact with the foster children has been increased. Inappropriate sexualized behaviour between two youth in a group home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police investigated and laid charges against the alleged offending youth and the youth was moved from the facility. Counselling was provided to the victim.
Northwest Alberta CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notifications involving two children or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One allegation of abuse involving one child was substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the Advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inappropriate discipline technique used by a foster parent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional training on discipline techniques being provided to the foster parent. Additional monitoring and respite services for the foster home.
Northeast Alberta CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No mandatory notifications for this region in this reporting period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
Métis Settlements CFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notification involving one child or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report of abuse was not verified by the facts discovered during the investigation into the allegation.

Report on Delegated First Nation Agencies

Delegated First Nation Agency (DFNA)	Concern Reported	Response
Akamkispatinaw Ohpikihawasowin Child & Family Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notifications involving four children or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reports of abuse were not verified by the facts discovered during the investigations into the allegations.
Bigstone Cree Social Services Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notifications involving three children or youth. Concerns about placement disruptions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two allegations of abuse involving two children or youth were substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the Advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inappropriate physical handling of a youth by a group home staff member. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The staff member no longer works at the group home. The youth was moved to another placement and provided with counselling supports. Inadequate supervision at a group home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing changes to enhance supervision were implemented at the group home. In some cases, a disruption cannot be avoided because a child or youth must be moved immediately if there are concerns regarding the quality of care that they are receiving in their existing placement. Every effort is made to minimize disruptions and consider the wishes of the child or youth when moving the young person.
Blood Tribe Child Protection Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notifications involving two children or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reports of abuse were not verified by the facts discovered during the investigations into the allegations.
Kasohkowew Child Wellness Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notifications involving 12 children or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One allegation of abuse involving two children was substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the Advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inappropriate quality of care by kinship caregiver. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kinship children were moved from the home and the home was closed.
Kee Tas Kee Now Child & Family Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notifications involving four children or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reports of abuse were not verified by the facts discovered during the investigations into the allegations.
Saddle Lake Wah-Koh-To-Win Child Care Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notification involving one child or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mandatory notification was found to not be related to an allegation of abuse in care (the youth was interviewed as part of an assessment regarding another youth).
Siksika Family Services Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notification involving one child or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mandatory notification was found to not be related to an allegation of abuse in care (the youth was interviewed as part of an assessment regarding another youth).
Siksika (Calgary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notifications involving two children or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One allegation of abuse involving one child was substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the Advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inappropriate sexualized gestures by a youth in a foster home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth moved to another foster home and is receiving counselling.
Stoney Child & Family Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory notifications involving three children or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One allegation of abuse involving one child was substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the Advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth sexually assaulted by another youth outside of their group home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision when youth are outside of the group home has been enhanced. Alleged offending youth moved from group home and matter referred to police. Victim is receiving counselling supports.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of staffing changes. • Mandatory notification reporting. • Lack of a timely process for transition planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every effort is made to reduce the impact of staff changes on children and youth, including letters sent to foster parents, meetings with the foster child and parent, and the casework supervisor meeting with the child and parents if the worker leaves their position without much notice. • The need to make mandatory notifications has been reviewed with staff at the DFNA, including during monthly staff meetings, during staff-supervisor discussions, and through reminders being placed on the staff bulletin board. Staff have also received additional information about the mandatory notification process. • Youth files are being assigned to one or two workers in one team as of April 1, 2010. This will increase timely transition planning.
Tribal Chiefs Child & Family Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory notification involving one child or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One allegation of abuse involving one child was substantiated and addressed to the satisfaction of the Advocate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inappropriate discipline technique used by a foster parent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The child was moved from the foster home. ▪ Foster parent being provided with additional training. ▪ Additional supports and respite services are being provided to the foster parent and a hold has been put on future placements in the home.
Western Cree Tribal Council Child Welfare Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory notification involving one child or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mandatory notification was found to not be related to an allegation of abuse in care (the youth was interviewed as part of an assessment regarding another youth).
Yellowhead Tribal Services Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory notification involving one child or youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mandatory notification was found to not be related to an allegation of abuse in care (the youth was interviewed as part of an assessment regarding another youth).

* The Child and Youth Advocate did not receive any mandatory notifications or have additional observations regarding the Delegated First Nation Agencies not listed in the table above.