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BRIEFING NOTE
July 10, 2001

ISSUE: Update re: Children in Care Sheshatshiu

BACKGROUND:

- At the end of June, 2001 9 children ranging in age from 8 years to 15 years were placed in the Charles J. Andrews Centre in Sheshatshiu following further incidents of gas sniffing in the Community.
- Five of these 9 children were already in care of the Director in the Region for Child, Youth, and Family Services, as they were involved in the initial gas sniffing crises in November 2000. The remaining 4 children were new to gas sniffing.
- Emergency staffing for the Charles J. Andrews Centre was necessary as the regular staff of the Centre were on holidays.

CURRENT STATUS:

- On Sunday, July 8, 2001, Health Labrador Corporation were advised that the children who were placed at the Charles J. Andrews Centre had run away from the Facility and were sniffing gas in the Community.
- The RCMP were contacted for assistance in locating the children .
- One 11 year old child who was sniffing gas , threatened suicide and was subsequently found, assessed, and was admitted to the hospital. The parent of this child was contacted and following reassessment of the home circumstances a decision was made to return this child to parental care when she is ready for discharge from the hospital.
- One child was charged under the *Young Offenders Act* and is currently placed in the Open Custody Group Home in Sheshatshiu.
- Three children have returned to the Charles J. Andrew Center.
- The remaining 4 children are "at large" in the Community, and are reportedly "hanging around together." These children have been seen by relatives and others in the Community. Last night the children returned on their own to the Charles J. Andrew Center however they ran again this morning. RCMP is assisting in the locating of these children.

Current Plans:

Health Labrador Corporation is planning to move 3 of the children currently at the Charles J. Andrew Center this afternoon to the individual living arrangements they have established in Happy Valley and Goose Bay. Two of other children who have been in care since November will return to their previous care giver placement in Sheshatshiu. As noted earlier one child is in hospital and will return home following her discharge. Another child will remain at the open custody group home. The final two children will be placed back in the Charles J. Andrew Center pending further planning once they have been located in the Community. This accounts for the nine children who were placed at the Center at the end of June who have now relapsed into gas sniffing behavior .

At 4 p.m today Health Labrador Corporation advised that they had received a referral from Peter Penashue that 4-5 children 8/9 years old were seen sniffing in the Community. The staff at the Sheshatshiu office will be responding to this information. If placement becomes necessary these children will be placed at the Charles J. Andrew Center. The staff at HLC believe this behavior will be common until the election for a new Chief is over tomorrow. They have planned to use the Charles J. Andrew Center to respond to any emergency during this time

- Additional information will be provided as it becomes available.

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