

Child and Family Services – Newfoundland and Labrador

Overview

Child and Family services in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish is provided by the Newfoundland Provincial Government through the Grenfell Health Authority in Happy Valley Goose Bay. Staff is located in Sheshatshiu and travel to Natuashish on a regular basis. There currently is no CFS presence in Natuashish, however there has been in the recent past. The issue is staff retention and there are no immediate plans to have a full time presence in that community.

The office is located in the only provincial building in Sheshshatshiu. It was a former Public Works building built in the 1970's and is small and insufficient. It does not permit sufficient space for the number of staff and there are obvious security issues for staff as well as file security concerns.

Currently there is 19 staff servicing the two communities. The regional director, a clinical manager, administrative manager, 4 social workers assigned to child protection, with one of those focusing on foster care, 6 community service workers (4 in Sheshshatshiu and 2 in Natuashish) who speak the language and are actively involved in the case management and liaison in clinical and financial requests with the social workers, a behavior management specialist, and other administrative support staff. Two additional positions were recently approved for each community referred to as family intervention workers who will be required to teach skills to parents.

Recruitment and retention are major issues for the CFS agency and there is an expectation that 2 of the 4 social workers will be leaving in the next few months.

Both communities have a combined population of 1900, with Sheshshatshiu being twice as large. Interestingly the birth rate in both communities is extremely high with a number of parents aged 12 and 13 years in the community. This also translates to the child protection caseload. Of the **309 children receiving protective intervention** (children at risk who remain with the family and receive services), 200 are less than 10 years of age. Of the **112 children in care**, 72 are less than 10 years of age.

Child and Family Services

The focus of CFS is protection and dealing with apprehensions and placement of children in care. The agency deals with approximately 30 referrals on average per month. They have a large number of children on their protection intervention caseload and provide mainly social work support and place few other services in

the home. This oftentimes results in the level of service increasing when the child/family is in crisis, often leading to apprehension and placement. Unfortunately there are few resources for prevention either with CFS or in the community. Specifically in Shehshatshiu, there is limited resources/infrastructure to assist with child wellness.

There is some mental health services located in Goose Bay. There are no counselors who can speak the Innu language. Psychiatric services are sporadic with a psychiatrist visiting Goose Bay 4 times per year. Communities are currently working on a mobile mental health team. As well, there is a FASD consultant in each community to complete screening only. There remains one Doctor in Goose Bay that will diagnose and treat children with FASD. There is one psychologist in Goose Bay, however she is generally unavailable for counseling. The day care in the community has the capacity to take 8 children and is mostly utilized by employed parents. The head start program is limited to 3 and 4 year olds and they must be accompanied by a parent to the program.

The community has a safe house and attached to this, a young offender group home. The safe house was originally built to provide a safe environment for gas sniffing children prominent in the early 2000's. Today it is not being fully utilized. CFS has used the facility to provide short term emergency placements and although staffed, CFS staff is also required to remain with the child. As well, the young offender group home is under utilized. CFS noted they would like to have it re designated as a child welfare group home.

The Innu Nation also have one parent support worker in each community and the Regional Director believe they should have a role and work collaboratively with CFS and provide some of the prevention work for children who are at risk but maintained in their own home.

The community also has a women's shelter that can accommodate 4 to 5 families. As well, the Charles J Anderson is a youth addictions inpatient program however CFS notes that the difficulty is getting children to remain in treatment.

The community has a new all grade school. They currently offer a breakfast and lunch program only. Historically school attendance has been sporadic and overall dismal. It was noted by the Regional Director that there has been only 6 university graduates from the two communities.

The standard of living in the community is mixed. There are a number of new homes and new housing construction as well as infrastructure in the community. All members receive the dividends from the Impact evaluation and few community members receive social assistance. Most adults are employed as the demographics suggest that the employable adult population is quite small. Income does not seem to be the main issue with regards to the high number of child social issues. The issue appears to be capacity and a cultural milieu of few

boundaries and limits placed on children. Traditionally all community members were involved in raising of the children in the community, however due to forced assimilation and the introduction of alcohol and drugs into these communities, the rate of child neglect and abuse has increased substantially.

