

Child and Youth Advocacy Review Recommendation Implementation Plan

Minister of Children and Youth Services Janis Tarchuk initiated a review of the child and youth advocacy system in the province in November 2008. A committee of nine members internal and external to government, including young adults formerly in care, studied practices in other jurisdictions and heard from key stakeholders to develop their report and recommendations.

The recommendations are based on the findings of the review committee in five areas – individual advocacy, systemic advocacy, natural and professional advocacy, reporting practices, and reporting relationship. In July 2009, Minister Tarchuk accepted all of the recommendations and announced implementation would begin immediately as outlined in the actions below.

The complete review panel report can be found at www.child.alberta.ca/advocacyreport.

Review Panel Recommendation	Ministry Response	Ministry/Advocate Action
<p>1. The Annual Report of the Child and Youth Advocate should be referred on an annual basis to the Policy Field Committee on Health (PFCH) for consideration, following being tabled in the Legislature.</p> <p>With an established process of accountability to the PFCH, the review committee believes that the Advocate should continue to report to the Minister.</p>	Accepted	<p>The Advocate will prepare and present his 2009-10 Annual Report to the Minister, who will table the report in the Legislature.</p> <p>The Policy Field Committee on Health will then have the option to review the annual report.</p>
<p>2. Quarterly reports should be redesigned to focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly tracking service issues • Reporting the resolution of those issues • Identifying potential system issues and actions <p>and serve as a basis for an annual report.</p>	Accepted	<p>The Advocate, department, Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) and Delegated First Nation Agencies (DFNAs) have entered into discussions to help determine the content and format of future quarterly reports.</p> <p>Introduction of the redesigned quarterly reports is targeted for October 2009.</p> <p>Redevelopment of the quarterly report process is a key component of the Advocate's 2009-12 Business Plan.</p> <p>The reports will be made publicly available.</p>
<p>3. An expert advisory panel of youth and other key stakeholders should be utilized to facilitate more transparent and comprehensive identification and validation of systemic issues and actions.</p>	Accepted	<p>The establishment of an expert advisory panel is a key goal in the Advocate's 2009-12 Business Plan. It is anticipated that the panel will be in place by March 2010.</p>
<p>4. The Advocate should proactively collaborate with the ministry to enhance and foster working relationships with Aboriginal stakeholders, including but not limited to Delegated First Nation Agencies (DFNAs), Métis, and First Nation communities.</p>	Accepted	<p>The Advocate and the ministry will continue to work together to establish effective working relationships with Aboriginal communities that contribute to the identification and resolution of systemic and service issues for children and youth.</p>

		<p>This will include joint meetings and strategy discussions with Aboriginal stakeholders and communities.</p> <p>This is identified as a long-term goal in the Advocate's 2009-12 Business Plan.</p>
<p>5. The relationship between the Advocate and service providers, such as foster parents, contracted agencies, and Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA)/ DFNA staff should be enhanced to identify and develop strategic alliances for change that will benefit children and youth.</p>	Accepted	<p>The Advocate will enhance efforts to develop alliances with service providers and organizations that will assist and support efforts to resolve systemic and service issues that affect children and youth.</p> <p>This is identified as a long term goal in the Advocate's 2009-12 Business Plan.</p>
<p>6. The Advocate, together with the ministry, CFSAs, and DFNAs should strengthen the processes for dispute resolution available to children and youth receiving child welfare services.</p> <p>The processes should seek to optimize natural or community and professional advocacy options.</p>	Accepted	<p>The Advocate will work collaboratively to assist the department, CFSAs, and DFNAs in strengthening dispute resolution processes available to children and youth in their communities.</p>
<p>7. The Advocate should enhance the office's management system to better link business planning and reporting with child and youth outcomes. These linkages should be shared with the ministry and service providers.</p>	Accepted	<p>The Advocate and ministry will work collaboratively to incorporate business objectives and reporting of initiatives contributing to child and youth outcomes in the Ministry Business Plan.</p>
<p>8. Alberta's system for child and youth advocacy should reflect four core functions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provide individual advocacy. Identify and address systemic challenges. Optimize professional advocacy. Enhance natural or community advocacy. <p>The Advocate should work with other stakeholders in the child welfare system to address each of these functions.</p>	Accepted	<p>The Advocate will continue to provide individual advocacy and identify systemic issues as core activities of the office.</p> <p>The Advocate will also develop educational opportunities for communities to establish advocacy supports for children and youth and will develop educational and developmental programs for professionals involved with children and youth.</p> <p>These activities are included in the Advocate's business plan to be developed and implemented over the next three years.</p>
<p>9. The Minister and Advocate should develop a detailed memorandum of understanding that formalizes roles and responsibilities of the Minister, ministry, and Advocate.</p>	Accepted	<p>The Advocate will continue discussions with the ministry started last fall to collaboratively establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Advocate, ministry, and Minister.</p> <p>This MOU is targeted for completion by October 2009 and will be made publicly available.</p>
<p>10. The Advocate should review its operational processes, competencies, and structure to ensure alignment with changes that may occur as a result of implementation of the report recommendations.</p>	Accepted	<p>The Advocate will implement a planned organizational review of the office in 2009-10.</p> <p>This review is a core business objective in the Advocate's 2009 -12 Business Plan.</p>