

Introduction

2011-2012 was a year of transition, as we move forward in developing a social services system that reflects and incorporates Inuit societal values. The work undertaken was informed by the *Report on Child and Family Services in Nunavut*, prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG), which was tabled in March 2011 through the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. As well, the Department of Health and Social Services (HSS) drew upon the feedback received during extensive public consultations undertaken during 2010-2011 as part of the Social Services Review. The Final Report from the Social Services Review was released in July 2011 and was tabled by the Minister of Health and Social Services in the fall 2011 sitting; work began immediately to act upon the findings.

The Department undertook steps for change, which included:

1. The hiring of an Executive Director – Social Programs, who has the responsibility to oversee the development of appropriate standards and programs. This position also has the ability to enforce standards;
2. Strengthening working relationships within the Department;
3. Renewing its relationship with key external stakeholders, such as Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) and the RCMP;
4. Expanding its relationship within the Government of Nunavut (GN) with key departments such as the Department of Justice and the Department of Education; and
5. Looking beyond the borders of Nunavut to other circumpolar countries, such as Greenland, to find those best practices which can be incorporated into Nunavut's social services system.

This report covers the period from April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012.

Actions Taken in Relation to OAG Recommendations

HSS prepared an Action Plan in response to the recommendations of the Report on Child and Family Services in Nunavut, prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG). The following is a summary of the work carried out by the Social Services Division during 2011-2012 based on that plan:

OAG Recommendation: *The Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice should take steps so that the community social service workers no longer perform correctional services.*

HSS and the Department of Justice (Justice) have undertaken a joint, three-year, transitional timeline to transfer correctional service functions from HSS Community Social Service Workers (CSSW) to the Department of Justice in those communities where this was the practice. The Department of Justice has created four new Community Corrections Officer (CCO) positions. As of March

31, 2012, CSSWs continue to provide probation services in 11 communities: Grise Fiord, Hall Beach, Kimmirut, Qikiqtarjuaq, Resolute Bay, Chesterfield Inlet, Coral Harbour, Repulse Bay, Whale Cove, Clyde River and Kugaaruk. The Department of Justice is working to secure sufficient resources to create and support the necessary CCO positions for these remaining communities including securing office space and staff housing for the new positions; as necessary communities will be serviced by CCOs from other communities. The goal is to have this transfer completed by November 2013.

OAG Recommendation: *The Department of Health and Social Services, in collaboration with the Department of Human Resources, should develop short-, medium- and long term strategies to fill community social service worker positions in order to ensure that each community has adequate child and family services coverage.*

The Department of Human Resources (HR) has provided a staffing consultant, on a one-time basis, to coordinate the competitions for all Community Social Services Worker (CSSW) recruitment. Standardized job descriptions and newspaper ads have been created.

A CSSW Trainee proposal has been developed, for consideration, as an alternative to filling vacant positions with fully qualified applicants; recent applicant pools have demonstrated that it is not necessary to lower hiring standards

The Department is considering recommendations from the Social Services Review to create CSSW Assistant and/or Family Support Worker positions.

Through a focused recruitment effort, there are seven remaining vacancies within the 39 CSSW positions. Coverage in these communities is being provided by casual staff or from the appropriate regional office.

A new round of interviews is being set up to fill these vacancies.

The focus is now being moved from recruitment to retention. Proactive vacancy management has also been identified as a priority.

OAG Recommendation: *The Department of Health and Social Services should perform an analysis of the workload of community social service workers. It should also set workload standards and take steps to ensure those standards are met.*

An Initial workload analysis was initiated in May 2011 to review the number of "open" cases per CSSW, as reflected on the social services spreadsheet.

Consultations and an environmental scan of best practices in case load assignments in other jurisdictions have been completed, with the conclusion that Nunavut will need to develop its own caseload standards.

The Social Services Transformation Plan under development anticipates the delivery of new community based services and supports. This will create new roles for social service staff and, potentially, new types of positions. In this

process, it is anticipated that the role of CSSWs will be revisited. Therefore, further review regarding work load standards is on hold.

