



**Ministry of Children's Services' Response to the  
J.A.C. Fatality Inquiry Report**

**June 2017**

**Alberta**  
Children's Services

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## Background

The Ministry of Children's Services has carefully reviewed the [Fatality Inquiry Report](#) into the July 31, 2012 death of seven-year-old J.A.C., released on October 20, 2016.

The inquiry found that the cause of death was drowning and the manner of death was accidental. The child was in provincial government care at the time of death.

Fatality inquiries provide a valuable opportunity for an external review of tragic incidents involving individuals receiving services and supports from the ministry. The information in the Fatality Inquiry Report has been reviewed and considered, and any learnings have been shared with staff who support children and youth in care. The ministry response includes information gathered from a review of existing policies and current ministry initiatives related to issues identified in the report.

## Response to Recommendations

The Fatality Inquiry Report makes a total of six recommendations. The first three recommendations are directed to the City of Edmonton. The remaining three recommendations are related to improvements in the swimming policies of foster and group homes, the need to maintain contact information for previous guardians of children in care, and government funding to teach all children to swim to support the prevention of similar deaths.

### Recommendation #1:

*The City of Edmonton should ensure wrist bands worn by children under eight are highly visible by persons on the pool deck.*

**Ministry Response:** This recommendation is not directed at the ministry.

### Recommendation #2:

*The City of Edmonton should mandate that any child under eight wear a lifejacket at all times in the pool unless he/she has passed the 25 meter swim test conducted by a life guard.*

**Ministry Response:** This recommendation is not directed at the ministry.

### Recommendation #3:

*The City of Edmonton should ensure that all recommendations made by the Lifesaving Society in their October 2012 report be completed for all City of Edmonton pool facilities.*

**Ministry Response:** This recommendation is not directed at the ministry.

**Recommendation #4:**

*The swimming policy implemented after J.A.C.'s death at the Stepping Stones Group Home should be implemented in all foster and group homes operating in Alberta.*

**Ministry Response:**

The ministry accepts the intent of this recommendation. The ministry acknowledges the importance of water safety information and practices to ensure the safety and well-being of all children in care. Caregivers play an essential role in facilitating the safety of children in and around water. The ministry is engaging and collaborating with the caregiving community (kinship care, foster care, and group care) to identify the best way of meeting the intent of this recommendation.

**Recommendation #5:**

*The Government of Alberta should provide funding to allow for all grade four students to complete a swimming survival program.*

**Ministry Response:**

The intent of this recommendation is that all children in Alberta are able to swim to survive. To achieve this end, more funding would be required as implementation would be complex. To address these complexities, the ministry has engaged with other ministries to determine the best course of action to achieve the intent of this recommendation.

**Recommendation #6:**

*The Government of Alberta should require that records are kept and updated regularly as to contact information of the guardians of children in their care to ensure that parents of children in their care can be immediately notified of their child's death.*

**Ministry Response:**

The ministry accepts this recommendation. Current practice requires staff to gather and record parent/guardian addresses and phone numbers, including a review of contacts provided by the family at regular review periods. Ongoing implementation of the Child Intervention Practice Framework provides opportunities to create additional cues for caseworkers when developing safety networks that will enable the ministry to more easily contact parents/guardians who have moved or change phone numbers without forwarding contact information. The electronic information system has been updated to allow for staff to enter emergency contact information of significant people in a child's life.

## Conclusion

The recommendations provided in this Fatality Inquiry Report are intended to protect the most vulnerable members of our society. The report highlights the importance of water safety and support services needed for caregivers and children to safely enjoy water activities.

The ministry will continue to work collaboratively with other ministries and service delivery partners to support children, youth, and their immediate and extended families.