

SOCIAL CARE FACILITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE

2012-2013 Annual Report



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COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jason Luan, Calgary (July 2012 – March 2015)

Jason Luan was a Member of Legislative Assembly of Alberta for Calgary-Hawkwood from April 2013 – March 2015. He chaired the Standing Committee on Privileges, Elections, Standing Orders and Printing. He was a member of the Government's Operations Committee, the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts; he was Deputy Chair, and later Chair, of the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, the Standing Committee of Private Bills, and the Standing Committee on Family and Community Services.

Jason holds a Master's of Social Work from the University of Calgary and has dedicated his career to public service for over 20 years. Mr. Luan served as a social worker for the former Alberta Family and Social Services, and then as a social planner for the City of Calgary, managing funding for nonprofit social service agencies. He was the recipient of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012. Jason's term as Chair of the SCFRC expired on March 31, 2015.

Maxine Fodness, St. Paul (October 2007 – Present)

Maxine Fodness previously worked for the Servus Credit Union where she was responsible for processing financial transactions. In 2004, Ms. Fodness was elected as a councillor in the County of St. Paul. She is currently a board member of both Community Futures and the local Victim Services.

Chris Branch, Calgary (April 2013 – Present)

Chris Branch holds a Bachelor of Social Work, a Bachelor of Arts, and a Master's of Social Work from the University of Calgary. He spent twelve years as the Director of Community and Neighborhood Services for the City of Calgary and has ten years of experience as a Trustee and Chair for the Burns Memorial Fund for Children. His professional career includes work as a senior social planner for Calgary Family and Community Support Services, coordinator of a work activity project and several roles providing care for children at the former Calgary Children's Service Centre.

Brenda Doupe, Wetaskiwin (April 2013 – Present)

Brenda Doupe holds a child development diploma from Red Deer College. She has more than 20 years of experience working with young children. She has worked with the Wetaskiwin Health Authority, Wetaskiwin Regional Public School and City of Wetaskiwin in providing learning opportunities in early childhood settings, program management and coordination of services for families of young children with special needs. Brenda is active in her community volunteering with various organizations including the local community school, early childhood community programs, and the local 4-H Beef Club.

Karen Keech, Canmore (September 2010 – Present)

Karen Keech has a Bachelor of Education and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Alberta. She has worked for the Edmonton Public School Board and the Calgary Board of Education as

a special education teacher, program liaison, teacher and strategist for the developmentally challenged. Ms. Keech is active in her community and volunteers with organizations including the Rotary Club of Canmore and Discovery House.

Judy Louis, Hobbema (April 2011 – Present)

Judy Louis has a Bachelor of Education from the University of Alberta, received her certification for palliative care from Red Deer College and completed numerous post-secondary courses including investigations training, curriculum development and counseling. Ms. Louis has worked with many children and youth in her 30-year career with the Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools system in areas of early childhood development, special education, counselor, community school coordinator, administrative positions and a First Nations, Métis and Inuit coordinator. She is active in her community being involved with the Hobbema Community Cadets and with projects to reduce crime and gang involvement within the Aboriginal community.

Kelly Pizzey, Sherwood Park (September 2010 – Present)

Kelly Pizzey has five children and four grandchildren. She has been actively involved in her community serving on school committees and coaching basketball. Ms. Pizzey has volunteered with her church in various capacities and currently is President of a women's organization that addresses the needs of families.

Leslie Shaughnessy, Calgary (August 2011 – January 2015)

Leslie Shaughnessy has operated her own hairdressing business for over 22 years. She is an active volunteer within her community as a coach with the Calgary Minor Basketball Association, team mom for the Lord Beaverbrook High School girls' basketball team and leader of a young women's group, organizing volunteer opportunities with other organizations such as the Beverly Center and the Calgary Drop-In Center.

Tracey Smith, Calgary (April 2006 – Present)

Tracey Smith has worked 27 years in a family practice medical clinic and is currently the office manager. She is an active volunteer in her community, specifically as a member of several school councils, a former playground coordinator and member of the Calgary Home and School Association. Ms. Smith helped to establish a reading literacy program in a local junior high school.

Linda Sutton, Calgary (April 2009 – Present)

Linda Sutton has taught music to children for more than 20 years. She completed training in an Early Childhood Education program at Sault College in Sault Ste. Marie and obtained an Orff Teachers Certification from the University of Toronto. Ms. Sutton has been an active volunteer with her church serving as president of the primary organization for children age two to 12, president of a 150 member women's group, choir director and as a teacher of religious studies to children and youth.

SOCIAL CARE FACILITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Social Care Facilities Review Committee was established in June 1980, under the *Social Care Facilities Review Committee Act*. The mandate of the committee is to:

- 1) visit social care facilities from time to time to review the quality of services provided in the facilities and the manner in which the facilities are operated; and
- 2) conduct investigations of social care facilities upon the direction of the Minister of Human Services.

In 2002, an amendment was made to the legislation defining social care facilities as:

- 1) facilities that provide care, treatment or shelter and are funded, wholly or partly, by the Ministry of Human Services; and
- 2) the premises where a child care program that is licensed under the *Child Care Licensing Act* is offered or provided.

The facilities currently reviewed by the SCFRC include: foster homes, child and youth facilities, day care programs, out-of-school care programs and emergency shelters for women. The facilities currently reviewed by the SCFRC include: foster homes, child and youth facilities, day care programs, out-of-school care programs and emergency shelters for women. Although 'child and youth facilities' include many types of facilities, in 2012/13 only group homes were visited.

During the 2012-2013 review period, the committee consisted of one Member of the Legislative Assembly who chaired the committee and between seven to nine private citizens who reside throughout the province. Members serve the committee on a part-time basis and contribute a diversity of perspectives due to their varied backgrounds, expertise and work experience. They are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and are not employees of the provincial government.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

The work of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee is guided by the operating principles below.

The Social Care Facilities Review Committee will work with clients and their families, service providers and government representatives to:

- facilitate open and neutral communication;
- focus on the current mandate of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee;
- promote awareness of the mandate;
- respect the rights and obligations of all parties;
- empower clients by providing a "voice" for them;
- be objective, open-minded and receptive to all parties;
- be professional in manner and appearance;
- listen to and understand the needs and concerns of clients;
- be observant of the physical and social environment;

- develop and maintain respectful, supportive relationships with government representatives and among committee members;
- operate in a way that makes optimal use of available resources; and
- respect the right of confidentiality.

Review Process

The Social Care Facilities Review Committee conducted reviews in foster homes, child and youth facilities, day cares, out-of-school care programs and emergency shelters for women. Currently, there are approximately 3,800 facilities that fall under the committee's mandate. To review a sampling of the programs, the committee plans their visits so they are continually in the larger regions and rotating through the smaller regions. This year, programs and facilities within nine of the ten Child and Family Services Authorities were reviewed¹:

- Region 1, Southwest
- Region 2, Southeast
- Region 3, Calgary and Area
- Region 4, Central
- Region 5, East Central
- Region 6, Edmonton and Area
- Region 7, North Central
- Region 8, Northwest
- Region 9, Northeast

Programs and facilities were randomly selected in each of the chosen regions to ensure an unbiased, representative sample from the population of programs and individuals being served and to include a representative selection of communities in each region.

During the visits, participants were encouraged to talk about their experience with the services they received. Committee members asked service recipients open-ended questions around themes relevant to the type of facility and the type of services provided. It is important to note that due to the qualitative nature of the interviews, service recipients were not required to comment on every theme.

Where service recipients were children, consent was obtained from their guardians to participate in the interviews and there were no age limitations on participation in the interviews as long as children were able to understand and respond to questions. As parents were considered to be the service recipients at day care programs, the parents, not the children, participated. Committee members spoke with parents from out-of-school care programs, as well as children, if their parents/guardians had provided consent for the interview.

Committee members also provided an opportunity for foster parents and staff members at the programs to express their views on the services they provide.

¹ The Child and Family Services Authorities were dissolved in December of 2013. New service delivery boundaries for Human Services took effect on April 1, 2014, with the advent of seven service delivery regions.

Additionally, survey forms were made available to some service recipients and providers who wished to share their views, but were unable to take part in the committee's visit. The information provided in this report represents only the perspectives of the people who were interviewed and/or surveyed.

All individuals who participated in interviews or completed surveys were advised that the committee collects information in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Participants were also made aware their comments could be included in Social Care Facilities Review Committee reports.

This Annual Report provides a provincial overview of the feedback obtained during visits conducted from April 2012 to March 2013. To develop statistics for this report, all comments were analyzed for common themes. Comments were coded positive to indicate satisfaction, neutral to indicate a perception of adequate service or to provide descriptive information and negative to indicate dissatisfaction.

Further, where respondents provided general information and/or indicated a theme was not applicable, comments were classified as neutral. Positive, neutral and negative comments were counted and grouped by theme and reported as percentages. The Annual Report is distributed to all participating programs.

Sample Size

A total of 231 programs were visited from April 2012 to March 2013, including:

- 21 day care programs;
- 11 out-of-school care programs;
- 166 foster care homes;
- 27 child and youth facilities; and
- 6 women's emergency shelters.

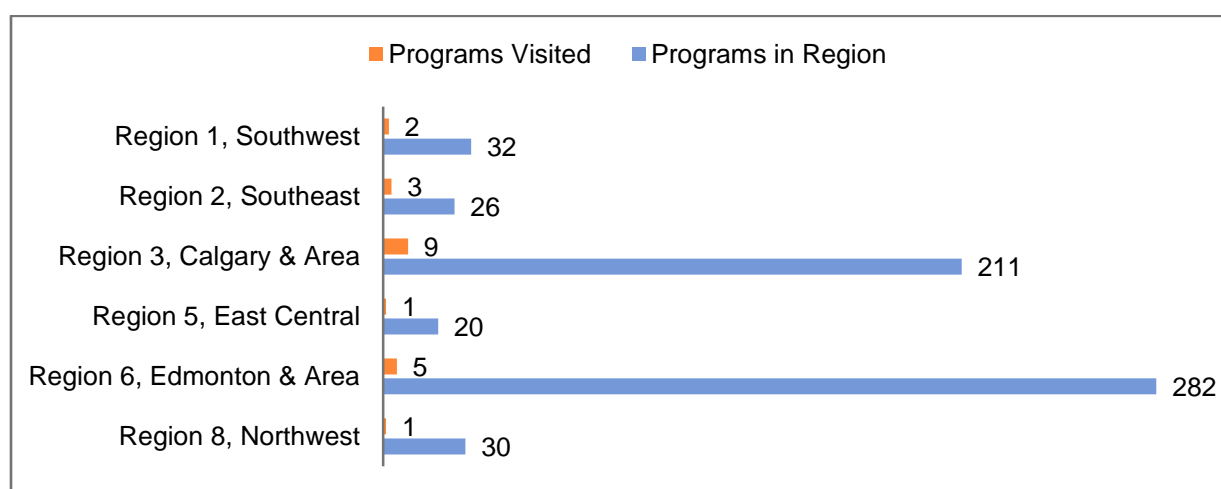
Committee members spoke with a total of 751 service recipients and service providers. One hundred and eighteen children and youth were observed rather than interviewed due to their young ages and/or inability to speak to the committee members. An additional 303 service recipients and 334 staff members completed surveys.

DAY CARE PROGRAMS

Day care programs provide child care to seven or more children for four or more hours each day the program is in operation. Children enrolled in day care are under seven years of age and do not attend school, although some may attend early childhood services programs for part of the day. Day care programs are licensed under the *Child Care Licensing Act* and are obligated to meet the requirements of the *Child Care Licensing Regulations*.

During the April 2012 to March 2013 review period, the committee visited 21 licensed day care programs. Figure 1 shows the number of day cares visited compared to the total number of programs in the region at the end of the review period.

