

Permanent Ward Unit - Main Office

Children in Care are discussed, planning for the future for the children, case transfers, aging out of care, extension of care and IRAP (Individual Rate Adjustment), Special Needs, Child and Family Services Guidelines for Child Maintenance, Exceptional Circumstances Fund Guidelines, and the required training for workers.

The Supervisor role and responsibility is to ensure workers are performing effective case management, ensure workers are working in compliance with Agency Policies and Provincial Standards.

Unit Supervisors responsibilities are as such, ensure workers are completing 90 day reviews, complete supervision notes on those completed reviews, arranging family visit schedules and transportation for the CIC's, entering completed face to face information of CFSIS, maintain monthly stats such as, tracking CIC's (Children in Care), VSG'S (Voluntary Service Agreement), Youth entering Independent Living (IDL), CIC's requiring extensions of care in care and/or CIC's leaving the care of the agency.

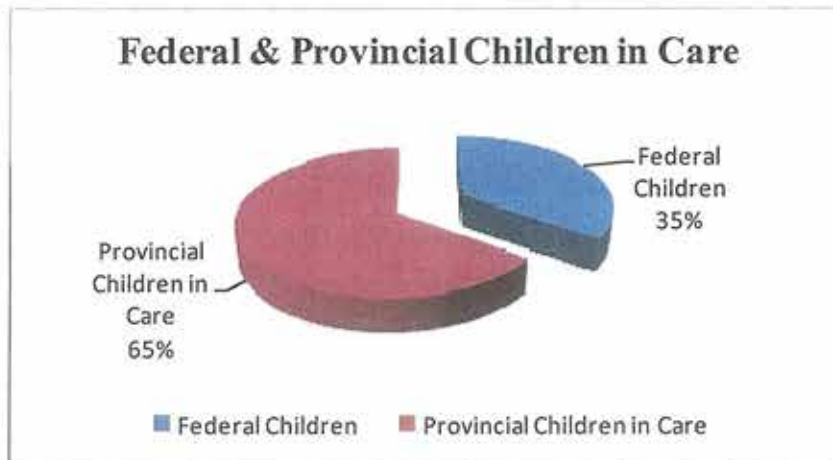
Unit Supervisor's other responsibilities are as such, review 90 day review, complete supervision notes on the 90 day reviews, review case files ready for transfer, review transfers transferring in from other Units, monthly Unit meetings, ensure workers are attending the required training, case manage files when workers are attending training or out in field, help develop and support workers case plans, attend monthly management meetings and staff meetings.

The challenges the youth endure when attending postsecondary education is the issue of being able to afford to live on campus and pay for their meal plan for the year with the basic minimal provided funding. The youth are experiencing difficulty in trying to complete their postsecondary education with the minimal funding provided and have had at times leave their post-secondary education and locate full time employment at meaningless jobs and never do return to complete their postsecondary education.

"You must be the change you want to see in the world." – M.K. Gandhi

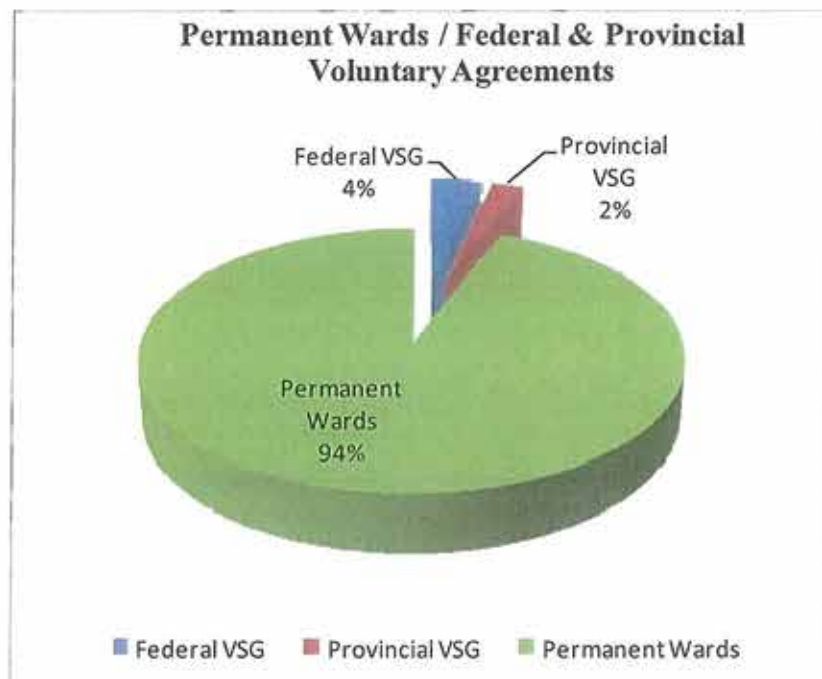
Stats: April 1, 2014, ending March 31, 2015, the Permanent Ward Unit supervises:
Total children in Care; 76 / Total Permanent Wards; 71 / Federal VSG'S: 3 / Provincial VSG'S 1
Independent Living Program: 2 / CIC aged out of Care: 2 / Family Reunification 1 / Extension of
care: 2

