

CHILD WELFARE REVIEW PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS PROGRESS UPDATE AUGUST 2011

Panel Recommendation	Progress Update from Government
<p>1. Implement fundamental changes to the child welfare system: create an easily accessible preventative family support stream for all families who need it, and a smaller formal child welfare stream for families where the authority of the courts is required.</p>	<p>Ministry of Social Services will move to a flexible response delivery model. Flexible response model means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families whose children are at lower risk will get support and prevent the need for foster care or other residential services. • Children at high risk of abuse or neglect receive better child welfare services. <p>A risk assessment tool incorporated with a flexible response model will be tested in Saskatoon this fiscal year.</p>
<p>2. Planned and deliberate transition to First Nations and Métis control of child welfare and preventative family support services.</p>	<p>A new relationship with First Nations and Métis in child welfare is a key part of the Child Welfare Transformation Strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters of Understanding to guide renewed relationships. • Government is engaging with First Nations and Métis to transform the system at political, senior officials, and technical working group levels. • FSIN and MNS will engage their communities to develop frameworks for child welfare. • First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies are leading work in prevention supports on-reserve, and their expertise will assist Government in developing actions.
<p>3. Include concepts contained in the <i>Children and Youth First</i> principles and the <i>Touchstones of Hope for Indigenous Children, Youth and Families</i> in legislation, and use these principles to guide planning and decision-making for children and youth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This recommendation will be considered in reviewing legislation in collaboration with partners.
<p>4. Develop and implement a Saskatchewan Children and Youth Agenda that guarantees children and youth become a high priority in the province, and that all children get a good start in life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government established the <i>Cabinet Committee on Children and Youth</i> in December 2010 to provide leadership at the highest level for the new <i>Saskatchewan Children and Youth Agenda</i>. • The first <i>Saskatchewan Children and Youth Agenda</i> Enterprise Budget in March provided \$34 million in new funds for children, youth and families. Cross-ministry investments will address key determinants of child welfare involvement, help eliminate the education and employment gaps for First Nations and Métis people, and support people with Autism or FASD. • Government wide indicators of child and family well-being are being developed.

<p>5. Acknowledge at all levels of government that poverty related conditions drive child neglect and other social problems. Make significant improvements to the income support, affordable housing, and disability service systems used by Saskatchewan families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus of the <i>Saskatchewan Children and Youth Agenda</i> is on prevention and early intervention, and addressing key determinants of child and family well-being. • Investing \$17.1 million in 2011-12 in improving First Nations and Métis Education and Employment outcomes, including a task force, pre-kindergarten spaces, high school completion and success and Adult Basic education and apprenticeship training. • Government has announced The Housing Strategy for Saskatchewan. • Adjusted shelter allowances in income support programs in April and October 2010.
<p>6. Emphasize collaborative approaches to child welfare and preventative family support services within the Ministry, across Ministries, and with Community partners. First Nations & Métis stakeholders must be involved.</p>	<p>Collaboration is a key component of all actions in the Child Welfare Transformation Strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of collaborative actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Central Urban Métis Federation respite services. ◦ Family Finders working with First Nations to find extended family care providers. ◦ Lac La Ronge First Nations Child and Family Services Agency providing off-reserve emergency after hours services. • The First Nations Family and Community Institute to provide training, policy and standards for First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies.
<p>7. Establish family violence, mental health, and substance abuse services, available without delay, for families receiving child welfare or preventative family support services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives are being considered through the integrated Saskatchewan Children and Youth Agenda. • A northern transportation pilot that increases immediate access to places of safety and transitional support for northern residents fleeing circumstances of interpersonal violence and abuse. • Several new initiatives underway to prevent FASD and to support and assess individuals with Autism and FASD.
<p>8. Ensure the court system works better for families: minimize the number of child welfare cases that go before the courts, move cases to resolution more quickly, and ensure that families, children and youth have accessible legal advice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elder Review Panels were established in Saskatoon to minimize the number of cases that go to court. • Social Services and Justice are examining Lean methods to streamline the court process for families. • The Aboriginal Court Worker Program supports child welfare cases. • Access to Justice Committee is developing approaches to support counsel for children involved in child protection proceedings.

<p>9. Take special measures to ensure children and youth in foster care and other specialized resources are safe and well cared for.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New policy developed to enhance communication between the Ministry staff responsible for identifying and addressing care giver concerns. • Reducing the number of children in homes with more than four children (874 children in March 2009 down to 467 children in March 2011). • Establishing services with First Nations and community organizations to complete home assessments for foster and extended family care; assist with supervised visits between family and children in care; and provide therapeutic foster care.
<p>10. Improve the existing system in areas where there is an urgent need for change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a flexible response model. • Roll out of the new Linkin case management system, beginning in Fort Qu'Appelle.
<p>11. Develop court-recognized custom adoption processes for First Nations & Métis children and youth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action on this recommendation will be deferred until thorough discussion with First Nations and Métis partners occurs.
<p>12. Develop and implement a strategy to attract and retain child protection workers to deliver the new vision for child welfare and preventative family support programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 new frontline child protection staff being hired to help families. • Staff are engaged in planning for child welfare transformation. • Recruitment, preparedness and retention of staff throughout the system through initiatives such as mentorship of new staff and individual staff development plans.