Figure 1: Number of Visits to Day Care Programs versus Total Number of Programs



Highlights of Visits to Day Care Programs

To facilitate interviews, committee members scheduled visits to day care programs in late afternoon or early morning to coincide with times that parents were at the programs to drop off or pick up their children. Eighty-six parents were interviewed and 254 parents completed surveys. Some of the parents participated in interviews as well as completed the surveys. Due to the young ages of the children in the day care programs, children were not interviewed.

Comments made by parents are organized into eight categories: daily activities, staff-child relationships, communication with staff, opportunity for parent or guardian involvement, meals and/or snacks, physical environment, rules and regulations and overall feedback. Service providers' comments are discussed separately.

Day Care Themes

Parents reported 3,975 comments about the care their children receive at day care. Most of the parent's comments expressed satisfaction with services provided; 3,593 (90%) were positive, 350 (9%) were neutral and 32 (1%) were negative. The breakdown of parent comments, relating to the eight day care themes is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Responses – Themes at Day Care Programs

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Daily Activities	313 (92%)	27 (8%)	—	340
Staff-Child Relationships	305 (91%)	29 (9%)	2 (<1%)	336
Communication with Staff	730 (92%)	46 (6%)	14 (2%)	790
Parent or Guardian Involvement	286 (87%)	42 (13%)	1 (<1%)	329
Meals and/or Snacks	767 (90%)	76 (9%)	11 (1%)	854
Physical Environment	510 (87%)	74 (13%)	2 (<1%)	586
Rules and Regulations	371 (92%)	30 (7%)	2 (1%)	403
Overall Feedback	311 (92%)	26 (8%)	—	337
TOTAL	3,593 (90%)	350 (9%)	32 (1%)	3,975

Choice of Day Care

When asked why they chose their day care, parents made a total of 861 comments. The top reasons for their selection included location (34%), reputation (20%), hours of operation (12%) and accreditation (10%). The remaining 24 per cent of comments referred to reasons such as programs offered, cost, transportation and personal considerations. This data was not included in the figure above because the information cannot be categorized as positive or negative, but is useful in understanding the rationale employed by parents when selecting a specific day care program.

Daily Activities

Comments about daily activities were highly positive (92%). Eight per cent of comments were neutral, where parents rated the daily activities as adequate. No negative comments were made.

Staff-Child Relationships

Questions about staff-child relationships were met with highly positive comments (91%) from parents who described good relationships with staff and believed their children felt comfortable with staff. Nine per cent of comments were neutral, indicating parents felt staff interactions were adequate and/or their children did not have strong positive or negative feelings about the day care staff. Of the two negative comments (<1%) made, parents expressed concerns with some staff (e.g. “there is only one teacher who gets along with our child, strong willed child”, “they sometimes seem tired and short with the children”).

Communication with Staff

The majority of comments regarding communication with staff were positive (92%). Parents described good information sharing between themselves and staff, where staff were responsive to parental feedback and questions, kept parents informed of incidents or concerns occurring during the day and made parents feel heard and respected. Of the neutral comments (6%), parents reported that general communication was adequate and/or the information provided was adequate. Two per cent of comments were negative. Of the 14 negative comments made, several indicated that language barriers made it difficult for parents and staff to interact, a few others described having difficulty communicating with some staff members (e.g. “[staff] say nothing unless I ask them”, “the director speaks loudly to me in front of other people when my fees are overdue” and “I don’t find most of the staff friendly”) and two parents reported that staff do not follow the direction they provide regarding parenting their children.

Opportunity for Parent or Guardian Involvement

Almost all parents stated there were either good (87%) or adequate (13%) opportunities to be involved in the day care programs. There was one negative comment (<1%) where the parent stated he/she was not told of opportunities for involvement

Meals and/or Snacks

In Alberta, day cares have the choice to provide meals or snacks. If they do not provide food, parents are required to provide meals and snacks for their children to eat while attending the program. Ninety per cent of parents expressed satisfaction about the quality, variety and quantity of meals and snacks provided by the day care programs. Several parents also stated that the day cares accommodated children’s allergies. Neutral comments, where parents described the food quality, quantity and variety as adequate, comprised nine per cent of statements. Eleven comments (1%) were negative where some parents suggested the need for less sugar, less processed food, more vegetables and more protein. Two parents stated they wished the portion sizes were larger.

Physical Environment

While talking about the overall physical environments of the day care programs, over 99 per cent of parent comments were either positive (90%) or neutral (9%). In addition to being pleased with the overall space, parents expressed satisfaction with the play space, maintenance, equipment and toys. Two parents made negative comments (<1%) expressing the need for renovations and a larger indoor play space.

Rules and Regulations

When given the opportunity to comment on the rules, child guidance, security measures, discipline and consistency within the day care programs, comments were highly positive (92%). Seven per cent of comments were neutral, where parents described the rules, child guidance and security measures as adequate. Two negative comments (<1%) were made where one parent felt the children needed more supervision and one parent felt the consequences were not strict enough.

Overall Feedback

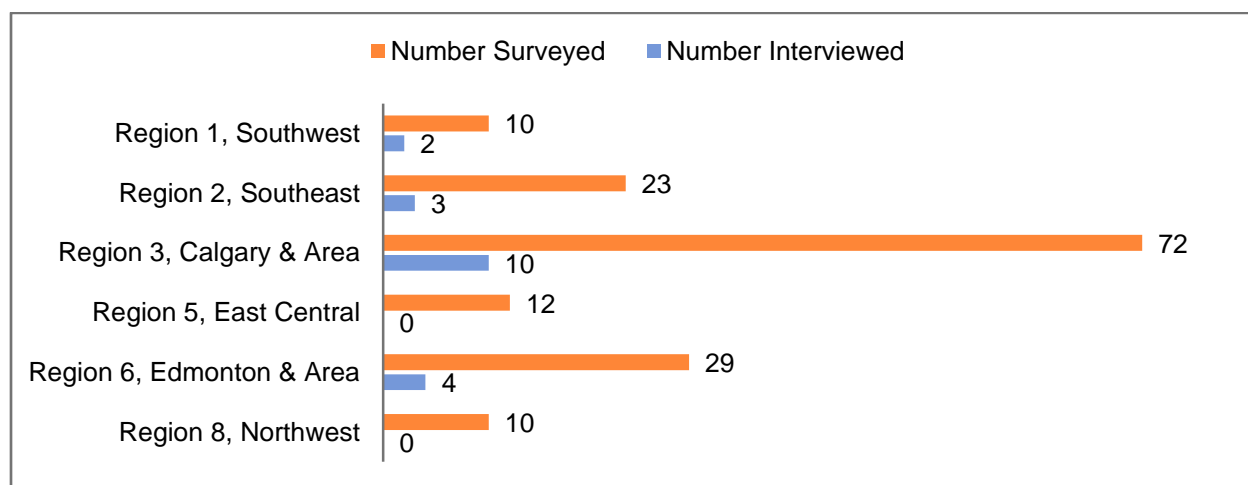
Comments made by parents about the overall quality of care their children receive in the day care programs were highly positive (92%). The remaining comments were neutral (8%) were

parents described being adequately satisfied with the quality of care their children receive at day care. No negative comments were made.

Service Providers' Comments

Day care staff were given the opportunity to comment on the services they provide. The committee spoke with 19 staff in 21 day cares. In addition, 156 staff completed surveys. Day care owner/operators and managers also participated in interviews; however, their feedback is provided separately from the staff comments. The number of day care staff who were interviewed or completed surveys in each Child and Family Services Authority is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Day Care Staff Interviewed and Surveyed



The majority of comments made by service providers reflected satisfaction with the services they provide. Of the 2,588 comments made by staff, 2,168 (84%) were positive, 384 (15%) were neutral and 36 (1%) were negative. The main topics of discussion are listed below.

Physical Environment

Most of the staff expressed satisfaction with the physical environment of the day care programs. They described good overall lay-outs and were pleased with the play areas for children. Some staff stated the physical space was adequate in accommodating play space and program activities. No negative comments were made.

Meals and/or Snacks

Comments about the meals and snacks offered in the day cares were very positive. Staff stated the quality, variety and quantity of food provided was good. Some staff described the food offered in the programs as adequate. Of the three negative comments made, all referred to the need for more variety of snacks (not meals) offered in the program.

Daily Activities

When asked about daily activities, all but one comment were either positive or neutral. One staff indicated improvements could be made to daily activities by incorporating the children's input.

Staff-Child Relationships

Staff expressed very high levels of satisfaction in their relationships with the children in the programs. A few staff described staff-child relationships as adequate. No negative comments were made.

Rules and Regulations

All comments about rules and regulations within the day care programs were positive. Staff indicated that they were effective in assisting children to come up with solutions when differences of opinion or disagreements occurred among children and that staff were consistent in applying the rules and regulations. No neutral or negative comments were made.

Overall Feedback from Staff

Day care staff were given the opportunity to comment on the overall service and care they provide within the day care programs. The vast majority of comments made were positive. Staff indicated that diversities were respected, the programs were safe, parents were encouraged to spend time at the day care, there are appropriate child-staff ratios and medications were kept secure. No neutral comments were made. Of the few negative comments reported, the need for improved wages was their top area of concern.

Overall Feedback from Managers/Owners/Operators

Feedback received from managers, owners and operators was highly positive. Their statements mirrored those of staff, but also indicated that staff performance feedback is offered, the programs have processes for addressing concerns, information in the form of written materials are provided and many of the day cares are involved in the pre-accreditation program, as well as accepting children with disabilities. Two comments were neutral stating that staff wages were adequate. Of the negative comments provided, a few managers indicated that their programs did not accept children with disabilities and two owners highlighted challenges in recruitment and retention of staff and the need for improved wages.

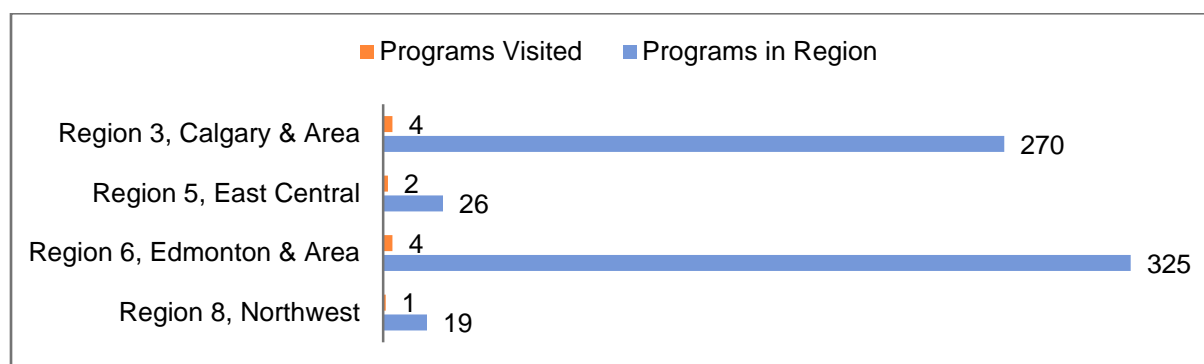
OUT-OF-SCHOOL CARE PROGRAMS

Out-of-school care provides child care before and after school or at other times schools are closed. Children enrolled in out-of-school care programs are in kindergarten to grade 6. Out-of-school care programs are licensed under the *Child Care Licensing Act* and are obligated to meet the requirements of the *Child Care Licensing Regulation*.

Some out-of-school care programs are co-located with day cares. The majority of out-of-school care programs visited by the committee during this review period were independent programs.

The committee visited 11 licensed out-of-school care programs during the April 2012 to March 2013 review period. Figure 4 shows the number of out-of-school care programs visited compared to the total number of programs in the region at the end of the review period.