In the interim, efforts are continuing to fill all existing CSSW positions, which will effectively increase staffing capacity by 40%.

OAG Recommendation: *The Department of Health and Social Services should ensure that mandatory training is delivered to each community social service worker in a timely fashion before the worker obtains a Child Protection Worker Appointment.*

The Department has taken under consideration the possibility of creating the new position of Child Protection Statutory Trainer/Training Coordinator. A draft job description and business case have been developed and are under review.

In reviewing the OAG recommendations in tandem with the recommendations of the Social Services Review, consideration is being given to utilizing standardized, evidence-based training frameworks and training infrastructures utilized by other jurisdictions.

The Department is working with the Child Welfare League of Canada to complete an analysis of training options and an associated ongoing professional development strategy for management, supervisors, and CSSWs.

As a first step, management training modules from the Quebec child welfare system were delivered in September and November 2011. Supervisory training based on the Ontario curriculum was delivered in March 2012.

In the interim, in-house statutory child welfare training was provided to all previously untrained CSSWs in November 2011 by two Regional Directors of Social Programs, both with Masters Degrees in Social Work.

In-house training of newly hired CSSWs is being organized for April 2012.

OAG Recommendation: *The Department of Health and Social Services should provide supplemental training, including Inuit societal values training, that community social service workers require, based on the training needs and gaps identified in annual audits and appraisals.*

In response to the recommendation above, the proposed position of Child Protection Statutory Trainer/Training Coordinator is under consideration.

HSS has approached the Department of Culture Language, Elders and Youth about developing plans to incorporate Inuit Qaujimagatunqangit (IQ) / Inuit Societal Values into the training of CSSWs.

In recently completed statutory training, Inuit societal values and cultural practices were incorporated into the curriculum and delivered by Elders.

OAG Recommendation: *The Department of Health and Social Services should ensure that case management standards are met by having community social service workers meet with the children and their families and having supervisors review case plans as and when required.*

The Director of Child and Family Services has issued a clear directive to all Directors of Social Programs and Supervisors of Social Programs to re-emphasize the need to comply with these standards.

A full staff teleconference took place in April, 2011 to address the compliance requirements with these case management standards.

The Department has included case management standards in the Statutory Training Plan for new CSSW hires, and refresher / update training of all CSSWs and Supervisors, as per previous practice.

The Department has made plans for a workshop with Directors of Social Programs and Supervisors of Social Programs to review and discuss case management standards.

Regional Directors asked for and took on responsibility for ensuring that these standards are met within their respective regions. Delegation of this responsibility was confirmed during the September 2011 management retreat / training session. An assessment of compliance will be undertaken in September 2012 through an HQ-led audit.

OAG Recommendation: *The Department of Health and Social Services should ensure that community social service workers and supervisors keep accurate records of visits to children under care and maintain complete documentation, as required by the Child and Family Services Act.*

The Director of Child and Family Services has issued a clear directive to Directors of Social Programs, Supervisors of Social Programs and CSSWs to reiterate the statutory requirement to keep complete and up-to-date case documentation.

Supervisors of Social Programs have been provided with a case file audit checklist and protocol for conducting random audits of open and closed files. The Area Supervisor of Social Services from Pond Inlet, for example, has completed the first random file audit and submitted it to HQ.

The curriculum of the Statutory Training includes a formal section on statutory file documentation and record keeping requirements and processes. Plans are in place to review this material in preparation for the development of the Statutory Training Plan.

Regional Directors asked for and took on responsibility for ensuring that these standards are met within their respective regions. Delegation of this responsibility was confirmed during the September 2011 management retreat / training session. An assessment of compliance will be undertaken in September

2012 through an HQ-led audit. Review of electronic client information systems has included a focus on case management and auditing capabilities.

OAG Recommendation: *When placing a child outside of the parental home for his or her safety and best interests, the Department of Health and Social Services should comply with its own directives and standards by:*

- *Completing required safety checks such as a criminal record check, foster care home study, or group home evaluation;*
- *Ensuring facilities it deals with have a current license to operate; and*
- *Visiting children placed in facilities outside Nunavut, as required.*

Foster homes are being approved for the placement of children only after having a formal home study done and criminal record checks completed on all adults residing in the home.