Permanent Ward / Transitional
Number of Children in Care: 76

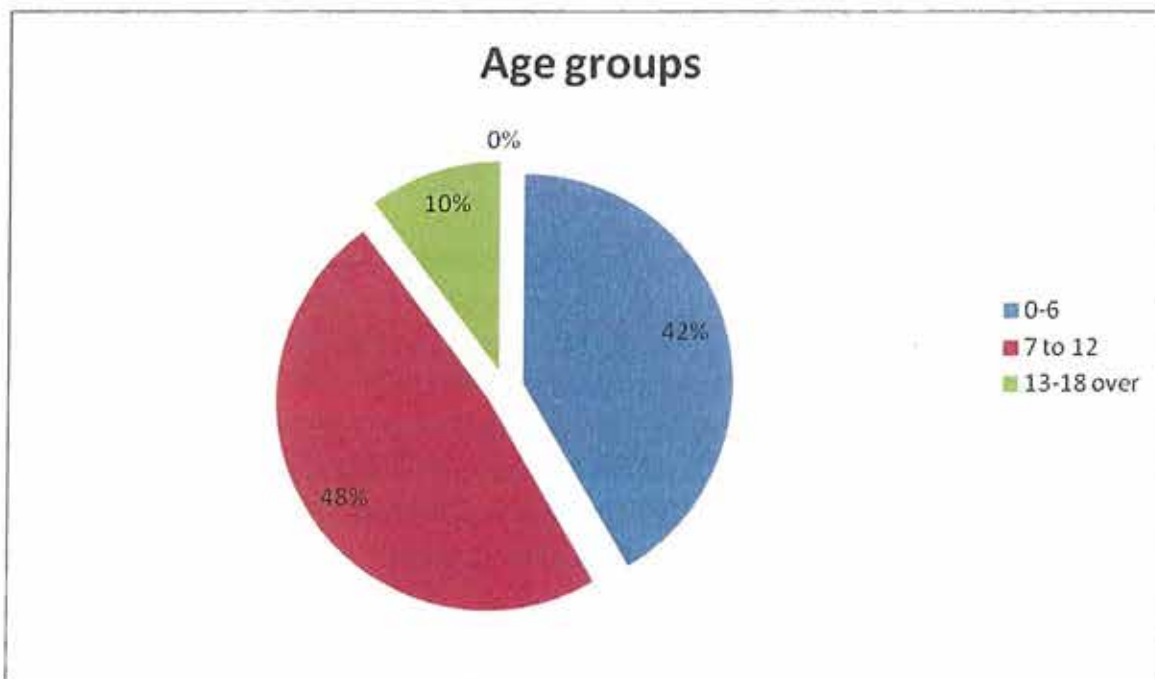
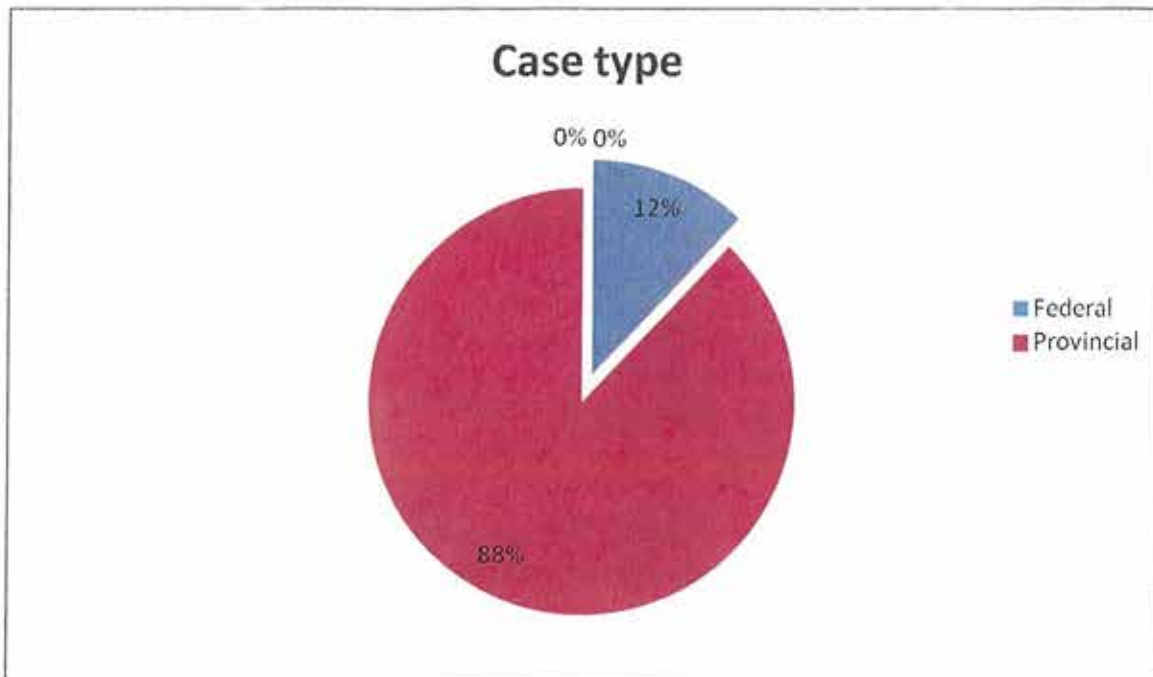