Figure 4: Number of Visits to Out-of-School Care Programs versus Total Number of Programs



Highlights of Visits to Out-of-School Care Programs

To coincide with times when parents were at the out-of-school care programs to drop-off and pick-up their children; the committee scheduled visits in the morning or late afternoon. Twenty-eight parents were interviewed and 49 parents completed surveys. In some cases, parents who completed surveys also participated in interviews. Children attending out-of-school care programs were invited to take part in the interviews if their parent or guardian was present or had provided a signed consent form. Forty-three children participated in interviews.

Parents' comments were compiled in eight categories: daily activities, staff-child relationships, communication with staff, parent or guardian involvement, meals and/or snacks, physical environment, rules and regulations and overall feedback. Children's comments have been included with the parents' comments in the following five categories: daily activities, staff-child relationships, meals and/or snacks, rules and regulations and overall feedback. Service providers' comments are discussed separately.

Out-of-School Care Themes

Committee members reported 1,326 observations from parents and children about the care children receive in out-of-school care programs. Overall, parents and children expressed satisfaction with the services provided; 1,146 (86%) comments were positive, 100 (8%) were neutral and 80 (6%) were negative. The breakdown of parents' and children's comments, relating to out-of-school care themes, is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Responses – Themes at Out-of-School Care Programs

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Daily Activities	157 (86%)	8 (4%)	18 (10%)	183
Staff-Child Relationships	250 (85%)	10 (3%)	34 (12%)	294
Communication with Staff	141 (95%)	6 (4%)	2 (1%)	149
Parent or Guardian Involvement	57 (75%)	17 (22%)	2 (3%)	76
Meals and/or Snacks	201 (84%)	33 (14%)	4 (2%)	238
Physical Environment	67 (81%)	14 (17%)	2 (2%)	83
Rules and Regulations	171 (93%)	7 (4%)	5 (3%)	183
Overall Feedback	102 (85%)	5 (4%)	13 (11%)	120
TOTAL	1,146 (86%)	100 (8%)	80 (6%)	1,326

Choice of Out-of-School Care Program

When listing the reasons for selecting out-of-school care programs for their children, parents made 208 comments. The top reasons for choosing an out-of-school care program were location (34%), hours of operation (15%), reputation (13%) and transportation (12%). The remaining 26% of comments referred to factors such as program offered, cost, accreditation, personal considerations and limited choice in local area. This information is useful in understanding why parents choose out-of-school care; but, because these factors cannot be considered positive or negative, they are not included in the table above. Parents were asked to report on wait times they experienced when trying to access these programs. Refer to Appendix 1 for information pertaining to wait times.

Daily Activities

Satisfaction with the daily activities offered in the out-of-school care programs was expressed in 86 per cent of comments from parents and children. Parents appreciated that their children were involved in planning and choosing activities and children indicated their satisfaction with the opportunity to choose the activities they were interested in. Four per cent of comments were neutral indicating the daily activities were adequate. Ten per cent of comments were negative, thirteen of which indicated the children were not involved in the planning of activities

and three children stated they were not able to choose the activities they wanted to participate in. One parent stated that there were a lack of field trips and one parent reported that activities are often cancelled.

Staff-Child Relationships

Parents and children were asked about the relationships between staff and children within the out-of-school care programs. Eighty-five per cent of comments made were highly positive. Parents described good interactions between staff and children and reported that their children had not been involved in a bullying incident. Children reported feeling safe and comfortable in the program. Many children also expressed that they like attending the program. Most of the children stated they had not experienced bullying while attending the program; a few who had experienced bullying stated the matters had been satisfactorily addressed. Ten neutral comments (3%) were made, where parents described staff-child relationships as adequate.

In the remaining 12 per cent of comments, the majority referred to comments made by children who reported having been involved in a bullying incident, either as a victim or a perpetrator. In all of these cases, the children and parents confirmed that the bullying incidents had been reported and resolved. One parent described staff-child relationships as poor but did not clarify the comment and four children stated they did not like coming to the program (e.g. one child wanted more time on the Wii, one child stated he/she did not like some of the people in the program and two stated “I don’t like coming that much. I would rather get to go home”).

Communication with Staff

Ninety-five per cent of comments described communication with staff as highly positive. Parents stated that the staff were responsive to their questions, the needs of their children and kept parents informed of any incidents/concerns. Four per cent of comments reported that communication with staff was adequate. Two comments (1%) were made suggesting that communication could be improved. One parent believed conflict resolution could be handled better within the program and the other parent did not provide further clarification.

Opportunity for Parent or Guardian Involvement

Most parents indicated there were either good (75%) or adequate (22%) opportunities to be involved in the out-of-school care programs. These parents stated they felt welcome in the programs and had opportunities to participate in activities. Two negative comments (3%) were heard by the committee regarding the lack of opportunities for parents to participate.

Meals and/or Snacks

For any out-of-school care program in Alberta, it is the choice of the program to provide meals and snacks, or require parents to provide them. Feedback from parents and children regarding the quality, quantity and variety of the food provided by an out-of-school care program were positive (84%). Fourteen per cent of comments by parents and children were neutral, describing the quality and quantity of food as adequate. Two per cent of comments were negative, where one child reported not liking the food and three comments made by parents referred to the need to improve quality and increase portions (e.g. one parent stated that “my child is hungry at pick-up time”, one parent did not like his/her child being served an orange on a Kleenex tissue and one parent reported that his/her child stated being served warm milk).

Identified concerns were sent for immediate follow-up to the appropriate Child and Family Services Authority.

Physical Environment

Satisfaction with the physical environment of the out-of-school care programs comprised 81 per cent of comments. Parent described the overall physical space as good and indicated that they liked the play space provided. Seventeen per cent of comments were neutral, referring to the physical environment, play space and maintenance of the space as adequate for the program. The remaining two per cent of parent comments were negative and referred to parents who desired more play space and/or more outside playtime.

Rules and Regulations

The majority of parents and children made positive comments (93%) about the rules and regulations in the out-of-school care programs. Parents were pleased with the child guidance policies, security measures and consistency in enforcing the rules. Children indicated they are aware of the rules and felt they were fair. A few comments (4%) were neutral, where parents described the rules, regulations and their application as adequate. Of the negative comments (3%), two children stated they did not know the rules because they had just started the program and three children felt the rules were not fair (e.g. “it’s difficult to follow the rules”, “you can’t say poop” and “not everyone listens [to the rules]” which is not fair).

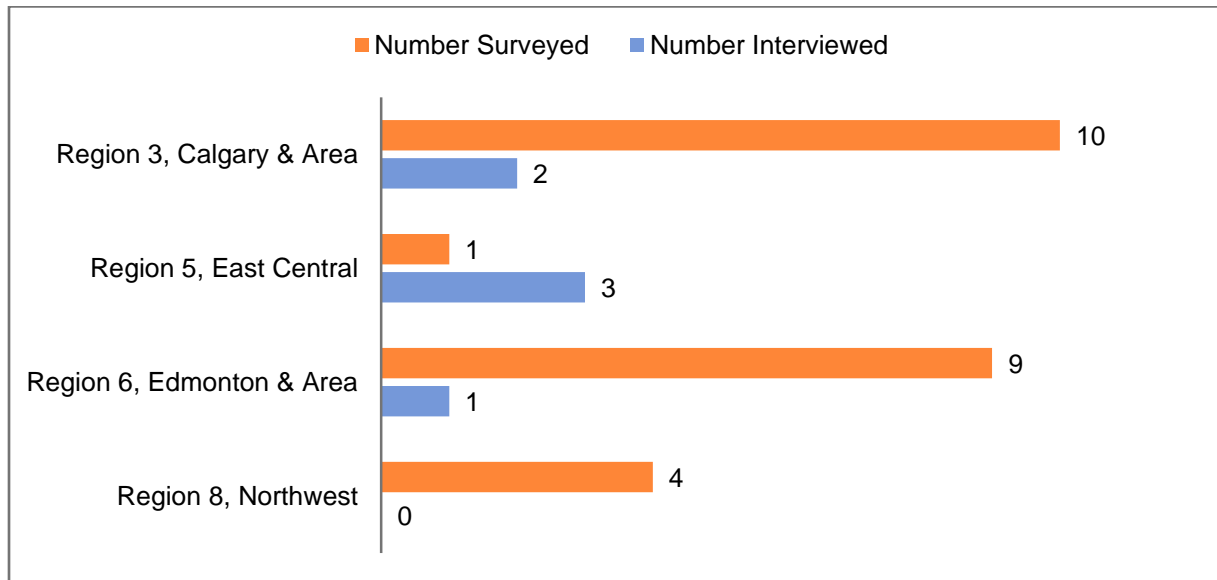
Overall Feedback

When given the opportunity to comment on the overall quality of care received at out-of-school care programs, the majority of comments were positive (85%). Many parents said they were pleased with the care their children received and children reported liking the programs and did not want anything to change. Four per cent of parent comments indicated the overall care was adequate. The remaining 11 per cent of comments were comprised of 13 statements made by children who said they wanted changes made in their programs. The majority of these requests for change appeared to be less about concerns/issues and more about desires (e.g. “more snacks”, “more candy”, “bigger bus”, “more dessert...of any kind”, “draw more”, “an audio-visual centre with movies, TV, etc.”, “more free time”, “more toys”, “more field trips”, “a no bullies sign”, “mix the age groups together”, “play DS in summer” and “play with anything I want to”).

Service Providers’ Comments

Committee members gave out-of-school care staff the opportunity to comment on the services they provide. Overall, the committee spoke with six staff in 11 out-of-school care programs. In addition, 24 staff completed surveys. Out-of-school care owner/operators and managers also participated in interviews; their feedback is provided separately from the staff comments. The number of out-of-school care staff who were interviewed or completed surveys in each Child and Family Services Authority is illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Out-of-School Care Staff Interviewed and Surveyed



Service providers' comments expressed satisfaction with the services they provided; 437 comments (78%) were positive, 99 (18%) were neutral and the remaining 23 comments (4%) were negative.

Physical Environment

The majority of staff spoke positively about the layout of their out-of-school care programs and the space provided for individual, small and large group activities. Neutral comments described the physical space and layout as adequate. No negative comments were made.

Meals and/or Snacks

Staff expressed satisfaction with the quality, variety and quantity of food provided to the children in the out-of-school care programs. A few staff described the meals and snacks as adequate in quality and variety. No negative comments were made.

Daily Activities

Apart from one neutral comment, all of the comments made about daily activities provided at out-of-school care programs were positive. The neutral comment indicated the daily activities were adequate. No negative comments were heard.

Staff-Child Relationships

All of the staff comments regarding staff-child relationships were either positive or neutral. In the neutral comments, staff provided descriptions of the kinds of modeling and direction they implement with children in the programs (e.g. respectful interactions).

Rules and Regulations

One hundred per cent of comments about the rules and child guidance in the out-of-school care programs were positive. Staff shared that they assisted children in solving their own conflicts and ensured rules were consistently applied.

Overall Feedback from Staff

When given the opportunity to comment about the general services and care they provide to children attending out-of-school care programs, staff were positive in their remarks. Staff reported that there are appropriate staff-child ratios, diversities are respected, medications are kept secure and the programs have policies for when children self-medicate. No neutral comments were made. The majority of negative comments referred to programs that did not have a policy for children to self-medicate. Three comments were heard from staff who stated medications were not secured. Any concerns were referred to the Child and Family Services Authority for follow-up.

Overall Feedback from Managers/Owners/Operator

Managers, owners and operators spoke positively about the services they provide to children attending out-of-school care programs. They demonstrated their knowledge of staff-child ratios, securing medications and working with children with disabilities. Managers, owners and operators further talked about how diversities were respected within the program and they also described procedures for addressing concerns, providing written materials, giving performance feedback, reviewing rules, giving children opportunity for input and accreditation. A few neutral comments were shared, describing whether children are allowed to leave the program independently and whether staff were shared with the co-located day care program. Of the few negative comments made, difficulties in turnover, recruitment and wages were highlighted as concerns.