The Regional Director and other provincial authorities recognize gaps in mandated services; however there is also recognition that the community leaders and community in general have to become more invested in children's wellness. Currently there are a high number of children in care and it has increased considerably the past 10 years. The emphasize with the Provincial authorities and supported by the community is to keep children in their communities. The large majority of children in care remain with relatives in their community of origin. Some, mostly older children who are often considered to be beyond parental control when they come to the attention of CFS, elect to be placed in Ontario. The decision is based on the child's needs. Oftentimes these children are older, requiring additional supports and services not available in local communities. There are currently 21 children in Ontario through private therapeutic foster homes referred to as Broken Arrow. The province also pays Tuskers, a company to provide case management services to these children. Generally the costs associated with these children are extremely high. As a pilot project, the Regional Director and the GHA have developed /approved four therapeutic foster homes in Sheshsatshiu where the foster family is expected to provide all services for a per diem of 135.00 per day. This would include any one on one, respite supports required as well as local transportation costs related to the child.

The current CFS workload in the communities is as follows:

Sheshatshiu	Natuashish
40 continuous care(permanently in care of DCW)	19
15 temporary care	5
16 interim care(continuing temp care)	7
9 youth services	5
204 protective interventions (prevention services for child to remain with family)	105
28 child welfare allowances	32 child welfare allowances

Currently the CFS program has 112 children in care (including the 10 youth who were in care prior to 16 years of age) and providing intervention and services to upwards of 485 children in the two communities.

CFS NL Program Areas and Relevant Codes

Child Welfare Allowances:

Basically CFS views this as a financial arrangement only, oftentimes as a result of a relative taking care of a child and requesting financial assistance through the CFS program. It's noted that the number of CWAs approved are decreasing and the Province is phasing out this program and moving toward the expectation that family are required to care for family without financial compensation, or to apply through the income assistance program. Most people are not on income assistance in the two communities. Caseload for CWA is decreasing as there used to be 100 cases in each community. Families receive a basic per diem (0-11 \$318.00 , 12+ \$379.00) as well as a special need rate to a maximum of \$1080.00 depending on the child's special needs , which is coded all under 63 as well as other services and are reimbursed monthly. This program ends when the child turns 16. There is no intervention from CFS or approval process for these homes. The child is entitled to the per diem as well as other services such as transportation and counseling and totaled \$61,497.19 for the month of July 09. **This would not be covered under INAC CFS program as eligible expenditures as this type of program would be funded through an Income Assistance program.** In 2008-2009, \$548,298.54 was reimbursed through the CFS maintenance program.

Protection Intervention:

There are in excess of 300 cases in both communities. These are open protection cases where the child has been assessed as at risk but can remain in the home and receive continued monitoring. Unfortunately, these cases receive minimal intervention as the priority for the 4 social workers is crisis intervention, ie apprehension and foster children. It's noted that there is some social work involvement however there are few case plans completed for services or financial involvement .

INAC would consider this to be prevention type services and would fund these services through operations under 20-1. In the 09-10 agreement \$970,415.00 was committed to operations.

The services considered prevention noted in the July 2009 review were few and placed under maintenance and reimbursed by INAC. In July 2009, a total of 5 children received services totaling \$4444.53. **Any financial reimbursement of prevention programs should be from the operations budget as opposed to the maintenance budget.** This amount would certainly demonstrate the limited prevention program/services offered to Innu children compared to the \$511,465.89 reimbursed by INAC for maintenance expenditures for the month of July 2009.

