

NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Children and Family Development
Representative for Children and Youth

Joint report results in action plan to reduce hotel stays as placements

VICTORIA – The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) has formalized, in written policy, the social work standard of only placing children and youth in care in hotels in exceptional circumstances when no other option is available. The ministry is also implementing a new practice directive that social workers must follow in these situations.

The changes are a direct result of a joint special report by MCFD and the representative for children and youth (RCY) on the use of hotels, released today. The joint report was initiated following the September 2015 death of a B.C. youth in care who had been placed in a hotel for a lengthy stay.

The new policy and companion practice directive sets out standard operating procedures on the use of hotels, the approval process, tracking, monitoring and oversight of hotel stays. It also stipulates the required supports provided to the child in the hotel, the qualifications of the individuals caring for the child, and reporting to the RCY. Changes took effect Jan. 13, 2016.

In addition to the practice directive, the joint report calls for MCFD to increase the number of available residential resources to address the current gap in emergency placements, ensure contracted caregivers are trained and vetted to the higher standard required of foster parents and formally report to the representative any hotel placements lasting longer than three days. A full public reporting on hotel placements by MCFD every six months will begin June 1, 2016.

The joint report found that between November 2014 and October 2015, a total of 117 children and youth in the care of the province were placed in hotels; representing 2% of the total ministry case load during that time. Some of those children and youth were placed in hotels more than once, bringing the total placements to 131. While 55% of those placements were for one night, the average hotel stay was 2.7 nights. The longest stay was 49 nights and related to the case of youth in care who died in September 2015.

The vast majority of hotel placements occurred after children and youth were taken into care unexpectedly, or after an existing placement for a child or youth broke down. Most hotel placements were made during evening and weekend hours.

The joint report was informed by a review of relevant literature, consultation with subject matter experts, and joint interviews conducted with MCFD and Delegated Aboriginal Agency (DAA) staff, supervisors, contracted service providers and others.

The practice directive states: "Hotels are not appropriate living arrangements for children in care (CICs). Children in care may only be placed in hotels in exceptional circumstances for short durations approved by a designated director when no other appropriate resource is available."

Quotes:

Representative for Children and Youth Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond -

"I want to see the use of hotels as placements for children and youth completely eliminated and this is a good initial step. Every child needs and deserves a stable home in a family environment and I am pleased that RCY and the ministry were able to work quickly and collaboratively on this report to identify the scope of the problem and make progress toward eliminating it. We will continue to monitor this issue closely. Further investigation of how specific youth have been impacted by hotel stays is underway in my office and I anticipate detailed reporting on this matter later in 2016."

Children and Family Development Minister Stephanie Cadieux -

"Our ultimate goal is to eliminate hotel placements entirely. Government can't do that alone however and we need more people to step up, get trained and work with us to provide kids in care with the stable homes they so desperately need and deserve. Consistent with my mandate letter, we are working on a foster recruitment, remuneration and retention plan that will be presented to cabinet later this year."

To view a copy of the report please click on the following link:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/services-and-supports-for-parents-with-young-children/reporting-publications-monitoring>

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