FOSTER HOMES

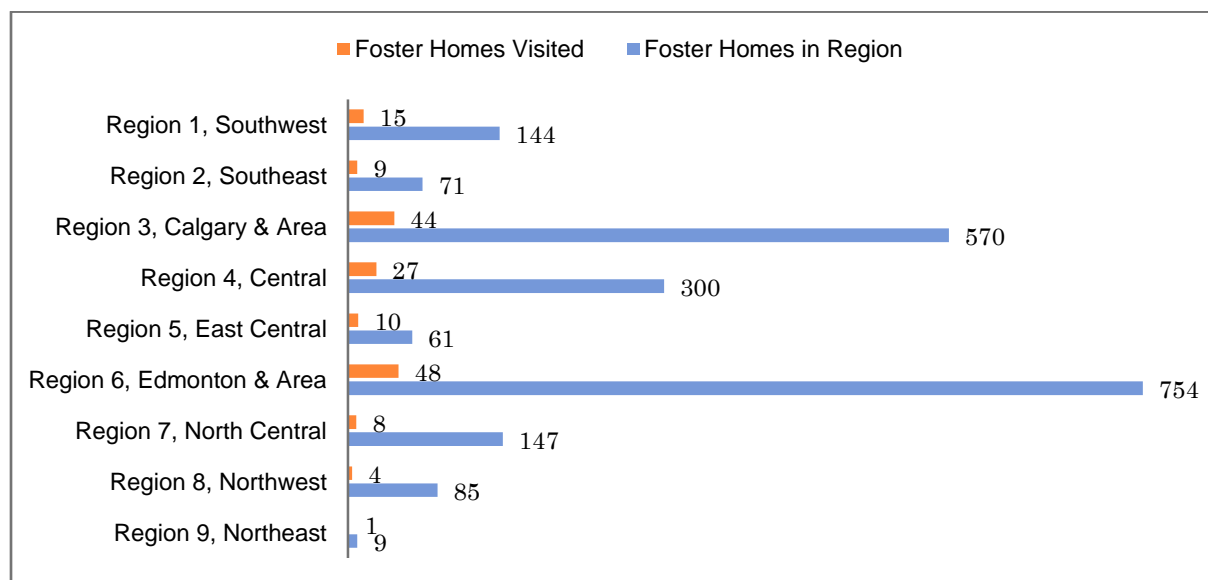
Foster homes provide temporary care to children in the custody or under the guardianship of a director designated under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to remain in their natural family home. Children are placed with foster parents who have the expertise and training required to meet the particular needs of the children in their care.

In most cases when a child in the custody or under the guardianship of the director is placed in a foster home, the goal is to return the child to his or her natural family when possible. Foster parents are part of the team working to achieve this goal. When a return to the natural family is not feasible, an alternative permanency plan is made for the child. This may include adoption, private guardianship, or kinship care.

The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act contains a licensing provision designed to ensure the health, safety and well-being of children in the custody or under the guardianship of the director. Regulations ensure quality of care and accountability for children placed in foster homes. All foster homes must be licensed.

The committee visited 166 foster homes during the April 2012 to March 2013 review period. The number of foster homes visited, as well as, the total number of foster homes in each region, is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Number of Visits to Foster Homes versus Total Number of Foster Homes



Highlights of Visits to Foster Homes

Committee members scheduled visits to foster homes around the families' schedules to ensure as many foster children as possible were available for interviews. Of the 417 children residing in the 166 foster homes visited, 226 children and youth (54%) participated in interviews. In addition, committee members observed 111 children (27%) who were pre-verbal and/or non-verbal.

Foster children's comments are organized into three main categories: care, treatment and accommodation. Foster parents' comments are discussed separately.

Care

In the course of interviews, committee members gathered 3,529 comments from foster children regarding the care they receive in their foster homes. In general, children and youth expressed satisfaction with the care provided; 2,764 (78%) were positive, 681 (19%) were neutral and 84 (3%) were negative. The breakdown of foster children's comments relating to care themes is shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Responses – Care Themes at Foster Homes

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Education	477 (95%)	4 (1%)	18 (4%)	499
Summer Break	231 (92%)	21 (8%)	—	252
Social Activities	950 (100%)	—	—	950
Foster Parent-Child Relationships	385 (51%)	367 (49%)	—	752
Rules	402 (57%)	288 (41%)	10 (2%)	700
Overall Care and Comfort Level	319 (85%)	1 (<1%)	56 (15%)	376
TOTAL	2,764 (78%)	681 (19%)	84 (3%)	3,529

Education

Most of the children's comments (95%) about education were positive. Children and youth stated they liked school, described the types of schools they attended (e.g. public, private, preschool, special needs programs) and spoke about plans for their futures. Five per cent of the positive comments indicated foster children had plans to graduate from high school and another five per cent of comments referred to plans for post-secondary education.

One per cent of comments were neutral and referred to four youth who were employed part-time. Four per cent of comments were negative and referred to five children and youth who expressed a dislike for school and 13 youth who stated they were unaware of the Advancing Futures Bursary program. (Committee members provided information to the youth interviewed about the Advancing Futures Bursary program).

Summer Break

Questions about summer activities evoked many positive comments (92%) from children and youth. Vacations with foster families, summer camp, day trips and vacations with natural family members were discussed with enthusiasm. Eight per cent of comments were neutral, which referred to 21 children and youth who had not lived in their current foster home long enough to participate in summer activities. No negative comments were made.

Social Activities

All of the children interviewed expressed high levels of satisfaction with their participation in social activities (100%). Unstructured activities (e.g. going to the mall, playing game systems, watching movies), activities with the foster family, having friends to hang out with and receiving an allowance topped the list of positive things the foster children and youth talked about. There were no neutral or negative comments.

Foster Parent-Child Relationships

Children and youth spoke positively about their relationships with their foster parents. All of the comments were either positive (51%) or neutral (49%). Positive comments referred to children and youth who described good relationships with their foster mothers and foster fathers. Neutral comments referred to the people that the children and youth were comfortable talking to if they needed someone to speak with about concerns or problems. The majority of these comments indicated children would choose either their foster mother or foster father to talk to. No negative comments were heard.

Rules

Almost all of the children and youth made positive (57%) or neutral (41%) remarks about the rules in the foster homes. Positive comments referred to knowing the rules and believing the rules to be fair. Neutral comments described the consequences for breaking the rules, such as time-outs, being talked to, having privileges revoked and grounding. One child, who experiences significant cognitive delays, stated that he/she was unsure of the rules. Negative comments (2%) referred to eight children or youth who felt the rules in the foster home were unfair (e.g. one child was not sure why the rules were unfair, one child or youth stated “[the rules] are not really fair” but did not provide further explanation, one child did not like that he/she couldn’t jump on the couch, one youth did not like having to shower every day, one child was upset about having to clean his/her bedroom, having to ask permission for things and not being allowed to play a certain game on the Xbox or Play Station, one child did not like not being able to watch television and one child wanted to be allowed to hit and throw things in the home) and two children who stated they did not know the rules in the home.

Overall Care and Comfort Level

Eighty-five per cent of comments made by children and youth about their overall care and level of comfort in the foster homes were positive. Children and youth reported good levels of comfort, stated they were treated fairly and felt safe in their foster home. Some of the children indicated they had experienced bullying, but stated they were able to report the matters and the bullying had been addressed. One neutral comment (<1%) was made indicating a child/youth’s level of comfort was adequate.

Of the negative comments (15%), all but two comments referred to children and youth who reported having been bullied in the past, but all confirmed that the bullying incidents were addressed. One child reported a poor level of comfort (e.g. this child indicated that the foster parent sometimes “yells” but he/she likes the home, likes the foster parent and would speak to the foster parent if he/she had a problem). One child stated that he/she was being treated unfairly (e.g. this child felt it was unfair to be penalized for “not listening”, but also said he/she

likes the foster home and feels safe). Matters that required follow-up were forwarded to the appropriate authority for resolution.

Treatment

Committee members reported 1,801 observations from foster children about the treatment they received in foster homes. Children made 1,141 (63%) positive comments, 519 (29%) neutral comments and 141 (8%) negative comments. The breakdown of foster children's comments, relating to treatment themes, is shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Responses – Treatment Themes at Foster Homes

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Transition	173 (49%)	111 (31%)	69 (20%)	353
Medical/Dental Needs	717 (64%)	403 (36%)	3 (<1%)	1,123
Contact with Natural Family	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Case Plans	63 (50%)	5 (4%)	59 (46%)	127
Keepsakes	188 (95%)	—	10 (5%)	198
TOTAL	1,141 (63%)	519 (29%)	141 (8%)	1,801

Transition

Foster children and youth were asked about their experiences of moving into their foster homes and how they felt at the time of transition. They were also given the opportunity to comment on their current placement. Forty-nine per cent of comments were positive, where children and youth described liking their current placement, recalled being advised of the move, given pre-placement visits and remembered feeling happy at the time of the move. Neutral comments (31%) referred to the type of placement the children and youth were living in prior to their present placement, children and youth who had no memory of their transition and three children/youth who recalled having no feelings at the time of the move.

The remaining 20 per cent of comments were negative. A few children and youth expressed dissatisfaction with their transition stating they felt scared and/or sad at the time of the move, while some stated they had not received a pre-placement visit and/or were not advised of the move. (It is not always possible to provide advance notice or a pre-placement visit in circumstances where children are apprehended from their home on an emergency basis.) Two children stated they were still somewhat upset. These children also indicated they were happy and comfortable in their current foster homes, but felt sad at times about not living with their natural families (e.g. "I am half happy-half sad, sappy").

Medical/Dental Needs

Almost all of the responses about medical, dental and optical care were either positive (64%) or neutral (36%). Positive comments referred to children and youth who stated their medical,

dental and optical needs were attended to and felt they were well cared for when ill. Neutral comments indicated those children and youth who had visited a doctor, dentist, or optometrist in the last year. Negative comments (<1%) referred to three children and youth who said they had not yet seen a doctor and/or optometrist. Follow-up indicated that these children had in fact attended medical appointments.

Contact with Natural Family

Questions about the contact children and youth have with natural family members were designed to determine whether or not contact occurs. These questions do not explore the reasons for, limitations on, or appropriateness of contact. For reporting purposes, family contact is not classified in the positive or negative, as family contact and/or reunification with natural family is not always possible or desirable given individual children's circumstances.

In response to questions about contact with natural family, some of the children indicated they maintain contact with natural family members and/or mentioned they were happy with the level of contact they have with their natural family members. Most children identified specific family members with whom they had contact with and/or frequency of visits with family. The level of contact described ranged from regular to limited, but regular contact was most frequently reported. In a few cases, comments were made referring to situations where a child did not have contact with natural family or where a child expressed dissatisfaction with the level of contact they had with natural family members.

Case Plans

Half of the children and youth interviewed stated they were aware of their case plan and/or had input into the plan (50%). Four per cent of comments were neutral, where children and youth described the frequency of contact they had with their caseworkers. The remaining 46 per cent of comments were negative and referred to nine children and youth who said they were unaware of their case plans. Four of these comments came from children with comprehension issues who were unable to understand what constituted a case plan and may not have readily recognized conversations with caseworkers as case planning.

Keepsakes

Ninety-five per cent of children and youth reported having photographs, memory books and/or keepsakes. There were no neutral comments. Negative responses (5%) were made by children and youth who indicated they did not have a memory book, photographs, or keepsakes. (Committee members realize that due to the manner in which some children and youth come into care, it is not always possible to bring pictures and/or keepsakes).