A review is being undertaken to confirm that criminal record checks have been completed on all adults residing in current foster homes

Children are being placed only in pre-approved foster homes.

CSSWs have been instructed that a foster home file needs to be created and maintained for all approved foster parents in their community, with a copy forwarded to Social Services headquarters.

The Department has taken under consideration of the possibility of creating the new position of Residential Care Compliance Coordinator. A draft job description and business case have been developed and are under review.

Regional Directors asked for and took on responsibility for ensuring that these standards are met within their respective regions. Delegation of this responsibility was confirmed in the September 2011 management retreat / training session. An assessment of compliance will be undertaken in September 2012 through a HQ-led audit. Regional Directors are taking responsibility for standard compliance and in-territory facility reviews within their region.

Two regional Directors of Social Services have taken the lead in conducting out-of-territory facility reviews, with HQ support. A contractor has also been hired to assist with this project.

OAG Recommendation: *As per its standards and procedures, the Department of Health and Social Services should conduct annual audits of child protection files to verify that supervisors and community social service workers are fulfilling the requirements of the Child and Family Services Act. It should use the results to guide community social services workers' training.*

Supervisors of Social Programs have been provided with a case file audit checklist and protocol for conducting random audits of open and closed files.

The Area Supervisor of Social Services from Pond Inlet, for example, has completed the first random file audit and submitted it to HQ.

The curriculum of the Statutory Training includes a formal section on statutory file documentation and record keeping requirements and processes. Plans are in place to review this material in preparation for the development of the Statutory Training Plan.

Regional Directors asked for and took on responsibility for ensuring that these standards are met within their respective regions. Delegation of this responsibility was confirmed in the September 2011 management retreat / training session. An assessment of compliance will be undertaken in September 2012 through a HQ-led audit.

OAG Recommendation: *The Department of Health and Social Services should ensure that the regions collect basic information about the children in care and send it to headquarters on a timely basis.*

Direction has been given for the monthly occupancy reports to be reviewed and signed by the Regional Program Director submitting the report – in order to begin increasing accountability.

Regional Directors asked for and took on responsibility for ensuring that these standards are met within their respective regions. Delegation of this responsibility was confirmed in the September 2011 management retreat / training session. As of March 31, 2012, regional reports are not being submitted consistently. Follow-up with the ADM Operations is underway to address this issue. An assessment of compliance will be undertaken in September 2012 through a HQ-led audit.

OAG Recommendation: *The Department of Health and Social Services should determine what additional information needs to be collected, tracked and analyzed in order to provide management with trends about children in care, including but not limited to repeat users of child and family services; analysis by issue (for example, neglect, sexual abuse, violence); and analysis by community.*

The Department has reviewed past attempts to complete this project in order to inform development of a new action plan.

The Department has taken steps to focus attention on compliance with the existing “paper system”, in preparation for automation in the future.

The Child Welfare League of Canada has been contracted to assist in identifying and assessing database options. Initial review of the Nova Scotia child welfare database is promising.

Analysis of database design and utility highlights the critical importance of this project in driving standards compliance and system oversight, particularly with staff working with little direct supervision.

OAG Recommendation: *The Department of Health and Social Services should use its analyses of children in care to:*

- *develop, as needed, community-based, territory-wide or issue-specific strategies aimed at preventing and identifying abuse and ensuring that children and their families are receiving the protection to which they are entitled; and*
- *include information on these analyses in annual reports to the Minister of Health and Social Services.*

The Department has reviewed its capacity to collect and manage child in care data, as well as to undertake data analysis.

Regional Directors asked for and took on responsibility for ensuring that these standards are met within their respective regions. Delegation of this responsibility was confirmed in the September 2011 management retreat / training session. An assessment of compliance will be undertaken in September 2012 through a HQ-led audit.

HSS Information Technology provided technical assistance in making some upgrades to the existing Headquarters client database (simple Access database), however lack of direct access to regional data results in an unreliable database. The HQ team has had the ability to provide basic analysis of the available data.

