

## **MINISTERIAL PANEL ON CHILD INTERVENTION TERMS OF REFERENCE**

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Recent reports from the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA) and the Office of the Auditor General, along with the debate and discussion in the Legislature respecting the Child Intervention system, have called for the changes and improvements to the system. The Government of Alberta recognizes this as a critical priority and is striking an all-party Ministerial Panel to lead this work.

### **SCOPE AND PURPOSE**

In the next 8-10 weeks, the panel will write a report outlining immediate recommendations to improve the child death review process. This work includes:

- Identifying recommendations to streamline and strengthen the child death review process, including receiving updates on the status of all internal reviews.
- Identifying which agency should have primary authority for conducting these reviews.
- Examining internal communications protocols to ensure timely access to information for relevant agencies;
- Developing possible criteria for which deaths would be reviewed. This could include all children, all children in care, all children receiving child intervention services or some combination of the above.
- Making recommendations for legislative changes.

Following this initial study, the panel will then review legislation, policies, current practices, literature, relevant data, and recommendations (including OCYA and Auditor General). Further, it will solicit feedback from subject matter experts. The panel will submit a final report addressing:

- The root causes and factors that contribute to child and family involvement in the child intervention system;
- Current funding and resource levels for the child intervention system as well as an assessment of workplace culture and staff morale;
- Existing supports for families, including supports for kinship caregivers, foster parents, and families at-risk of needing child intervention services;
- Opportunities and concrete actions to improve the child intervention system, address over-representation of Indigenous children in intervention system and improve outcomes for all children receiving child intervention services; and
- Identifying recommendations of past studies, prioritizing them and discussing implementation timelines and oversight.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The panel is deemed to continue beyond prorogation and may meet during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued. In the event a member cannot attend a meeting, their party may send a substitute MLA from the same caucus. Membership will be for a fixed term of six months from date of commencement (to be confirmed by Government) and will include:

- Government appointed Chair;
- Up to five Members of the Legislative Assembly from the governing party;
- One Member of the Legislative Assembly from each opposition party in the legislature;
- Experts in the child intervention system from outside Government.

## **SECRETARIAT SUPPORT**

Children's Services shall provide a Secretariat and provide a support team to facilitate access to expertise and resources, and engage cross-ministry partners including Human Services, Health, Justice and Solicitor General, Education, Indigenous Relations and Executive Council as needed.

## **ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

The Committee members will have access to department officials and all documents and records relevant to the review mandate, including systemic level information, but will not have access to case-level information about specific children or families.

For evaluation of individual cases, the panel can interview the OCYA or look at cases investigated by the OCYA.

## **PROCESS**

While endeavoring to achieve consensus, the panel will focus on writing two reports as per the scope and purpose of the panel. In addition, the panel will

- Protect front line workers: Assurances that frontline workers can communicate with the panel without fear of repercussions subject to their requirements to protect the personal identification of their clients and/or coworkers;
- Be held in public: panel meetings will be held in public and on the record except when the panel decides a session should be held in private. There may be times when the members will wish to meet in private to better protect front line workers or families and to respect individual privacy. This will be determined by the panel on a case by case basis when developing their work plan.
- Be open and transparent: transparency and reporting on the progress and work of this panel will be essential to ensuring that this panel is accountable for its actions and words.