Family Services:

This is a small program where the parent is considered protective and the need is based on the child. For example it could include specialized counseling for child, formula, and food voucher. This is coded under 26 and not submitted to INAC for reimbursement and therefore the approximate cost is unknown. **These expenditures should be directed and reimbursable through the income assistance program.** Currently there are 2 cases in Natuashish and 14 in Sheshshatshiu.

Foster Care/ Special Living Arrangements:

There is an expectation that Innu children will remain in their community and children who are apprehended will be placed with relatives. There are few children placed outside the community beside children placed in Broken Arrow in Ontario.

Currently there are 53 foster homes in Sheshshatshiu and 9 in Natuashish, mostly relatives of apprehended children. Of these 62 foster homes, 11 are considered to be approved foster homes according to provincial standards. The Province require foster homes to undergo criminal records checks, CFS record check, home study, environmental scan of home as well as PRIDE training. As an interim measure or when placing children with relatives, a minimum standard would be required and include all of the above requirements except the detailed home study.

Currently, 51 homes are not meeting the minimum standard. One of the four social workers have the foster care file for licensing and PRIDE training, however her priority has been crisis intervention and child protection.

The Regional Director has indicated that the Director of Child Welfare is aware of the issues of non compliance with regards to foster care standards. It was noted by the Regional Director that she has been a resident in Sheshshatshiu for 20 plus years and is confident that she is familiar with the families and any issues that would prevent children from placement in the family's care.

Regular foster care rates (code 77) have recently increased from \$619 to \$760.00 depending on the age of the child as well as the introduction of a Labrador allowance of \$54.00 to \$167.00 depending on the age of the child and community location of the foster family. The GHA has yet to bill INAC the new rates in effect.

Many foster parents also receive special foster care (93) up to a maximum of \$1080.00 in addition to the regular rate depending on the special needs of the child. These special needs are determined by the social worker through an assessment based on certain ratings of indicators and extra duties required by

the foster parents based on the child's needs. It could be related to medication needs, feeding issues, behavioral problems etc. **This per diem would be reimbursed by INAC on a monthly basis from maintenance.**

Also related to foster care rates is special living arrangements, code 79. This is where the per diem for Broken Arrow children are recorded as well as therapeutic foster homes in Sheshshatshui.

In response to the community outcry with regards to sending children to Ontario, CFS has entered into special care agreements with foster parents to care for up to two children if one parent is willing to remain at home. The foster family would receive a flat rate of 135.00 per day per child which would be an all inclusive rate related to the care of the child. Currently there are 4 homes in Sheshshatshui approved at a cost of \$4050.00 per month per child. **These services are eligible expenses for reimbursement through maintenance.**

Counseling Services:

Code 40 is for professional counseling services. The large majority of counseling services are children who are in Ontario in therapeutic foster homes referred to as Broken Arrow. As noted above, there are few professional counseling services available in Labrador. **This service would be an eligible expenditure under maintenance reimbursement.**

One on One Support:

This is a service available to foster children and is meant for the child. It is based on a social work assessment, in consultation with the behavior management specialist. It would outline a plan for the type and number of one on one support hours required to assist the child in modifying the particular behavior. The cost of this program is tremendous. As an example for the month of July, 26 children in care received this service at a cost of approximately \$100,000.00 per month. Of these 26 children, 11 of these children received extensive support costing from \$4500.00 to \$10,500.00 each.

Children with Broken Arrow have one on one supports and have a support person with them for academic and clinical issues. **The costs related to academic support would not be covered through CFS maintenance as it is an educational service and covered through other authorities.** With Broken Arrow children, this support service charges \$25.00 per hour and averaged \$38,000 for the month reviewed. One on one supports for foster children who remain in the communities receive \$9.79 per hour and \$14.25 OT rate after 80

hours. This rate is as per provincial standards as well as the RD approving beyond 20 hours per week.

Currently in Sheshshashui and Natuashish, the employment of the one on one worker is completed by the foster parent. Standards are required in terms of a criminal check and reference and the responsibility of the social worker to enforce. There is no indication that this is being completed or standards applied.