The use of social service generated data to inform service planning is not yet taking place. However, health data (for example: Tchouaffi, P. and Sobol, I. (2011). *Nunavut Report on Comparable Health Indicators 2011*. Iqaluit: Department of Health and Social Services) and information presented in externally developed reports clearly (for example: Rae, L. (2011). *Inuit Child Welfare and Family Support: Policies, Programs and Strategies*. Ottawa: National Aboriginal Health Organization) identifies the pressing social issues for which programming needs to be developed.

OAG Recommendation: *The Department of Health and Social Services should engage parents and communities in a dialogue focused on keeping children safe. It should use their input to develop strategies that will incorporate community-based solutions.*

The recently completed Social Services Review has included a focus on the involvement of parents, families and the community as a whole in the development of strategies to keep children safe.

The Social Services Transformation Plan under development identifies new mechanisms for parental, youth, Elder and community engagement.

OAG Recommendation: *As the Department of Health and Social Services develops its action plan to respond to the recommendations contained in the Child and Family Services section of the report, it should prioritize the implementation of its commitments on a short-, medium-, and long-term basis.*

Initial work plan and project charters were developed in July 2011.

Lack of project management capacity and resources at both the regional and HQ levels has slowed the progress of the projects identified in the work plan to address the OAG recommendations. Strategies to address these challenges are being explored.

OAG Recommendation: *The Department of Health and Social Services should ensure that it complies with the requirements of the Adoption Act and its Regulations and the Department's adoption manual, such as completing a pre-placement report, family union report on adoptive parents.*

All pending adoption files in HQ were reviewed for compliance with this recommendation.

A review of adoption file management processes was completed and new procedures initiated to facilitate compliance with requirements of the *Adoption Act* and effective case management.

OAG Recommendation: *The Department of Health and Social Services should conduct periodic follow ups with the regional Inuit associations to confirm that correspondence it sent to the associations has been received and that the associations do not have input regarding the adoption of a child.*

The Department has contacted the Regional Inuit Associations (RIAs) to review and where necessary, clarify the role RIAs have in the adoption process.

An audit for compliance was initiated in March 2012. The resulting report will be used in 2012-13 for quality improvement, as required.

OAG Recommendation: *The Government of Nunavut should consider reviewing the Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act to:*

- *ensure that the responsibilities are made clear with respect to the safety and best interests of the child, and;*
- *ensure that the Act continues to meet the need to reflect Aboriginal customary law.*

Through the Knowledge Sharing Forum and the Social Services Review, the Department has received feedback regarding custom adoptions in relation to the current legislation.

The timelines for this project have been moved forward in light of recent events which have highlighted weaknesses in the *Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act (ACARA)*. A legal opinion has been requested regarding potential changes to the *ACARA*.

Actions Taken in Response to the Social Services Review Final Report

The Child Welfare League of Canada completed the Social Services Review Final Report in July 2011. The report and its recommendations were based on extensive stakeholder consultations conducted during 2010-2011.

The Introduction to the Final Report notes:

“The intent of this Report is to focus on concrete and practical recommendations and accompanying suggested steps that can lead to meaningful change.

An effective social service system that protects children and supports families requires a number of components. Key elements include, but are not limited to:

- adequate numbers of qualified, culturally-competent staff;
- ready access to social supports and prevention services;
- a pool of foster and alternative care resources;
- on-going monitoring and evaluation;
- accountability mechanisms; and,
- communities and governments that assume responsibility for problem solving.

The eleven recommendations which are detailed in this report are intended to promote the conditions specified above. The recommendations, while presented individually, are intended to reinforce one another. The problems they address are complex and have many facets. Sadly, these problems have been years, in some cases generations in the making. They will not be surmounted overnight. Not surprisingly, the solutions that are recommended involve many elements that need to be addressed together and at the same time. Addressing these recommendations will require a major public investment in protecting children and youth. That is an investment that Nunavummiut have signalled, throughout the consultations, that they want the Government of Nunavut to make to better protect the well-being of their children, youth, families and culture.” (Final Report, page 5).