Accommodation

Committee members heard 1,339 comments by foster children related to accommodation including meals and the physical environment of the home. Foster children and youth expressed high levels of satisfaction with their accommodation; 1,132 (85%) comments were positive, 160 (12%) were neutral and 47 (3%) were negative. The breakdown of foster children's comments relating to accommodation themes is shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Responses – Accommodation Themes at Foster Homes

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Meals	733 (94%)	—	45 (6%)	778
Physical Environment	399 (71%)	160 (29%)	2 (<1%)	561
TOTAL	1,132 (85%)	160 (12%)	47 (3%)	1,339

Meals

Children and youth made highly positive comments (94%) about the quality and quantity of meals provided in foster homes. The children and youth also described helping to cook and prepare meals. No neutral comments were made. Negative comments (6%) referred to 43 children and youth who reported that they did not help cook or prepare meals (participation in meal preparation is considered an opportunity to develop life skills; as a result, a lack of participation is classified as negative). Two comments were heard where the children and youth reported they would like more snacks. Matters that required follow-up were forwarded to the appropriate authority for resolution.

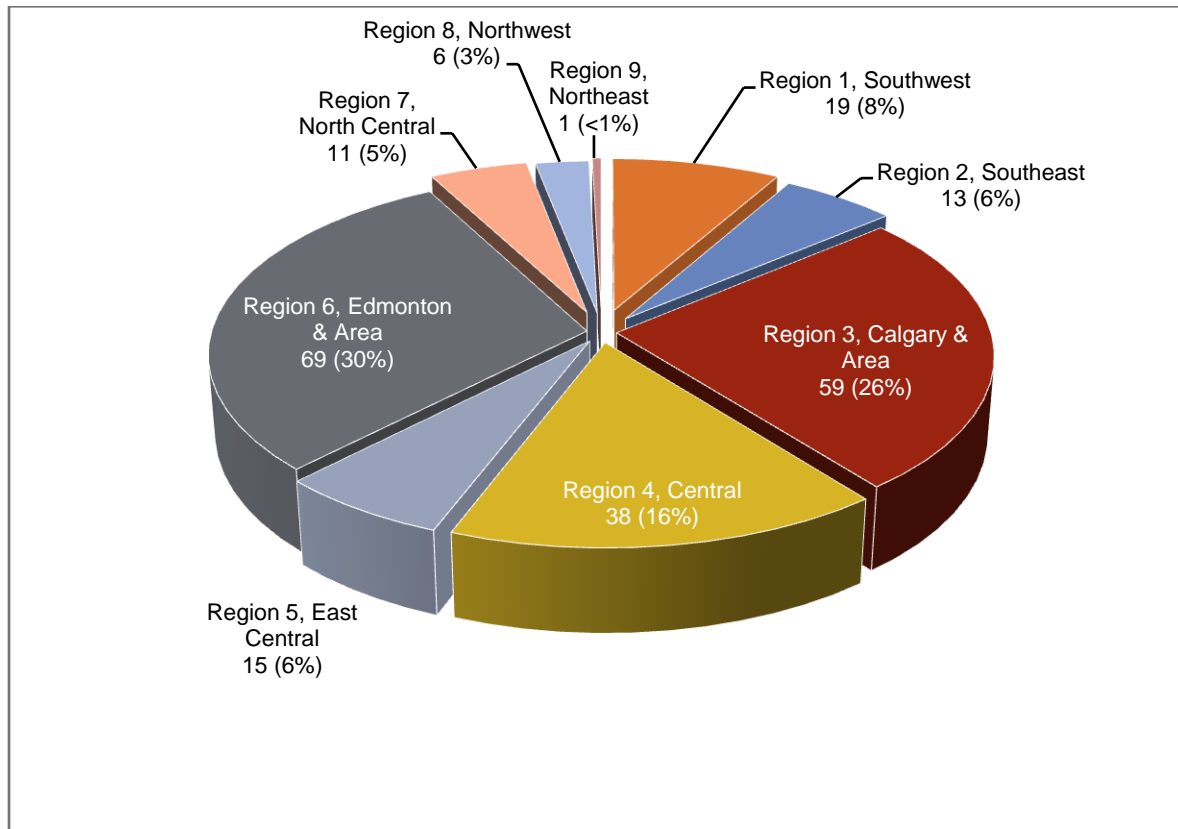
Physical Environment

While describing their foster homes, bedrooms, chores and desired changes, children and youth were highly positive. Almost all comments were either positive (71%) or neutral (29%). In positive comments, children and youth stated they liked their home and completed chores. In neutral comments, children and youth indicated whether or not the home had pets and changes they would like to make in the foster home (e.g. “speed up the adoption process”, “allow First Nation children to be adopted”, “have access to more electronics”, “provide free passes to fun outings”, “more recreation money”, “higher allowance”, “be able to go on trampolines and sleep-overs”, “see my caseworker more often”, “move into the city”, “be able to move between provinces”, “be adopted”, “new placement”). Two negative comments (<1%) were made indicating that the children/youth were not responsible for any chores (chores are considered opportunities to develop life skills; as a result, a lack of participation is classified as negative). Matters that required follow-up were forwarded to the appropriate authority for resolution.

Foster Parents’ Comments

Committee members gave foster parents an opportunity to comment on the services they provided to the children in their care and the supports they received to assist them in their role as foster parents. As well, foster parents had the chance to express concerns of their own. Members spoke with 231 foster parents in 166 foster homes. Foster parents expressed different views, depending upon their experiences, perceptions and geographic location. The percentage of foster parents who participated in interviews, broken down by Child and Family Services Authority is shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Responses – Percentage of Foster Parents Interviewed



Overall, foster parents' comments expressed satisfaction; 1,373 comments (73%) were positive, 29 (1%) were neutral and the remaining 487 comments (26%) were negative.

Services

The majority of foster parents expressed satisfaction with access to treatment and services for the children and youth in their care. Foster parents described having good relationships with health, education and dental professionals and were satisfied with the recreation funding provided. Neutral comments referred to those foster parents who described available funding, treatment and services as adequate.

The most common area of dissatisfaction raised by foster parents was recreational funding. Foster parents indicated that the children's recreation funds did not always cover actual costs of several recreational activities (e.g. hockey, dance, music lessons). Some foster parents expressed difficulty in accessing physicians and difficulty getting assistance from educational professionals. A few foster parents stated they had difficulty accessing treatment or services.

Agency Support

When agency foster parents were asked about the general support and services received through their foster care agencies, most of the foster parents' comments were positive. Foster parents described having good relationships with their support workers, enjoyed agency foster

parent training and were satisfied with respite resources and agency services. Of the two neutral comments heard, one foster parent indicated access to agency foster parent training was adequate and one stated respite resources were adequate. Dissatisfaction with the lack of available respite homes, foster parent training and access to foster care training (e.g. more on-line training, less redundancy in material, more specialized courses) were highlighted as the top concerns.

Support from the Ministry and Child and Family Services Authority

Comments about the support received from the Ministry and Child and Family Services Authorities were split between positive and negative. In regards to positive comments, foster parents stated they had good relationships with the children's caseworkers and foster care support workers, they were satisfied with foster parent training, appreciated respite resources, access to foster parent training and overall Ministry support. A few neutral comments were made describing support workers, respite resources, foster parent training and caseworkers as adequate.

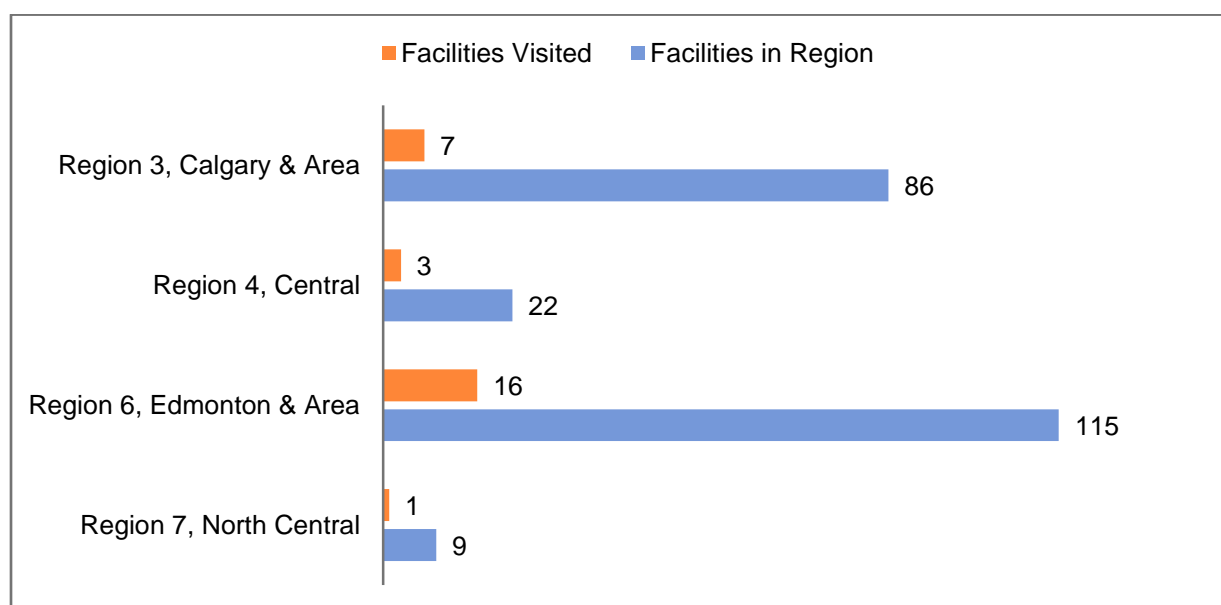
Just under half of the comments were negative, where foster parents highlighted the need for better relationships with regional staff (e.g. caseworkers, support workers, regional support staff), improved foster parent training (e.g. less redundancy in material, more specialized courses, allowing foster parents other avenues for training) and less staff turnover. Foster parents identified the need for better access to foster parent training (e.g. on-line training, more on-line choices, providing enough courses during the year, providing more spaces in training) and more respite homes.

CHILD AND YOUTH FACILITIES

Child and youth facilities provide care to a person under the age of 18 years and includes youth who are under the guardianship of a director designated under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*. A range of facilities including group homes, secure services and youth assessment centres are classified as child and youth facilities and are licensed under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*. Most of these facilities are operated by not-for-profit or profit organizations; however, some are government operated.

The committee visited 27 child and youth facilities between April 2012 and March 2013. Figure 12, shows the number of child and youth facilities visited, as well as the total number of facilities in each region.

Figure 12: Number of Visits to Child and Youth Facilities versus Total Number of Facilities



Highlights of Visits to Child and Youth Facilities

Committee members scheduled visits to child and youth facilities late in the afternoon, after school hours or early in the evening to ensure as many children and youth as possible were available for interviews. Fifty-five children and youth, from 27 facilities, participated in the interviews. Another eight children and youth were observed during the committee's visits.

Children and youth comments are organized into three main categories: care, treatment and accommodation. Service provider's comments are discussed separately.

Care

Committee members reported 831 comments from children and youth about the care they received in their facilities. Overall, children and youth expressed satisfaction with the services provided; 622 comments (75%) were positive, 157 comments (19%) were neutral and 52 comments (6%) were negative. The breakdown of children and youth's comments, relating to care themes is shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Responses – Care Themes at Child and Youth Facilities

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Education	116 (81%)	2 (1%)	26 (18%)	144
Summer Break	45 (86%)	5 (10%)	2 (4%)	52
Social Activities	230 (100%)	—	—	230
Staff-Child/Youth Relationships	54 (45%)	65 (55%)	—	119
Rules	100 (54%)	81 (44%)	4 (2%)	185
Overall Care and Comfort Level	77 (76%)	4 (4%)	20 (20%)	101
TOTAL	622 (75%)	157 (19%)	52 (6%)	831

Education

Most of the responses regarding education were positive (81%). Children and youth described the types of schools they attended (e.g. public, special needs programs, facility programs), stated they liked school and spoke about plans for their futures. Nine per cent of the positive comments indicated children or youth had plans to graduate from high school and another 11 per cent of positive comments referred to plans for post-secondary education, trade work, or military training. A few youth stated they were aware of the Advancing Futures Bursary and were looking forward to accessing the program in the future.