Legal Status

Permanent Ward / Federal & Provincial Voluntary Surrender Agreements
Number of Children in Care: 76



Permanent Ward-Winnipeg



Permanent Ward Unit - Main Office

Boozhoo / Tansi

First of all, I would like to take this moment to welcome everyone to Sagkeeng Child & Family Service Agency Annual General Assembly.

The Permanent Ward Unit is located in the main office on the Sagkeeng First Nation. The Permanent Ward Unit works with the family and the children that become Wards of the agency through the court system.

Permanent Ward Supervisor: Keith Guay BSW
Permanent Ward Worker: Linda Swampy BSW
Permanent Ward Worker: Anita Prince BSW (LTD)
Permanent Ward Worker; Kelcie Bunn

The children that come into the care of Sagkeeng CFS come into care by way of parental conduct such as, Neglect, Domestic Violence, Alcohol Abuse, Prescription Drug Abuse, and other various forms of abuse.

The case loads in the Permanent Ward Unit are assigned according to age of the child such as, 0-12 years old will be assigned to two workers. Children that range in the age of 12-18 years of age are assigned to the Transitional Worker. These children require individualized programming that will assist in their preparation and transition into adulthood such as, Independent living program, Extension of Care for those children aging out of care and soon to be attending a postsecondary Educational Institutions.

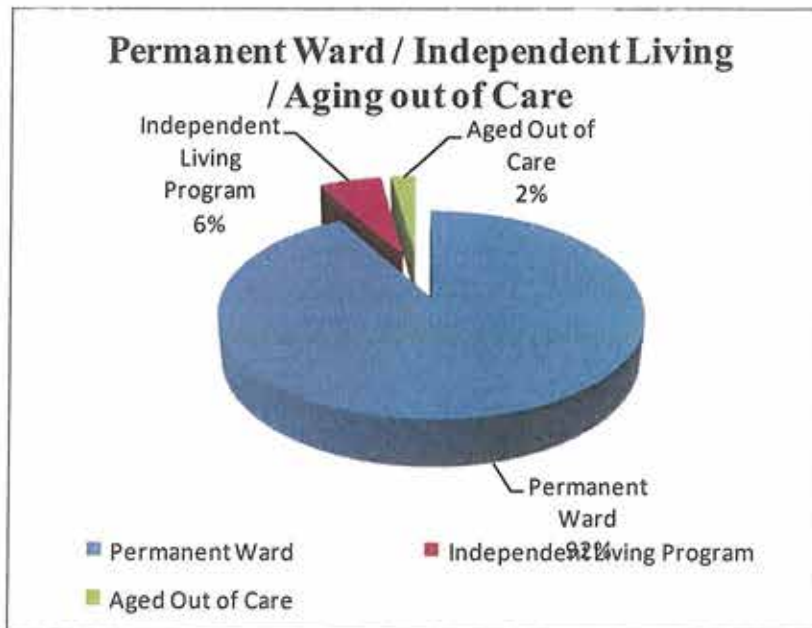
The younger Permanent Wards also require individual attention and services to meet their unique needs. The workers are responsible to ensure placements are long term and compatible with the child's needs. The workers further ensure that applications are completed to obtain the child's Birth Certificates, Medical Card, Social Insurance number, and pass ports. The workers enroll the children into school, case plan with the care givers and other collaterals involved with the child. The Permanent Ward workers ensure the children are scheduled regular family visits, annual visits to the family physician, dental, and eye doctor, and further ensuring the children's immunizations are up to date and attending therapy when required.

