



Commission to Promote
Sustainable Child Welfare

Commission de promotion de la viabilité
des services de bien-être de l'enfance

Recommendations

to the Honourable Laurel Broten, Minister of Children and Youth Services

SUBJECT: STREAMLINING AND SIMPLIFYING SERIOUS OCCURRENCE REPORTING

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Terms of Reference for the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare (the “Commission”) include (page 4), the expectation that the Commission will make recommendations to the Minister or Ministry that may encompass:

- *Ministry processes, in order to positively impact the effective use of resources in CASs.*
- *Effective accountability structures between the ministry and CASs.*
- *Appropriate mechanisms to recognize performance (ranging from excellence to non-compliance).*
- *Policy, including funding policy, standards, legislation and regulation, where changes facilitate improved CAS performance and maximize use of resources.*
- *Issues which impact on other parts of the children’s system.*

The Commission has received extensive information and reviewed documents from CASs and MCYS and has examined the current requirements and practices associated with the tracking of high risk child protection cases. As a result of this review and consistent with its Terms of Reference:

THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS:

- ***That the Ministry discontinue the requirement for CASs to file Serious Occurrence reports on every instance of the use of physical restraint unless the use of the restraint causes injury to a client, leads to an allegation of abuse, or if the service provider determines that the restraint did not comply with regulations (e.g. improperly applied). Every use of restraint should be logged and the logs regularly reviewed by the CAS and by the Ministry for licensing purposes.***
- ***That the Ministry instruct CASs to follow the SOR guidelines by not filing SORs in cases where another provider is obliged to do so, nor when the incident does not involve a child in care of the CAS (except where there is a death of a child) nor when a child is missing from the residence unless the provider has cause to be concerned about the child’s safety or that of others.***

- ***That the Ministry provide greater clarity and make fuller use of Serious Occurrence reports by***
 - ***Identifying a lead person in each Regional Office and ensuring that these leads provide consistent interpretation and direction to CASs across the province regarding SORs;***
 - ***Ensuring that Crown Ward reviewers restrict themselves to making recommendations within the scope of their role and cease giving directives to CASs regarding SORs on individual cases;***
 - ***Renaming Enhanced Serious Occurrence Reports as Contentious Issues Reports to better reflect their purpose and to distinguish them from Serious Occurrence Reports;***
 - ***Preparing and disseminating reports on the analysis of SOR data to Regional office staff and CASs at least annually; and***
 - ***Clarifying in the guidelines (under Category 5) the meaning of the word “disaster” to include only matters of great significance and not all “disruptions to daily routines”***

RATIONALE:

The Commission has identified four prongs to its strategy to increase the sustainability of child welfare and improve outcomes. The recommendations related to Serious Occurrence Reporting support the fourth theme: *Reducing Administrative Burdens* to free up resources for direct service to children and youth.

Streamlining and Simplifying Serious Occurrence Reporting will generate three overall benefits:

Reducing administrative burden - through eliminating duplication of missing persons reports and of reports submitted by other service providers while discontinuing unnecessary reporting of trivial incidents;

Bringing clarity to the purpose of Serious Occurrence Reporting - by achieving greater standardization of interpretation and processes across Regional Offices of MCYS and distinguishing Serious Occurrences from Contentious Issues;

Facilitating service and improving risk management - by focusing on matters that are significant, allowing more time to be spent providing direct services, and making better use of the data gathered through Serious Occurrence Reports.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS:

The full benefit of the Commission’s recommended changes in the Serious Occurrence Reporting process requires CASs to exercise the judgment that is reasonably expected of them in determining what constitutes “serious”. To that end, the Ministry should communicate that expectation to CASs at the time that it issues changes to the guidelines, and on an ongoing basis. The designated Serious Occurrence Lead in each Regional Office should discuss with each Society any SOR submissions that appear to be not “serious”.

CASs should be instructed to satisfy themselves that they receive SORs and/or MPRs from any residence in which they place children and that if a CAS receives one or more SORs or MPRs that cause concern about the care provided to any of the children it places in a residence, it should communicate its concern to any other CAS that places or may place children in that residence.

Progress in implementing the recommendations above and reducing the number of SORs filed, should be monitored at both the CAS and Regional Office level and progress should be summarized and reported quarterly.


SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Commission Background Paper #2: Serious Occurrence Reporting

These recommendations are made this 25th day of May, 2010.



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