One on one workers are paid by the Band who administers the financial aspect of the program. The band is currently charging an administering fee of 30.00 per check issued to a worker. Based on July 2009, this can often cost 7-8000.00 per month, which is built into the one on one support costs billed to INAC under code 41. **This should not be billed to CFS maintenance and administration of this program would fall under the operations budget. Considering the average monthly cost, this would amount to \$96,000 per year that maintenance is currently covering that should be paid through operations.**

The GHA/CFS is under the impression that this service had to be contracted out as not for profit organizations cannot have a business number. Workers receive benefits and pay EI and CPP, which are also billed to INAC.

The issue with the one on one program appears to be related to the intention of the program which should be clarified with the Director of Child Welfare. It's suspected that it is well beyond the reality of its application in the two communities and the RD did acknowledge that their agency utilizes this service extensively compared to the remainder of CFS in Newfoundland. Another concern is that these workers have little formal education/knowledge of early childhood education, are not screened for criminal checks or provided with support and training. The CFS RD noted that July was possibly higher than usual due to the fact that children were not in school. She also acknowledged that it is used extensively possibly due to the lack of professional services /supports for children in the area. **This service would be eligible for reimbursement by INAC through maintenance for children in care.**

Also noteworthy, under one on one supports are the preliminary conversations CFS is currently having with the Labrador Innu Education Board. They have requested that they would like to discuss the use of one on one support in the schools. Previously they were unable due to unionized teaching assistants. The RD was advised that this would not be an eligible maintenance expense as its provided under another authority, education services. This will have to be reiterated in the agreement as it currently specifies one on one service is not reimbursable in day care settings only.

Respite Care:

Respite services are minimal in these two communities and expenditures would be reimbursable through maintenance. It was noted that the province has set rates and caps (\$10.29 per hr/20 hr per week) that were not exceeded in the month reviewed. It's difficult to obtain respite services and homes given the size of the community. The total claimed for the two communities the month of July was \$6362.30.

Transportation:

Currently INAC is being billed transportation upon placement, school, parental visiting and other. GHA were under the impression that they could not bill INAC court related expenditures under their funding agreement, however they were advised that travel for family court purposes for the child was permissible and reimbursable through maintenance.

The majority of placement and other transportation is travel to and from Ontario for children attending therapeutic foster homes in Ontario. The RD supports two trips home per year for a child. **The child is usually escorted by a staff member from either Broken Arrow or CFS NL. Currently the cost of the child and staff member's travel is being billed to INAC through maintenance expenditures; however staff (from Broken Arrow or CFS) would be reimbursed from operations and not maintenance.**

To determine what portion would be staff travel, a detailed review of placement (code 80) and other transportation (code 85) would have to occur.

In general for July 2009, a total of 36,091.39 was reimbursed by INAC through maintenance. For 2008-2009, 449,060.43 was reimbursed for placement and other travel and a portion of this expense should have been reimbursed through operations.

It is also noted in the 2009-2010 Funding Agreement that medical expenses and travel are not covered by INAC. There is an INAC regional provision that if the CFS demonstrates that the expenditure will not be approved through Health Canada and their appeal process, but it is a provincial standard, INAC will reimburse based on the provincial standard requirement. According to the RD, Health Canada are reluctant to approve and reimburse medical related and travel expenditures. She noted that many Innu children require major dental work performed at the Janeway in St John's and it's an item never covered by Health Canada. Currently the majority of medical expenses and transportation is being covered by the Province of Newfoundland.

