

THE THIN FRONT LINE

CHILD PROTECTION STAFFING AT B.C.'S MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

The Review & Audit



analysis of more than

200

MCFD DOCUMENTS & DATA SOURCES

51

INTERVIEWS WITH SOCIAL WORKERS & TEAM LEADERS

from 16 B.C. communities

AUDIT OF

40

FILES

from 4 teams in 3 offices in B.C.

audit & interviews occurred between
OCTOBER 2014 & JANUARY 2015



KEY FINDING

DRAMATIC MISMATCH BETWEEN EXPECTATIONS PLACED ON CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS AND AVAILABLE CHILD PROTECTION STAFFING RESOURCES



Workers report that they are dealing with an incoming stream of new child safety reports and too little coverage for absent colleagues

at any given time, 10% OF FRONT-LINE SOCIAL WORKER POSITIONS are vacant or unfilled

“There’s always someone on leave”
“Your work waits for you when you are away”

Recruitment and retention of social workers is difficult, particularly in rural and remote locations

As more workers become eligible for retirement, turnover will continue to pose a problem for the front line

“The last five to 10 years has been a revolving door for staff”

POOR RETENTION PERPETUATES A VICIOUS CIRCLE
Because the workers who remain behind face additional workload pressures, staff turnover rates remain particularly high

BECAUSE OF HEAVY WORKLOADS, CHILD WELFARE STANDARDS ARE ROUTINELY NOT MET

“Front-line social workers are not the ones saying, ‘I don’t want to see that kid, I’m going to wait 45 days.’ It’s because they have 35 incidents sitting on their caseloads”

On Nov. 30, 2014, there were child protection incidents still open after 90 days

8,227

– well beyond the mandated child protection standard



In 2015, there were front-line child protection workers

1,184

a decrease of 44 workers since 2002

The complexity of child protection work has increased, but there are fewer front-line workers now than in 2002

“[Children are] as safe as they can be with what we have to work with”

MCFD staff report

THAT MANY FAMILIES & CHILDREN ARE NOT RECEIVING TIMELY SERVICES, & SOME CHILDREN ARE LEFT IN UNSAFE SITUATIONS

“Are kids safe? We provide a little above the bare minimum. We get to calls and reports in time but it’s after that, the follow-up that goes wanting...”

“There is a lot of tension, a lot of people can’t cope, want to move on”

SOCIAL WORKERS ARE BECOMING DISENGAGED AND TAKING SICK LEAVE AT A HIGHER RATE THAN THE REST OF GOVERNMENT



In 2013, the employee engagement scores at MCFD were lower than the overall average in the B.C. government. There has been a 4.8% decrease in work environment scores at MCFD since 2008

IN 2014/15, THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL WORKER SICK DAYS PER YEAR WAS

12.8

higher than the government average

“Timelines don’t mean anything here; there’s no way it’s humanly possible to meet timelines with the complexity of cases and the level of staffing...”

Recommendations of B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth include:

- Increase MCFD's staffing budget to fully fund child protection work, including staff leaves.
- Update MCFD's 10-year old workload model to more accurately reflect child protection tasks.
- Make recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff a priority and set targets to reach this goal.



REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

For more information, see the full report: www.rcybc.ca/thinfrontline