The Permanent Ward workers work with the family through making referrals to other collateral organizations in the community or outside the community such, short & long term treatment for their continual substance abuse, Positive Parenting, Anger Management, and Therapy.

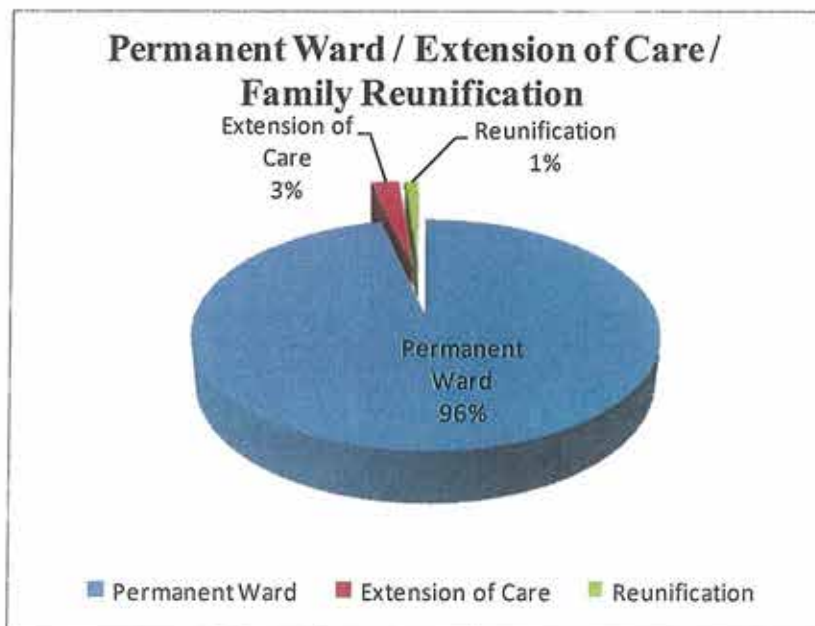
The Permanent Ward Unit workers participate in monthly Unit meetings where issues are discussed such as, effective case management, policy and procedures, Standards, CFSIS,

Permanent Ward Unit - Main Office

Permanent Wards / Independent Living Program
Number of Children in Care: 76



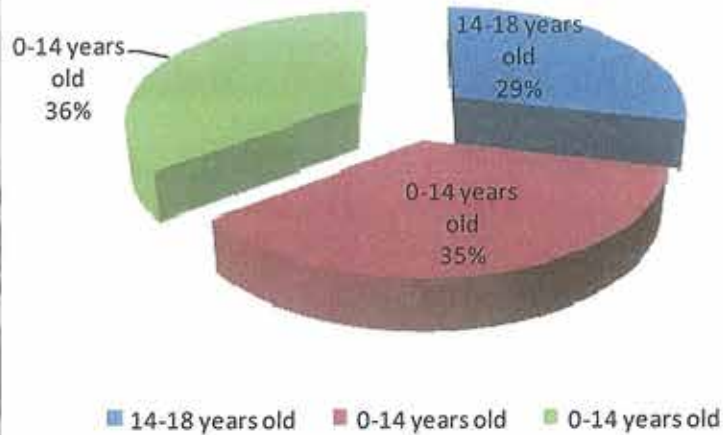
Permanent Ward / Extension of Care / Reunification of Family
Number of Children in Care: 76