Child Welfare Child Care:

Many children in foster care in both communities receive child care. Again it was reiterated that the majority of the adult population, including foster parents are employed and foster children require child care services. Like one on one support, these services are administered from the band and charge an administration fee. As well, the foster families are responsible for finding a suitable sitter and a criminal check is required. The Province has specific rates and caps of 9.00 per hr/40 hrs per week, with the RD able to approve more than 40 hrs per week. It is noted that 44 children in care received child care for the month of July with 25 children exceeding 40 hours per week. A total of \$114,839.11 was claimed for July 2009 and reimbursed through maintenance. **This service would be reimbursed by INAC however the administration fee from the band should not be billed through maintenance but operations.**

Placement and Additional Clothing:

This service would be covered by maintenance. The province has specific amounts on placement and Labrador clothing allowances. There are no identifiable issues with this service.

Youth Services:

The province of Newfoundland provides youth services to 16 and 17 year old youths in response to the identified gap in program delivery. Youth cannot apply for income assistance until 18 and therefore receive youth services through Child and Family Services.

According to INAC CFS policy, children who are permanent wards prior to the age of 16 and reach the age of majority can continue to receive support beyond that age as long as they are involved in an academic program or involved in an age of majority plan. The NL provincial policy notes that youth who are wards of the Director of Child Welfare can receive specific services through signing a Youth Service Agreement until their 21st birthday or school leaving, whichever comes first.

Youth in NL are approved for residential and support services. Foster home and therapeutic foster home per diems would continue to be paid. If the child lived independently, a minimal basic living allowance equivalent to the basic foster care rate would be approved. Other services such as transportation, damage deposits, clothing allowances and other possible expenditures within the designated approval authority, would also be reimbursed.

Currently there are 14 children receiving youth services. Of these 10 were eligible for reimbursement through INAC as they were permanent wards prior to the age of 16. Four youth are currently in therapeutic foster homes in Ontario with BARTS the remainder except one was receiving foster care per diem. One

individual was placed in the safe house with 24/7 staff as the foster home placement broke down.

Of the 4 that were not in care prior to the age of 16, the cost of residential support was \$2068.37 for the month of July. The cost of these services to these 4 children would not be reimbursable through INAC.

Social/ Recreational:

There were no irregularities noted for the month of the July expenditures. The provincial standards outline caps and authority levels. All but one had less than 500.00 per fiscal year approved with program manager approval and one was greater than 500.00 per fiscal year requiring the RD approval. **These expenditures would be reimbursable through maintenance.**

Miscellaneous:

Code 96 is meant to cover car seats, school photos etc. A total of \$24,417.74 was spent for the month of July with two incidents where the expenditure was greater than \$1000.00 per month. Any expenses over 1500 per fiscal year lie with the RD authority.

Conclusions:

Based on the visit and review completed, both communities present as in crisis. Currently the Provincial Government through the Grenfell Health Authority are providing services to children and families in Sheshshatshui and Natuashish, however plans are underway for the program to be accountable to its specific department. As well, GHA are incorporating a new financial management system which will provide greater detail with regards to CFS expenditures.

There is a definite need for additional resources both physical space and staffing. Currently each social worker is carrying a caseload of over 100 children, well above the recommended standard of 25.

HR challenges are staff recruitment and retention, language barriers and lack of supports.

The focus of CFS is crisis management, specifically apprehension, placement and ongoing monitoring. There are very little services provided to families in general or those at risk in the two communities.

The focus with children in care is to keep them in the community, close to family, culture and language. Both communities have a large number of foster homes who are mainly relatives of the children. The large majority of these homes are not approved/licensed according to these provincial standards.

Children in care from these two communities are high risk/high need and services are expensive to provide.

Overall based on my review, the majority of expenditures are in line with 20-1 authorities. Ineligible expenditures that are currently being submitted by GHA and being reimbursed by INAC through CFS maintenance, that are not covered under 20-1 include:

- Child Welfare Allowances
- Administration costs associated with one on one support, respite care or child care services
- One on one support related to academic intervention
- Travel costs related to staff escorts to and from Broken Arrow upon placement and home visits twice per year
- Youth services for youth who were not wards of the Director of Child Welfare prior to age of 16

There is a great deal of work and community involvement required before devolution of the CFS program can occur to the Innu Nation.