

BN-2015-00335

Regular Circulation

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July 22, 2015

Information Note

Title: Level 4 Staffed Residential Placement Resources in Labrador

Issue: To provide an update on the consultations with Aboriginal partners on Level 4 staffed residential placement resources in Labrador and CYFS's next steps to secure these resources.

Background:

- In 2012, CYFS received authority to implement a Continuum of Care strategy (the Strategy) to expand and enhance placement options for children and youth in need of out-of-home care. The Strategy is comprised of four levels of care. Levels 1-3 are family-based care (kinship and foster care) and Level 4 consists of staffed residential placements including: Group Homes (GH), Individualized Living Arrangements, and Emergency Placement Homes.
- In February 2013, a request for proposals was issued to address Level 4 placement needs on the island and in Happy Valley-Goose Bay (HVGB).
- In March and July 2014, contracts were awarded to four service providers on the island. There were no submissions for HVGB and CYFS continued with existing service providers, which consist of a volunteer community board and a private individual.
- The Aboriginal coastal communities in Labrador were excluded from the RFP. A decision was made to address the existing 6-bed GH in Nain and the 6-bed GH in Sheshatshiu (SSS) through the MOU Planning Circles with the Nunatsiavut Government (NG) and the Innu First Nations (IFN) and CYFS. In Nain, the GH is operated by a volunteer community board. The GH in SSS is operated by the Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation (SIFN) Band Council.
- The current Level 4 placement capacity is not sufficient to meet the needs of children and youth in Labrador. As a result many children/youth are placed outside of their communities, and in some cases, outside of Labrador or the province. As of March 2015, there were 289 Innu and Inuit children/youth in out-of-home care with 30 per cent placed outside Labrador. This is a significant concern for Aboriginal leaders and CYFS.
- In February 2015, CYFS submitted an information note advising of its approach to develop Level 4 staffed residential placements in Labrador. At that time, CYFS anticipated another RFP in Labrador would result in a similar outcome of no bids noting that conducting an RFP could be viewed as inconsistent with the Aboriginal partnership mechanisms currently uses by CYFS (i.e. Planning Circles).

Current Situation:

- In June 2015, CYFS met with Aboriginal partners and Level 4 service providers in Labrador. During these meetings, several options to obtain these services directly in communities were discussed including issuing a call for proposals through a RFP or an Expression of Interest, or operating Level 4 as a program by providing an operating grant to those able to deliver Level 4.

- Aboriginal partners advise they support working with CYFS to deliver Level 4 placements that meet CYFS program standards while respecting and supporting Aboriginal needs, culture and communities. They advise their preference is to develop and deliver the placements through an operating grant to the Innu Roundtable Secretariat, the NG and/or the existing HVGB Group Home with these entities seeking the necessary expertise to meet the service standards.
- CYFS supports this approach as it has the potential to meet the needs of aboriginal children in need of out-of-home care. From a child protection perspective this approach:
 - provides flexibility to deliver the program while responding to the unique needs of Aboriginals and remote communities in Labrador;
 - ensures community buy-in which could lead to greater stability for the children;
 - will result in more placements in Labrador and thus more Aboriginal children able to live in Aboriginal communities; and,
 - creates more awareness of child protection needs among Aboriginal people while ensuring CYFS service standards;
- CYFS has considered the risks associated with providing operating grants using service agreements in Labrador. To mitigate these risks, CYFS will ensure the service agreements outline CYFS's accountability mechanisms including financial, monitoring and reporting mechanisms. In addition, CYFS will ensure provincial, regional and local office staff oversee the service agreements. This will include the services the children are receiving, the use of the operating grant, and community's ability to maintain the program in the longer term. CYFS will not require additional resources with this approach for Level 4 placements in Labrador as Budget 2015 provides funding for out-of-home placements.
- It should be noted that using an operating grant approach to obtain Level 4 placement services means CYFS is delivering Level 4 as a program. This approach differs from that being used for Level 4 placements on the island which uses a RFP approach.

Next Steps

- CYFS officials are continuing to provide information to officials with the Aboriginal governments to assist in their understanding of CYFS requirements. An in-person follow-up meeting with Aboriginal leaders is scheduled for mid-August to continue discussions of the requirements of a service agreement. This includes standards and policy requirements, Level 4 capacity requirements (short, medium and long-term), and financial, monitoring and reporting accountability requirements.
- Depending on the outcome of these discussions, it is possible GNL may be in a position to announce its approach to delivering Level 4 placements in Labrador in the fall 2015. During the June 2015 meeting, Aboriginal partners indicated that this initiative is of high priority for them. By the winter 2016, Aboriginal leaders want more of the children in need of out-of-home care placed in Labrador.

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Ministerial approval: Received from Hon. Sandy Collins

July 22, 2015