Permanent Ward Unit - Main Office

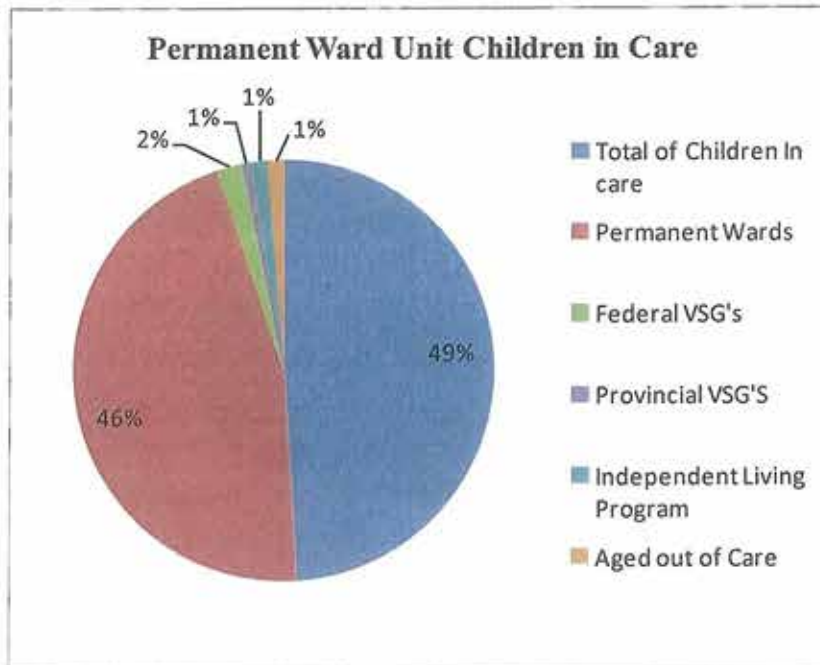
Case files distributed per Permanent Ward Worker
Number of Children in Care; 76

Distribution of case load is according to age of Child in Care



Sagkeeng Child & Family Service Agency - Main Office

Number of Children in Care: 76



Temporary Care and Protection Unit Annual Report 2014-2015

Provision of Services

The services provided by Sagkeeng Child and Family Services are divided into two separate but interrelated streams. This report focuses on the Temporary Care and Protection Unit, which provides preventative and protective services to urban Sagkeeng band members under the provisions of the Manitoba Child and Family Services Act.

The unit aims to implement preventative social work practices which support families, and ultimately prevent children from being admitted into care. As such, we have one Protection Worker assigned exclusively to families wherein the children are still under the care of their parents. This worker provides in-home supports and acts as a gateway to community resources. He or she makes regular home visits to assess risk factors first-hand, and to provide preventative services.

In addition to the Protection Worker, there are three Temporary Care Workers to specifically work with apprehended children and their parents. These social workers develop case plans to reduce risk factors with the goal of eventually reuniting the children and their parents. The primary reason for children entering care by parents was substance abuse in 2014-15; the second leading cause was domestic violence. It has been a challenge to connect parents with addictions counselling, where there are lengthy wait lists to enter the programs.

Our social workers attempt to utilize extended family members as foster placements for our children in care. In so doing, we hope to lessen the trauma of separation by placing them in an environment more familiar than say, a stranger's home.

Temporary Care and Protection Unit Annual Report 2014-2015

The social workers request that parents identify their extended family so the Foster Care Department can potentially place the children in a familial setting. In this past year we had licensed 10 extended family placements for children in care. We had also supported two sets of grandparents seeking guardianship of their grandchildren as a means to provide them stability and permanency.

Unit Staff

The current members of the Sagkeeng Child and Family Services Temporary Care Unit are:

