

**Children and Youth Services Response
to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
Annual Report 2008-2009**

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Response</u>
<p>1a/b. That Children and Youth Services (CYS) develop policy defining what is meant by “restrictive procedures” and “intrusive measures” and provide clear direction that considers alternatives to restrictive measures and intrusive procedures.</p> <p>This policy should address a system of accountability for the allowable use of restrictive procedures and intrusive measures.</p>	<p>1a. Accepted The ministry recognizes the benefits of a comprehensive policy framework that clarifies the use of restrictive procedures.</p> <p>Existing regulation and policy address many of the issues raised by the advocate but the ministry will continue to strengthen these policies to ensure enhanced understanding among those involved in children and youth in care including residential facility staff, caregivers, and caseworkers.</p> <p>1b. The ministry has established a working group to develop minimum standards related to critical incidents, serious injuries, suicide prevention, restrictive procedures, isolation/seclusion, and medical management. The work done by the group is expected to result in revisions to existing policy, including those around restrictive procedures.</p>
<p>2. That CYS undertake a comprehensive review of the Child and Youth with Special and Complex Needs (CYCN) process to determine what needs to be done to improve the effectiveness of the process for these children and youth.</p>	<p>2. Accepted in principle</p> <p>CYS will take this recommendation to other ministries it partners with in serving children and youth with complex needs, for discussion and review.</p> <p>The following actions have already been taken to address the points raised by the advocate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised guidelines for regional integrated case management teams that support children and youth with complex needs to clarify eligibility for services, roles and responsibilities, and case management practices. • Currently upgrading the data tracking system and developed a fact sheet to increase awareness of the program among ministry staff and others. • Continuing to discuss how services to children and youth with complex needs can be improved in collaboration with partnering ministries.

Systemic Issue	Response
<p>1. Permanency for young people in permanent care</p> <p>1a. Permanency defined as placement other than in the care of the Director</p>	<p>1/1a. The advocate considers this issue to be resolved as a result of a revised permanency planning policy introduced in fall 2008.</p> <p>New policy recognizes that permanency should be based on making sure children and youth in care have enduring relationships and stable placements.</p>
<p>1b. Permanent placements for young people in permanent care</p>	<p>1b. The revised permanency planning policy is resulting in additional permanent placements for children and youth in care.</p> <p>Additional steps the ministry has taken in the last year include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulting with aboriginal elders to ensure permanency plans for aboriginal children and youth are culturally appropriate and working on planned performance and placement strategies for aboriginal children and youth. • Increasing the access those adopting children and youth in care have to financial support through Supports for Permanency. • Increasing the basic maintenance rate foster and kinship caregivers receive for caring for children and youth. • Launching a province wide foster parent and aboriginal caregiver recruitment campaign which has resulted in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 10% increase in open adoption homes. ○ 24% increase in inquiries about adoption. ○ 717 new foster and kinship homes from October 1, 2008 to August 31, 2009 <p>These steps have also eliminated the need for emergency placement of children or youth in care in hotels.</p>
<p>2. Placements for children and youth in care</p> <p>2a. Placement availability</p>	<p>2/2a. The ministry has reversed a trend of a year over year reduction in the number of foster homes in the province.</p> <p>2008-09 was the first year in recent years that there was a net increase in the number of foster homes.</p> <p>A provincial foster parent and aboriginal caregiver recruitment campaign has resulted in more than 717 new foster and kinship care homes from October 1, 2008 to August 31, 2009.</p>
<p>2b. Kinship care placements</p>	<p>2b. The number of kinship care homes has steadily increased over the last three years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 300 new kinship homes from October 1, 2008 to August 31, 2009. <p>A review of policies and practices surrounding kinship care is currently being done by the ministry and is looking at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching best practices in other jurisdictions. • Reviewing approval processes and supports for kinship caregivers. <p>A report is expected to be complete in fall 2009.</p> <p>Additionally efforts are underway to ensure consistent application of kinship care policy across the province.</p>

<p>3. Recording of protection concerns</p>	<p>A ministry working group has been struck and is currently developing policy and procedures to address issues raised regarding responding to and tracking reports that a child or youth may have been neglected or harmed while in the care of the ministry. The Advocate's Office has representation on this working group.</p> <p>A new electronic information system presently being developed is expected to improve consistency in recording and tracking.</p>
<p>4. Restrictive procedures and intrusive measures</p>	<p>A recommendation that the ministry review its accreditation practices was made by the provincial Auditor General in 2008.</p> <p>In response the ministry established a working group with representatives from the four nationally recognized accrediting bodies. Among the areas they reviewed was restrictive procedures. Revisions resulting from the work of this group will include strengthening policies related to restrictive procedures.</p> <p>The inappropriate use of restrictive procedures is unacceptable and when a case of inappropriate use comes to the attention of the ministry, swift action is taken to address it.</p> <p>The ministry has accepted the advocate's recommendation.</p>
<p>5. Young people with complex needs</p>	<p>The advocate has indicated that the government policy framework for supporting children and youth with complex needs is resulting in benefits for these young people.</p> <p>Steps the ministry is taking to continuously improve supports to children and youth with complex needs includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater use of a wraparound approach to service delivery, which brings together representatives from various ministries and agencies when serving a child or youth. • Revised guidelines for regional integrated case management teams that support children and youth with complex needs to clarify eligibility for services, and roles and responsibilities. • Upgrading the data tracking system and developed a fact sheet to increase awareness of the program. • Continuing to hold discussions with partnering ministries on how services to these young people can be improved. <p>The ministry has accepted the advocate's recommendation in principle.</p>
<p>6. School completion</p>	<p>A provincial policy framework aimed at increasing success in school for children and youth in care has been jointly developed by CYS and Alberta Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently being piloted in four locations. • Following receipt of feedback from the four demonstration sites the draft protocol is expected to be signed off in March 2010. • A data match has been completed to ensure both ministries are better aware of children and youth in care who may need additional support in school. <p>Other steps the ministry continues to take include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making educational needs a part of standard case planning. • Caseworkers continually tracking the academic progress of children and youth in care. • RESPs for children and youth in care planning to go on

	<p>to post-secondary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Advancing Futures Bursary for children and youth in care to assist them in achieving their educational goals (7.5% increase from 2007-08 to 2008-09).
7. Replacement of lost or stolen property	<p>The ministry has found that the circumstances surrounding how items are lost or stolen is different in every case, and as such, the most effective way to address the matter is responding on a case-by-case basis.</p>
8. Investigation of abuse allegations against staff of government-run residential facilities	<p>The ministry is currently developing policy around how it investigates reports that children and youth in care are being abused, including in government operated residential facilities. The Advocate's Office is on the working group developing this policy.</p> <p>Human resource policies are in place to address cases where ministry staff members have been found to be involved in the inappropriate treatment of a child or youth in care. Actions that are criminal in nature are referred to police.</p> <p>Ministry employees working at government operated facilities are bound by the same code of conduct and ethics as all other Alberta Public Service employees.</p>
9. Policy restricting use of administrative reviews	<p>Standard practice is for children and youth being served by the ministry to be involved when decisions are made about the supports and services they receive (when age and developmentally appropriate).</p> <p>Children and youth in care who have concerns about the assignment of a caseworker or the decisions of a caseworker have the following options to voice their concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking to the caseworker, supervisor, or manager, as well as the Child and Family Services Authority CEO or Delegated First Nation Agency Director. • Raising the matter with the child and youth advocate. <p>In order to effectively serve children and youth in care, flexibility is needed to make staffing decisions that take into account workloads, geographical boundaries, and population demographics.</p>