There were two neutral comments (1%), one referred to a youth who was employed part-time and one youth who was awaiting an educational placement. Negative comments (18%) referred to eight children/youth who stated they disliked school (e.g. “I don’t really like school, but I have friends there”, “I don’t really like school. I go because it is important.”), two youth who had been suspended from school and 16 youth who stated they were unaware of the Advancing Futures Bursary program. (Committee members provided information to the youth interviewed about the Advancing Futures Bursary program).

Summer Break

Eighty-six per cent of comments about summer break were positive, describing summer camps, vacations and day trips with program staff and holidays with natural family. Neutral comments (10%) referred to children and youth whose circumstances (e.g. short-term placements, emergency shelter placements) were not conducive to summer activities. Two negative comments (4%) heard came from a child/youth who stated that they did not participate in summer activities (e.g. “I was supposed to go to camp but I did something I was not supposed to do, so I didn’t go”, “not really [did I do anything fun in the summer]”). Follow-up with the youth revealed no concerns.

Social Activities

One hundred per cent of comments made from children and youth about their social activities were positive. Participating in unstructured activities (e.g. going to the mall, playing game systems, watching movies), activities with program staff, program-based recreation events, hanging out with friends and unstructured sports activities topped the list of favorite things the children and youth liked to do in their spare time. Many of the children and youth also commented that they received an allowance. No neutral or negative comments were made.

Staff-Child/Youth Relationships

Questions about staff-child relationships evoked responses that were either positive (45%) or neutral (55%). All but two of the children and youth described having good relationships with staff; the other two stated they had adequate relationships with staff. Neutral comments referred to those persons with whom children and youth indicated they would speak to if they had a concern or problem (e.g. staff, family, caseworker and teacher). Sixty per cent of the neutral comments referred to youth who stated they would speak to staff if they had a concern or problem. The remaining neutral responses included speaking to “others”, “natural family”, “caseworkers” and “teacher/school counselor”. Seven youth stated they would talk to “no one” (e.g. “[Staff are nice]; I don’t talk to anyone about my problems;” “I just keep it to myself;” “I don’t know who I would talk to.” Four youth stated they did not feel comfortable talking to others about their problems). No negative comments were heard. Matters that required follow-up were forwarded to the appropriate authority for resolution.

Rules

When asked about the rules of the program, most children and youth stated they knew the rules and felt the rules were fair (45%). Neutral comments (55%) referred to the types of consequences used in their facilities when rules were broken (e.g. having privileges revoked, time-outs, grounding). No negative comments were heard.

Overall Care and Comfort Level

The majority of children and youth made positive comments about their overall care and comfort in the facilities (76%). These children and youth described feeling comfortable in their placements, being treated fairly and when bullying issues arose, they were addressed satisfactorily. Four per cent of comments were neutral, where four children and youth stated their level of comfort was adequate.

Twenty per cent of comments were negative, the majority of which referred to 19 children and youth who reported having been bullied at some point in time. In each of these cases, the bullying issue had been addressed. One child or youth reported having a poor level of comfort, but also stated he/she was comfortable in the home and liked the staff (e.g. “[my comfort is] a little bad, a little okay”). Matters that required follow-up were forwarded to the appropriate authority for resolution.

Treatment

Committee members reported 593 comments from children and youth about the treatment they received in child and youth facilities. Of those comments, 343 (58%) were positive, 188 (32%) were neutral and the remaining 62 (10%) were negative. The breakdown of children and youth's responses, relating to treatment themes, is shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Responses – Treatment Themes at Child and Youth Facilities

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Transition	67 (44%)	50 (33%)	34 (23%)	151
Medical/Dental Needs	203 (60%)	137 (40%)	—	340
Contact with Natural Family	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Case Plans	30 (60%)	1 (2%)	19 (38%)	50
Keepsakes	43 (83%)	—	9 (17%)	52
TOTAL	343 (58%)	188 (32%)	62 (10%)	593

Transition

Questions about the children and youth's transition into their current placement evoked a number of comments. Forty-four per cent of the responses were positive, where children and youth stated they are happy in their current placements, talked about being advised of the move, described being happy at the time of the move and indicated they had pre-placement visits. Neutral comments (33%) referred mostly to the type of placement the children and youth resided in prior to their current placement (e.g. natural family, foster home, group home) and a few children and youth who could not recall the transition and two children or youth who reported not having any particular feelings at the time of the interview.

The remaining 34 comments (23%) were negative, where children and youth recalled feeling sad, angry and/or scared at the time of the move, had no pre-placement visit and/or were not advised of the move. (As previously noted, it is not always possible to provide advance notice or a pre-placement visit in circumstances where children are apprehended from their home on an emergency basis). Three children and youth stated they were still angry (e.g. two children and youth expressed being angry at having to live in a residential care setting away from the city and one youth stated that although he/she is feeling better about the move, he/she still wants to go home and sometimes feels angry and frustrated at his/her situation). One youth reported still being sad (e.g. one youth felt sad that he/she was no longer able to live in his/her foster home due to his/her increased physical needs).

Medical/Dental Needs

All of the children and youth reported positive (60%) or neutral (40%) comments about their health care. Many children and youth stated their medical, dental and optometry needs were met and they felt well cared for in their facilities when ill. In neutral comments, children and

youth described having visited the doctor, dentist and optometrist within the last year. No negative comments were heard.

Contact with Natural Family

Children and youth were asked about their contact with natural family members. These questions do not explore the reasons for, limitations on, or appropriateness of contact. For reporting purposes, family contact is not classified in the positive or negative, as family contact and/or reunification with natural family is not always possible or desirable given each child's unique circumstances.

The majority of children and youth indicated they maintain contact with natural family members and/or mentioned that the child and youth care staff facilitate connection to family and culture. Most children identified specific family members with whom they had contact with and/or frequency of visits with family. The level of contact described ranged from "regular" to "some", but regular contact was most frequently reported. In a few cases, comments were made referring to situations where a child did not have contact with natural family and/or where a child expressed dissatisfaction with the level of contact they had with natural family members.

Case Plans

Sixty per cent of comments made regarding case plans refer to children and youth who said they were aware they had a case plan and/or had input into the creation of their plans. Two per cent of comments were neutral and referred to the frequency of visits with caseworkers. Most of the negative comments (38%) refer to children and youth who said they were unaware of their case plans and/or did not have input into their case plans. Some of the children and youth were unaware due to their young age or level of comprehension (these children and youth may not have readily recognized conversations with caseworkers as case planning).

Keepsakes

When asked about whether the children and youth had keepsakes, most children stated they did (83%). Children and youth reported they had photographs, memory books and/or special items they considered keepsakes. There were no neutral comments. Negative comments (17%) were made by children who indicated they did not have memory books, photographs and/or keepsakes. (Committee members realize that due to the manner in which some children come into care, it is not always possible to bring pictures and/or keepsakes).

Accommodation

Committee members reported 314 comments from children and youth on issues relating to accommodation in child and youth facilities. Residents expressed satisfaction with the services provided; 281 (90%) were positive, 10 (3%) were neutral and 23 (7%) were negative. The breakdown of residents' responses, relating to accommodation themes is shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Responses – Accommodation Themes at Child and Youth Facilities

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Meals	176 (90%)	2 (1%)	17 (9%)	195
Physical Environment	105 (88%)	8 (7%)	6 (5%)	119
TOTAL	281 (90%)	10 (3%)	23 (7%)	314

Meals

Children and youth provided highly positive comments (90%) about the food provided in their placements. They described liking the food, talked about their favorite meals, indicated the food was high in quality, described having plenty to eat and said they helped cook and prepare meals. Two neutral comments (1%) were made stating that the food was of adequate quality. Of the negative comments (9%), twelve referred to children and youth who did not help cook or prepare meals (as previously mentioned, participation in meal preparation is considered an opportunity to develop life skills and as a result, a lack of participation is classified as negative), one referred to not having enough to eat (e.g. “snacks are only available two times per day”) and four comments referred to not liking the food (“I’m used to eating expensive food, like \$18.00 meat...I like steak.”, “I don’t like vegetables”, “too many vegetables”, and “I often do not like the food”). Matters that required follow-up were forwarded to the appropriate authority for resolution.

Physical Environment

Eighty-eight per cent of comments about the physical environment of the facilities were positive. Children and youth described the chores they participated in, stated they liked their homes and a few children stated their facilities had pets. Neutral comments (7%) referred to eight suggestions for change the children and youth would like to make to their facilities and environments (e.g. four children and youth wanted changes in access to their natural families, one youth wanted an increase in clothing funds, one youth wanted the policy changed that required her to return to school three months after the birth of her baby and two children and youth wanted an increase in allowance).

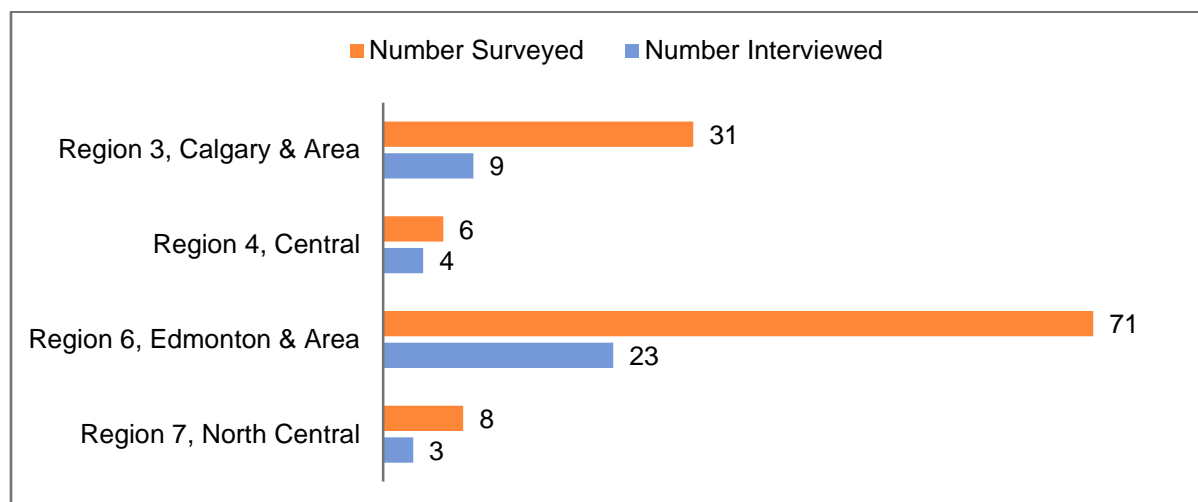
Five per cent of comments about the physical environment of the facilities were negative. Five children or youth stated they did not like their physical environments (e.g. they did not like living in a residential care placement) and one youth stated his/her program did not have pets. Matters that required follow-up were forwarded to the appropriate authority for resolution.

Staff Member Comments

Committee members talked to 39 staff members within 27 facilities to give them an opportunity to comment on the services they provided to the children in their care and the supports they received to assist them in their role. An additional 116 staff completed surveys. Comments made by staff differed depending on their experiences, perceptions and location (e.g. travel time, access to resources and services). The number of child and youth staff who were

interviewed or completed surveys in each Child and Family Services Authority is illustrated in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Child and Youth Facilities Staff Interviewed and Surveyed



Just over half of the responses from service providers expressed satisfaction; 914 comments (66%) of comments were positive, 393 comments (28%) were neutral and 87 (6%) were negative.