Tania Guimond, B.S.W, Supervisor

Maria Starr, Temporary Care / Family Service Worker

Letitia Kipling, B.E.C., Temporary Care/ Family Services Worker

Kel Sherman, B.S.W, Temporary Care/ Family Services Worker

Deb Spence, B.S.W. Temporary Care Worker/ Family Services worker

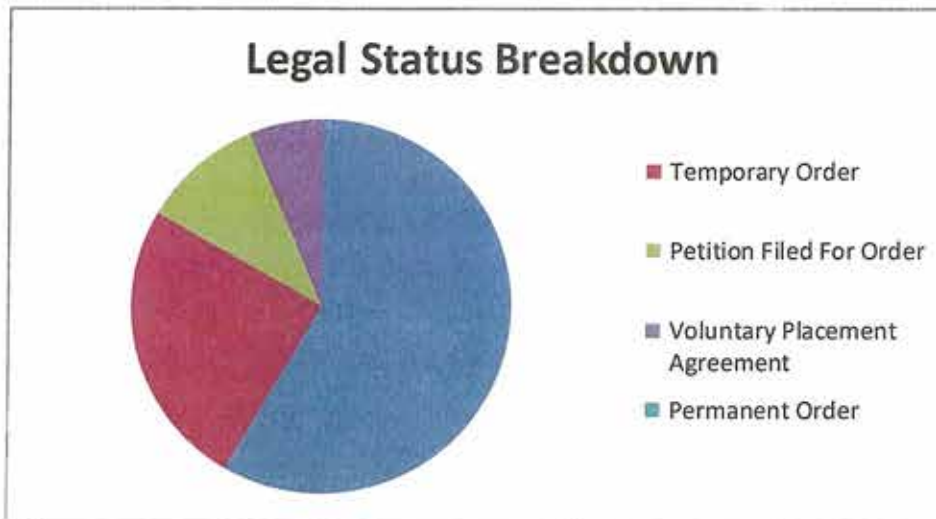
Future Goals

The goal of our unit is to develop in-house programming, promote family enhancement, and community networking.

Temporary Care and Protection Unit Annual Report 2014-2015

Statistics and Charts

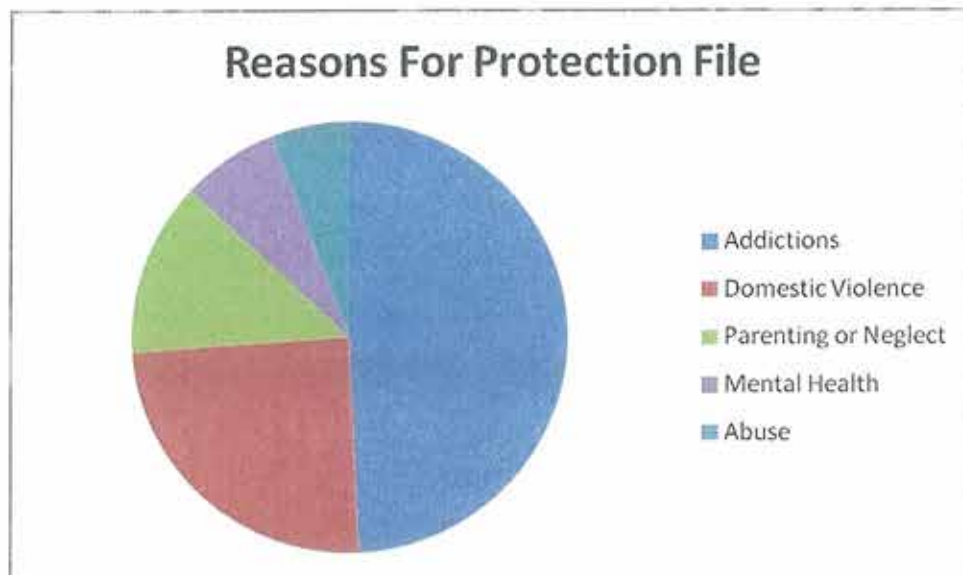
Legal Status	Legal Status Total	Percentage of All Files
Under Apprehension	28	58.3
Temporary Order	12	25.0
Petition Filed For Order	5	10.4
Voluntary Placement Agreement	3	6.3
Permanent Order	0	0.0
Voluntary Surrender Of Guardianship	0	0.0
TOTAL FILES	48	



Funding Status	Funding Status Total
Federal	0
Provincial	48
TOTAL	48

Temporary Care and Protection Unit Annual Report 2014-2015

Reasons For Protection File	Reasons Total	Percentage of All Files
Addictions	34	49.3
Domestic Violence	17	24.6
Parenting or Neglect	9	13.0
Mental Health	5	7.2
Abuse	4	5.8
TOTAL FILES	69	



"The ones that matter most are the children, they are the true human beings." - Lakota

TEMPORARY/RE-UNIFICATION UNIT- MAIN OFFICE REPORT

Unit Profile

The Temporary/Re-Unification Unit is a specialized unit created to assist families in the short term by providing support services and referrals to community collaterals to enhance parent's skills and the relationship with their children while maintaining a safe home environment for their children.