The following are the Final Report recommendations:

1. Reflect the strengths of Inuit culture to develop a more culturally competent approach to social services.
2. Enhance the role of Elders to enrich and strengthen the cultural validity of social services.
3. Improve and support the provision of child and family services.
4. Establish a multi-year, prevention-focused social development funding program to build and strengthen community-based programming.

5. Develop and implement a community-based training and skills acquisition strategy for child and family service personnel.
6. Adopt a dual track or differential response model for service.
7. Establish an office of the territorial child and youth advocate.
8. Involve children and youth in developing solutions.
9. Improve the legal framework.
10. Establish a Social Service Development Forum.
11. Implement a family-based care resource development strategy.

Based on these recommendations, as well as those of the *Knowledge Sharing Forum: A review of child welfare practices in Nunavut* (2010) and the *OAG Report on Children, Youth and Family Programs and Services in Nunavut*, HSS has developed a Discussion Paper to begin the process of planning for development and transformation of the Nunavut social services system. A Social Services Transformation Plan is being written to outline this new vision. The Social Services Review Advisory Committee, which includes representation from NTI and other stakeholder groups, have been involved in this planning process.

In the interim, the Department has begun to take immediate action in three key areas:

Legislation

- Undertaking a legislative review of the *Child and Family Services Act*
- Participating in the Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs led development of new legislation to establish a Children and Youth Representative (advocate)

Services

- Identifying new approaches to social services, reflecting Inuit societal values and international human rights standards
- Strengthening child protection processes
- Beginning to plan for expanding service capacity at the community-level
- Beginning to expand capacity to deliver specialized services for foster and kinship care

Management

- Establishing quality assurance processes
- Strengthening administrative systems
- Building staff capacity
- Ensuring consistency of service delivery across the territory

Child Welfare Statistics

As noted in the OAG Report, the Social Services data collection system is inadequate to support effective case management, child welfare supervision, systems management or overall program planning – or to meet the reporting requirements stipulated in the Regulations of the *Child and Family Services Act* pertaining to the Director’s annual report. The Social Services division currently relies on monthly data reports prepared by the regional offices; these reports are submitted on a spreadsheet, the data is then manually transferred to a simple database. This database is configured as a single table, which is overwritten each month. There are many steps in the data collection process in which errors can be created and not readily identified. This makes the reliability of data from the current system very weak.

It is important to note that data from the current system reflects point-in-time information only; an accurate count of the total number of children served in any data category over a one year period is not available. Further, data for a particular point in time is only available if a copy of the master spreadsheet was made on that date.

Work is underway to plan for the development and implementation of a client information system, when resources are made available for the Social Services division to do so.

With the above caveats, the following are the child welfare statistics at the end of the 2011-2012 fiscal year:

Table 1. Child Protection Statistics by Status on March 30, 2012

Temporary Wards	19
Permanent Wards	98
Plan of Care Agreements	40
Voluntary Service Agreements	116
Support Service Agreements	52
Supervision Orders	7
Courtesy Supervision	6
Court Adjourned Cases	39
At Apprehension Stage	16
TOTAL	393

Table 2. Child Protection Statistics by Region on March 30, 2012

Baffin (without Iqaluit)	155
Iqaluit	118
Kivalliq	65
Kitikmeot	55
TOTAL	393

Social Services Leadership

In March 2011, a new indeterminate staff person took over the role of the Executive Director - Social Programs; this role has key responsibilities in the areas of strategic planning and service capacity development. Since the May 2012 retirement of the Director of Child and Family Services, an Acting Director has been serving in the role, and is responsible for the production of this report.

Future Directions

The coming year will be an exciting and busy one for the Social Services division. A commitment has been made to legislative reform and work is underway to prepare a legislative proposal to amend the *Child and Family Services Act*. This will lay the groundwork for social services transformation.

There is public expectation that community services and supports be expanded and strengthened. The Social Services division is preparing plans to guide this development. It will be necessary to work closely with other GN departments, as well as communities across the territory to leverage available resources and work together to strengthen family and community capacity. These partnerships are particularly important in helping children and youth to reach their full potential. With over 1,000 individuals who have participated in the Social Services Review consultations and planning work to date, the Department is very encouraged about the future.