Education and Training

Staff expressed satisfaction with the training received to deal with the situations they encounter and also reported that their facilities provide opportunities for additional training and education. Neutral comments included those staff who provided the number of years and experience they have in the child and youth care field, as well as some staff members who indicated the training they received was adequate. Negative comments included three staff who felt the training they were provided was not sufficient to deal with the situations they encounter and seven comments stating that additional training was not available.

Staffing/Facility Facilities

Most of the comments made by the child and youth care staff about their facilities were positive. Staff talked about their positive relationships with the children and youth in their facilities, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, as well good relationships with fellow staff members, where teamwork and communication is an important part of their success with residents. Staff also highlighted low staff turnover, appropriate staffing levels and good programming. Among neutral comments, some staff described staff turnover, staffing levels, staff-child relationships and staff relationships as adequate. Other neutral comments indicated that the strengths of their facilities were due to the dedication of staff. The biggest challenges reported by staff were high facility staff turnover and lower staffing levels, which impacted staff workload.

Supports from the Ministry, Agencies and Community

It should be noted that there were only 11 comments made about the assistance received from the Ministry, agencies and community. Due to the low response rate, caution must be exercised when interpreting the results. Two comments indicated good communication and relationships

with ministry staff. The remaining nine comments suggested the need for better regional support, more timely response from regional staff, improved relationships with caseworkers and more background information on the children and youth entering group care.

Director's Comments

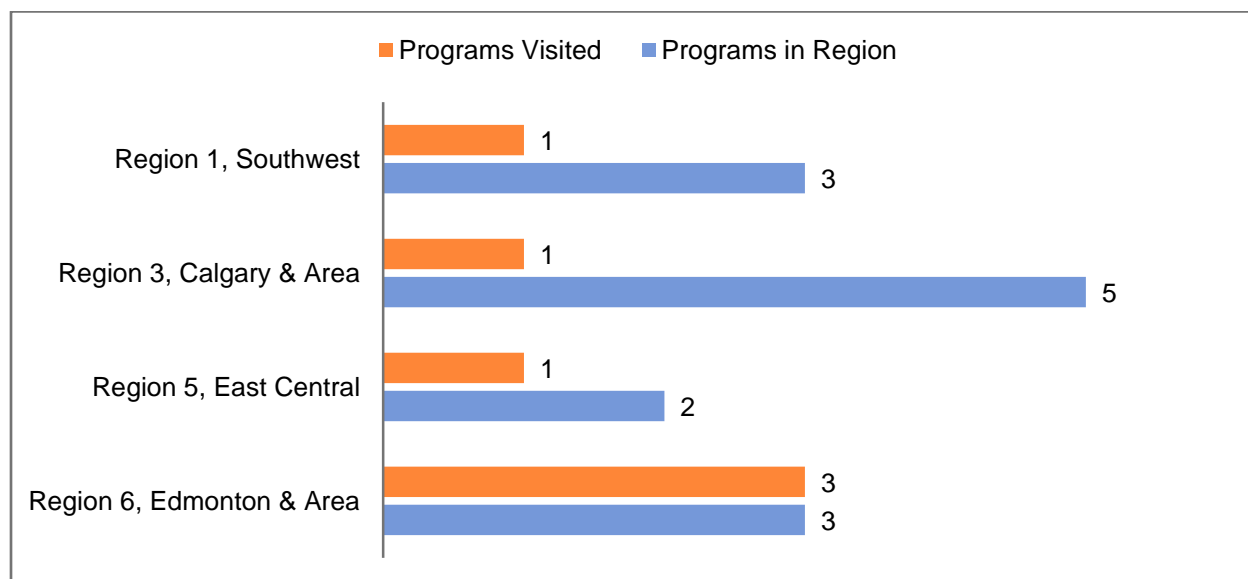
Like the section above, only 10 directors provided additional comments. Eight of the comments were either positive or neutral, where directors described their program and identified the role of programming and staff in its success. One director talked about having good communication with a local Delegated First Nations Agency office and one director indicated staff turnover had been low. Two negative comments were heard; one indicating the need for better wages and one requested better placement decisions made by regional staff.

EMERGENCY SHELTERS FOR WOMEN

The Ministry of Human Services provides core, operational funding to 29 women's emergency shelters for the provision of safe accommodation, information, crisis intervention, referrals and outreach services through an Outcomes-Based Service Delivery model, which provides holistic, wrap-around services to support the unique needs of individuals and their families who are impacted by family violence. In addition, Human Services maintains Fee-For-Service Agreements with five On-Reserve Shelters to serve women who ordinarily live off-reserve, but have come On-Reserve to access emergency shelter services. The Ministry also provides two Second-Stage shelters with program funding to help families who require more intense support over a longer-term; programing funding to two unique community shelters, including one that specializes in supporting women with children who are recovering from addictions; program funding to two community family violence programs, including a men's counseling program; and funding to support 276 specialized, high-quality child care spaces in 25 shelters for women.

The committee visited six emergency shelters for women during the April 2012 to March 2013 review period. Figure 17 shows the number of shelters visited in comparison to the total number of funded programs in those regions.

Figure 17: Number of Visits to Emergency Shelters for Women versus Total Number of Shelters



Highlights of Visits to Emergency Shelters for Women

Committee members make every effort to schedule visits to women's emergency shelters at times of the day when it is most convenient for residents and staff to be interviewed. This year six shelters were visited and eight out of 76 residents participated in interviews. Because of the unique situation of these women, participation rates can be low. Residents are often searching for jobs, accommodations, attending counseling appointments, or attending to their children. Given the low response rate, the findings within this section cannot be generalized to the larger shelter population; rather they provide insight into the experiences of these women.

Ten staff participated in interviews and 38 staff completed surveys. Children residing in the shelters did not participate in interviews. Residents' comments are organized into two main categories: care/treatment and accommodation. Staff comments are discussed separately.

Care and Treatment

Committee members heard 66 comments from residents regarding their care and treatment at the emergency shelters for women. Sixty comments (91%) were positive, one comment (1%) was neutral and five comments (8%) were negative. The breakdown of residents' comments, relating to care and treatment themes is shown in Figure 18.

Figure 18: Responses – Care and Treatment Themes at Emergency Shelters for Women

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Program Awareness	15 (79%)	—	4 (21%)	19
Staff-Resident Relationships	31 (97%)	—	1 (3%)	32
Quality of Services Received	14 (93%)	1 (7%)	—	15
TOTAL	60 (91%)	1 (1%)	5 (8%)	66

Program Awareness

The majority of residents' comments were positive (79%) where woman stated that in addition to receiving information and referrals, they were made aware of programs for themselves and their children. No neutral comments were made. The remaining comments (21%) were negative and referred to four women who reported a lack of awareness and information about programs for oneself, children and/or spouse.

Staff-Resident Relationships

All but one comment was positive (97%), where residents talked about receiving good assistance from staff. Supportive and understanding staff members who worked as a team to assist the residents within a culturally diverse program were highlighted by the women interviewed. One negative comment (3%) indicated the need for more cultural diversity in the program.

Quality of Services Received

Ninety-three per cent of comments about the quality of services received were positive. Women stated the services were helpful, information was provided in a timely manner and programs for children were good. One neutral comment (7%) was made stating that the children's program was adequate. No negative comments were made.

Accommodation

Committee members reported 95 comments from residents about the accommodations provided at emergency shelters for women. Overall, residents expressed satisfaction with their accommodations; 71 comments (75%) were positive and 24 comments (25%) were neutral. No

negative comments were made. The breakdown of the residents' comments, relating to accommodation themes, is shown in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Responses – Accommodation Themes at Emergency Shelters for Women

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
Physical Environment	11 (73%)	4 (27%)	—	15
Meals	18 (67%)	9 (33%)	—	27
Rules	22 (81%)	5 (19%)	—	27
Support Services	20 (77%)	6 (23%)	—	26
TOTAL	71 (75%)	24 (25%)	—	95

Physical Environment

Satisfaction with the physical environment of the shelters was evident in the positive (73%) and neutral (27%) comments provided by respondents. Residents expressed feeling safe and secure and described the size, design and/or comfort of the physical space as good or adequate in meeting their needs. No negative comments were made.

Meals

All of the feedback regarding the quality, quantity and variety of food provided in the shelters was either positive (67%) or neutral (33%). As part of neutral comments, women shared whether they assisted in meal preparation. No negative comments were made.

Rules and Regulations

When asked about the rules and regulations in the shelters, responses were either positive (81%) or neutral (19%). Women reported that they were informed of the rules, the rules were fair and reasonable and rules were enforced. Neutral comments referred to women who reported participating in chores. No negative comments were made.

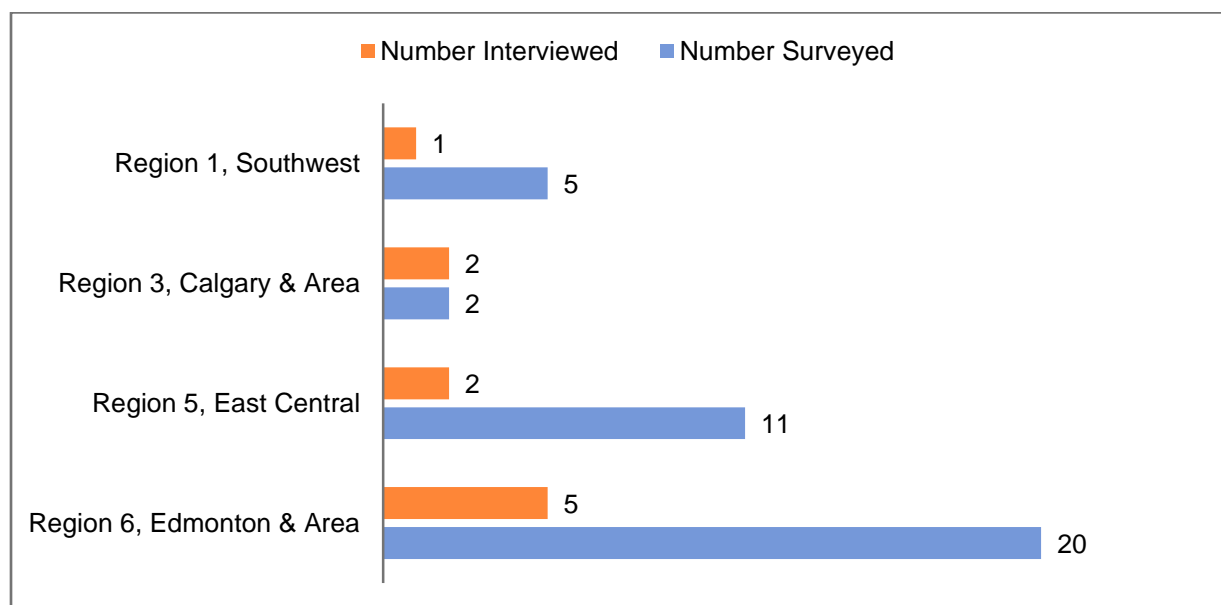
Support Services

The majority of comments about support services were positive (77%). Residents said that the services they received were good, they were pleased with the staff and would recommend the facility to others. Twenty-three neutral comments were heard, describing how residents came to know about the shelters (e.g. media, police). No negative comments were heard.

Staff Members' Comments

Committee members talked to 10 staff in six emergency shelters for women to give them an opportunity to comment on the services they provide. An additional 38 staff completed surveys. A breakdown of staff who participated in the interviews or completed surveys is shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Emergency Shelters for Women Staff Interviewed and Surveyed



A total of 687 comments were made by service providers, reflecting satisfaction with the services they provide; 418 comments (61%) were positive, 176 comments (26%) were neutral and the remaining 93 comments (13%) were negative.

