

Memorandum of Understanding

Alberta/British Columbia Partnership On Child Welfare

Overview

Goals

- To enhance the partnership between Alberta Children's Services and British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development in the area of child welfare.
- To produce key deliverables in the areas of information sharing on child welfare best practices, database development and strategic planning in areas of common interest.

Objectives

- To develop an overall plan to coordinate the implementation of recommended areas of activity resulting from identified areas of common interest.
- To direct and facilitate aligned approaches focused on achieving agreed to project outcomes.
- To provide a project management role at the strategic level, managing the activities of concurrent streams of activity.
- To ensure the process of design, development and implementation is undertaken in a manner that is consistent with the philosophy and strategic direction of Alberta Children's Services and British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Deliverables

Deliverables include the following:

- **Information sharing on child welfare best practices:** This includes sharing knowledge and experiences in implementing various forms of differential response; engaging communities in new directions in child welfare; seeking alternatives to removal of a child from the family while ensuring a form of protection services; use of mediation and other dispute resolution mechanisms with families served by child welfare services and options for permanency planning.

Examples of initiatives include:

- Alberta Response Model including family enhancement services and family group conferencing,
 - Alberta Child Welfare Training initiatives including the Competency Project, sharing of competency based training curriculums, and joint training of child welfare workers and family violence shelter workers,
 - British Columbia Blue Ribbon Panel,
 - British Columbia Surrey Court Project.
- **Database development:** This includes database development and outcomes measurement as well as finding efficient and effective ways to divide the labor on research projects associated with best practices and information management in the areas described above.

Examples of initiatives include:

- Alberta outcomes integration of national child welfare outcomes matrix
 - British Columbia Adoption Management System
 - British Columbia Workload Model
- **Strategic planning in areas of common interest:** There are many issues of common interest, however, Ministers and Deputy Ministers have identified First Nations child welfare issues as a priority for western provinces. This may be a starting point of development for a joint strategy to address these issues at both provincial and federal/provincial orders of government.
 - **Adoption:** Explore opportunities to find children waiting for adoption a home in either province and develop local and national initiatives to build public awareness of the need for permanent families for children in care.
 - **Sharing staff expertise:** Provide opportunities for staff exchanges in specific areas of child welfare between the two provinces to build capacity, knowledge and expertise.

Scope

- The projects will be limited to identified areas of common interest articulated above and will be further detailed in a joint work plan set out by the working group and approved of by Deputy Ministers.

Structure of Working Group

Reporting

- Upon approval of the terms of reference by Ministers responsible for child welfare from Alberta and British Columbia, the working group will report to

Deputy Ministers of Alberta Children's Services and British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development

- Deputy Ministers provide overall directional guidance and the working group manages the activities jointly agreed to.
- The working group will seek strategic level decisions from Deputy Ministers when projects have impact on multiple areas of common interest or have significant intergovernmental implications.

Membership

- Membership includes Assistant Deputy Ministers and designates from British Columbia and Alberta. Members will assign work teams as required.
- The Working Group will be co-chaired by British Columbia and Alberta.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The working group is responsible for monitoring and supporting overall activity completion to ensure the projects remain on target and deliver products agreed to.
- The role of the members of the Working Group is to:
 - Develop a work plan outlining the projects and activities
 - Communicate direction from Deputy Ministers, Ministers
 - Provide progress reports to Deputy Ministers on a regular basis
 - Provide direction, feedback and support to sub-committees
 - Approval of plans of sub-committees
 - Communicate information with relevant stakeholder groups and individuals impacted by the work
 - Establish realistic timelines
 - Status monitoring - coordinate and prioritize tasks to support the project timelines
 - Identify resource requirements
 - Reallocation of resources as required
 - Facilitate the bi-directional exchange of information
 - Make decisions to support the activities

Meeting Frequency

- As agreed to by co-chairs of the working group.

Approved By:

The Honourable Iris Evans
Minister of Alberta Children's
Services

Date: _____

The Honourable Gordon Hogg
Minister of British Columbia
Children and Family Development

Date: _____