



**Ministry of Human Services' Response to the  
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate  
*"Baby Dawn: Bed-Sharing with Infants in Foster Care"***

**July 2015**

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## Background

In 2013, a six-week-old infant was found unresponsive in her foster parents' bed. Our thoughts are with this young child's family and with their friends and the community into which she was born.

The *Child and Youth Advocate Act* provides the Advocate with the authority to investigate systemic issues arising from a serious injury or death of a child who was receiving child intervention services at the time of injury or death. On August 5, 2014, the Advocate released an investigative review entitled *Baby Dawn: Bed-Sharing with Infants in Foster Care* ("the report"). The report makes one recommendation about safe sleeping practices and bed-sharing with infants.

The ministry's response includes information gathered from the following sources:

- A review of existing policies in comparison to issues identified in the report;
- A review of current ministry initiatives and program directions related to issues identified in the report; and
- Engagement with internal ministry partners, including other divisions and our regional service delivery partners.

Based on the information gathered and analyzed, we are confident that the existing service delivery mechanisms and approaches provide an effective foundation for achieving the highest possible quality of care for infants whose families are receiving services. While we are confident in the current quality of care provided, we continue to work with service delivery partners, including caregivers, on possible refinements or improvements that can be made to support the health and well-being of the children we serve.

## Response to Recommendations

### Recommendation #1:

The Ministry of Human Services should implement clear policy for foster parents providing direction not to bed-share with infants placed in their care.

**Ministry response:** The ministry accepts the recommendation. Policy has been revised to be more explicit about not bed-sharing with infants. The policy was implemented along with Safe Babies Caregiver Training in the fall of 2014. Policy in this area also guides foster parents to follow Alberta Health Services' Safe Sleep Practices, which includes no bed-sharing with an infant.

## Conclusion

Human Services thanks the Advocate for his review and recommendations. We remain committed to being responsive and working collaboratively with the Advocate in supporting systemic improvements to the Child Intervention system, as well as with our caregivers, to support children, youth and families.