Facility - Staffing

Staff indicated that they received sufficient training to provide services to women and children and reported that roles and responsibilities were clearly defined within their shelters. Respondents also stated that staffing levels within the shelters were adequate to meet the needs of residents and relationships between staff members were good. Of the neutral comments heard, most staff indicated additional training was available, but a few staff said additional training was not available within their shelters. A few staff further reported adequate camaraderie among staff members. Of the negative comments, unclear roles and responsibilities, staffing levels and wages were highlighted by staff as areas for improvement.

Facility – Building/Services Provided

Most of the staff expressed highly positive comments about the services provided to women and children in the shelters. Staff reported a safe and secure facility, good relationships with residents, good in-house children's programs and services and positive community support. Neutral comments described adequate relationships with residents and adequate facility programs. Of the negative comments made, the lack of transition supports, access to second stage housing and transportation topped the list of concerns.

Overall Feedback

When asked to comment on their overall satisfaction with the support provided to women and children during and after their stay at an emergency shelter, just over three-quarters of the feedback provided by staff was positive. Staff talked about how culture and ethnicity were reflected in their services and described the commitment and expertise of staff as a strength of

the programs provided. No neutral comments were made. The need for improved funding to shelters and their programs topped the list of negative comments made by staff.

FEEDBACK ON VISITS

Each year, service providers (e.g. foster parents, facility staff and facility owner/operators) are invited to provide feedback on the committee's visits. Visit feedback forms are sent to each of the programs, along with the pre-visit information package. This feedback is an important method of evaluation for committee members. From the 231 visits, 51 individuals responded. Because the response rate is low (22%), the results and opinions expressed cannot be generalized to all service providers who participated in reviews. Nevertheless, the information gathered is useful to the committee in assessing their preparation for interviews and visits in general. It also provides respondents with the opportunity to suggest areas for improvement.

The results from the feedback forms are summarized in Figure 21. Responses were provided on a five-point scale, with one indicating very dissatisfied and five indicating very satisfied. The feedback provided was highly positive. All of the respondents (100%) appreciated the visits and commented on how pleased they were with how the visits were conducted. Many commented that committee members were pleasant, personable, professional and able to engage the children easily. Service providers also indicated that the visits were beneficial and they appreciated the opportunity to share their experiences and concerns. When asked whether the visit was useful, 84% indicated they were satisfied or highly satisfied. Several stated they hoped their feedback would be used to improve services to children and families.

When asked whether anything could have been done differently with the committee's visits, 86 per cent of respondents marked "no". These answers suggest that most respondents were satisfied with the visits in general. Several service providers stated that it was a joy to speak with the committee and they appreciated being given a voice. Ninety-six per cent of service providers reported they had been sufficiently informed about the purpose of the visit and received enough information in the pre-visit information packages to understand what the committee's visit would involve. A couple of respondents indicated that the phone calls and information received prior to the visits were helpful and appreciated.

In response to being asked if they had adequate time to speak with committee members and whether committee members were well informed of their jobs, 92 per cent indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied. Respondents expressed having enough time, not being rushed and feeling comfortable and relaxed during the interviews. They also reported that committee members were knowledgeable and professional.

Typical Comments:

- "The kids were very relaxed...It was a very good visit."
- "We are very satisfied as we were able to express our concern".
- "The committee members are very friendly and professional."
- "I felt like they truly heard what we had to say."
- "Great visit!"

Figure 21: Service Provider Feedback

Question	Tone	Number of Responses	Percentage
1. How was the visit? How satisfied were you with the visit process?			
	Very Satisfied	38	75%
	Satisfied	13	25%
	Neutral	0	0%
	Dissatisfied	0	0%
	Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
		51	100%
2. Was the visit useful?			
	Very Satisfied	25	49%
	Satisfied	18	35%
	Neutral	7	14%
	Dissatisfied	1	2%
	Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
		51	100%
3. Is there anything that we could have done differently?			
	No	44	86%
	Yes	7	14%
		51	100%
4. Did you understand and receive enough information about the purpose of the visit?			
	Very Satisfied	33	65%
	Satisfied	16	31%
	Neutral	2	4%
	Dissatisfied	0	0%
	Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
		51	100%
5. Did you have enough time to speak to the committee members?			
	Very Satisfied	37	72%
	Satisfied	10	20%
	Neutral	3	6%
	Dissatisfied	1	2%
	Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
		51	100%
6. Did you feel the committee members were well informed about their job?			
	Very Satisfied	38	74%
	Satisfied	9	18%
	Neutral	3	6%
	Dissatisfied	1	2%
	Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
		51	100%

COMPLAINT INVESTIGATIONS

The Social Care Programs Review Committee conducts investigations into matters relating to a facility, as specified by the Minister. The Minister did not request any investigations in the April 2012 to March 2013 review period.

EXPENDITURES

Committee expenditures for the April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013 review period were \$289,899.97. This total includes: honoraria, travel, accommodations, printing, courier, long distance and Internet expenses for the members of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee.

Each team of two committee members spent between one and three hours planning and conducting each facility visit and an additional two to four hours summarizing feedback.

COMMITTEE MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

As committee members, we are often in awe of the contributions made by foster parents and child and youth care workers in meeting the needs of children and youth who are unable to live at home. The opportunity to witness extraordinary acts of kindness, creativity and advocacy on behalf of children and youth is a great privilege and we are so appreciative of the opportunity year after year. The most satisfying aspect of these visits is the ability to witness the impact of the dedication, commitment and support provided to vulnerable Albertans across the province. Seeing the positive influence these services are having on the children and youth is remarkable.

Overall, children and youth residing in foster homes and group care settings spoke positively about the care and support they receive in their placements. Conversations with children and youth residing in foster homes, child and youth facilities, as well as their caregivers (e.g. foster parents, group homes staff) highlighted the following:

- Many children and youth stated that although they wished to be with their natural families, they understood the importance of being out of the home at present and expressed their desire to continue residing in their current placements.
- Children and youth described being happy in their placements, felt loved, cared for and reported a strong sense of belonging.
- Many foster parents and group care staff demonstrate high levels of dedication and commitment to the safety, stability and well-being of the children and youth in their care. Committee members observed how foster parents play a crucial role as advocates for the children and youth in their homes.
- Several foster parents have and continue to pursue the adoption of children and youth placed in their care who are unable to be returned to their families.
- Group home staff and foster parents reported that training and support provided from ministry and/or agency staff supported them in their roles.

During visits to women's emergency shelters, we were touched at the women's graciousness in sharing their stories with us. Given that these women are facing recent trauma and loss, it was

inspiring to see their courage and fortitude. While speaking with the women, they stated emergency shelter staff were dedicated to their jobs and willing to assist residents in finding solutions to the problems they faced. Emergency shelter staff indicated their gratitude to community members for their support. We also visited one women's emergency shelter that collects items to give each woman upon entry to the shelter so the women have special items they can call their own. Further, once the woman leaves the shelter, they are provided with an abundance of items in order to begin a fresh start.

Having the opportunity to visit day cares and out-of-school care programs, we observed staff that demonstrate passion and care for the children they serve and make the programs special for the children who attend. Committee members were advised by parents, children and staff about the quality of care provided in the day care and out-of-school care programs. Areas of satisfaction shared with the committee included:

- The positive impact accreditation has on the quality of the programs.
- Children and youth stated they felt safe at their programs and enjoyed their day care and out-of-school care programs.
- Staff and operators spoke with pride about their programs and the ability to impact the lives of children.

In conclusion, the committee witnessed tremendous resilience among children and youth who are unable, for at least a time, to live at home. We also were able to observe the strength of women and children who had to flee their homes in order to be safe. Meeting the foster parents and group home staff who are committed to care for and advocate for children and youth helped us see how their service makes the success of these children and youth possible. The services women receive in the emergency shelters help provide the safety and support women need to make the necessary transition for both themselves and their children. Lastly, Alberta's day cares and out-of-school care programs are providing necessary care of children while also providing quality programming. It has been a great privilege to see all that is happening for Alberta's children and families across the province.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

During April 2012 to March 2013 review period, several changes and achievements took place for the Social Care Facilities Review Committee. A new chair, Jason Luan, MLA Calgary-Hawkwod, was announced in July 2012. Two new members were appointed to the committee in April 2013: Christopher Branch, from Calgary and Brenda Doupe, from Wetaskiwin. The committee bid farewell to Jan Prince in October 2012 and wish her the very best in her future endeavors.

The committee held two meetings this past year in September 2012 and January 2013. As part of their ongoing learning and development, committee members completed two training modules; Diversity Training and Information Security Awareness. They also heard presentations on:

- Aboriginal Policy and Community Engagement Division;
- Social Policy Framework; and
- Foster Parent Training.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Social Care Facilities Review Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who helped make this report possible. Every child, youth and adult who participated in interviews, filled out a survey, or provided us feedback has contributed to the Ministry's ability to make informed decisions and plan for the future of Alberta's children, youth and families in need. By sharing your experiences and suggestions, you have warmed our hearts and made all Albertans aware of your important stories.

Committee members would also like to extend their deepest thanks to the Chief Executive Officers and staff in the Child and Family Services Authorities who helped co-ordinate the visits. Without their willing assistance, committee members would be unable to conduct the interviews with children and families.

Lastly, the committee warmly acknowledges the contribution of staff from the Ministry of Human Services; those who provided training and information sessions to support the committee's ongoing professional development, as well as the staff who provide services and support to the committee throughout the year. We couldn't do this without you!

APPENDIX 1: DAY CARE AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL CARE PROGRAM WAIT TIMES

During the April 2012 to March 2013 review period, the committee visited 21 licensed day care programs and 11 licensed out-of-school care programs. Parents were asked to report on the wait times they experienced when trying to access these programs. The following provides an overview of those findings:

Provincial Totals 2012-2013

- Day care: out of 329 parents interviewed, 192 (58%) had no wait times, 67 (20%) waited less than six months and 70 (22%) waited more than six months.
- Out-of-school care: out of 62 parents interviewed, 54 (87%) had no wait times, six (10%) waited less than six months and two (3%) waited more than six months.

Southwest Region

- Day care: out of 17 parents interviewed, 15 (88%) had no wait times and two (12%) waited less than six months.
- Out-of-school care: no statistics available.

Southeast Region

- Day care: out of 64 parents interviewed, 32 (50%) had no wait times, 19 (30%) waited less than six months and 13 (20%) waited more than six months.
- Out-of-school care: no statistics available.

Calgary & Area Region

- Day care: out of 168 parents interviewed, 92 (55%) had no wait times, 36 (21%) waited less than six months and 40 (24%) waited more than six months.
- Out-of-school care: out of 28 parents interviewed, 24 (86%) had no wait times, two (7%) waited less than six months and two (7%) waited more than six months.

Central Region

- No statistics available.

East Central Region

- Day care: out of 10 parents interviewed, two (20%) had no wait times, two (20%) waited less than six months and six (60%) waited more than six months.
- Out-of-school care: out of six parents interviewed, no parents (100%) had wait times.

Edmonton and Area Region

- Day care: out of a 58 parents interviewed, 51 (89%) had no wait times, five (9%) waited less than six months and two (2%) waited more than six months.
- Out-of-school care: out of 23 parents interviewed, 20 (87%) had no wait times and three (13%) waited less than six months.

North Central Region

- No statistics available.

Northwest Region

- Day care: out of a total of 12 parents interviewed, three (25%) waited less than six months and nine (75%) waited more than six months.
- Out-of-school care: out of a total of five parents interviewed, four (80%) had no wait times and one (20%) waited less than six months.

Northeast Region

- No statistics available.

Métis Settlements Region

- No statistics available.

It is interesting to note that 45% of the parents interviewed in Calgary and area reported they had to wait to get their children into a day care program; whereas, in Edmonton Region, only 11% of parents interviewed had to wait to place their child into a day care program. Wait times varied depending on the region.