When the agency has to intervene as a last resort, the agency considers family kinships placements first and foremost so as not to cause too much disruption to the children and to ensure the children are provided with a nurturing safe home environment where they can flourish emotionally, spiritually, physically and mentally.

Identified Issues Families Struggle with

Families and children come to the attention of Sagkeeng CFS for several reasons. Some of these issues include addictions, family violence, domestic, neglect, lack of parenting abilities, Parent/Teen conflict, etc. to name but a few.

Like other child welfare agencies, Sagkeeng Child and Family Services has noticed a higher volume of individuals struggling with prescription medication misuse and the number of children entering agency care due to this new trend.

Community Resources:

Sagkeeng CFS Temporary Ward team works closely with the Sagkeeng Wellness group and makes family referrals for NNADAP services, Parenting Programs, Family Violence Programs, personal counselling, Strengthening Families Program, etc. The agency also makes referrals to the Wings of Power program who offer programs in areas such as; parenting and family violence in the neighboring community of Pine Falls.

The agency workers advocate for families with Manitoba Housing, as the community struggles with a shortage of housing. In addition, the agency also assists families with transportation or provides families who are struggling financially with food vouchers.

In turn, Sagkeeng CFS also works closely with our collateral organizations such as schools, Victim Services, concerned community members and RCMP. We all work collaboratively to empower our community members and to help them help themselves.

TEMPORARY/RE-UNIFICATION UNIT- MAIN OFFICE REPORT

Further to the community resources, Sagkeeng CFS also works with collaterals from the urban center of Winnipeg such as; the Child Development Clinic, the FASD Center and other resources that are not available within the community of Sagkeeng First Nation.

Sagkeeng CFS Staff:

The Temporary/Re-Unification Unit is comprised of a supervisor and three CFS workers who bring their own unique set of skills and commitment to the families and children they work with. They are as follows:

Lorna Bruyere – Temporary/Re-Unification Supervisor

Sharon Richard – Temporary/Re-Unification Worker

Renay Bone – Temporary/Re-Unification Worker

Sheena Millette – Protection Worker

Vera Bruyere – Case Aide

The Case Aide assists the Temporary/Re-Unification workers and Protection worker with filling out names, birthdates and treaty number, medical numbers on forms, Transportation Requests, develops schedules for family visits, attends Intakes with CFS workers and transporting parents and their children to and from medical appointments, etc.

The Protection Worker in the Temporary/Re-Unification Unit works directly with families where children are at home may be at risk or in need of supports and services. The protection worker plans with the parents to provide monitoring and provides internal and external supports when required, to ensure the safety of their children.

The Temporary/Re-Unification workers work directly with children in agency care and their parents. The Temporary/Re-Unification workers develop plans with the parents, make referrals to collaterals and also provide supports services to reduce the risks so that their children may return safely to their care.

Temporary/Re-Unification workers also develop plans with the children in care to ensure the wellbeing and safety of the child is being met. This may include making referrals for therapy, to the Child Development Clinic, FASD Centre, working closely with schools, etc. to safeguard the development and wellbeing of children in care so that they may flourish.

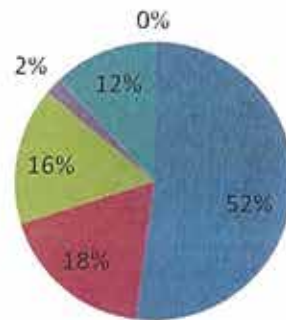
TEMPORARY/RE-UNIFICATION UNIT- MAIN OFFICE REPORT

CHILDREN IN CARE DATA:

LEGAL STATUS OF CHILDREN IN CARE

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE: 50

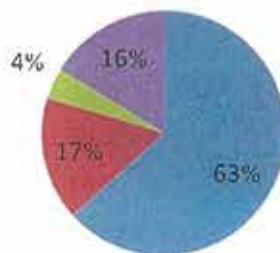
- Apprehension
- Temporary Ward
- Petition Filed for Further Order
- Voluntary Surrender of Guardianship
- Voluntary Placement Agreement
-



REASONS CHILDREN ENTER AGENCY CARE

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE: 50

- Drugs & Alcohol
- Family Violence
- Neglect
- Other: Parenting Abilities, Parent/Teen Conflict, Mental Health Issues

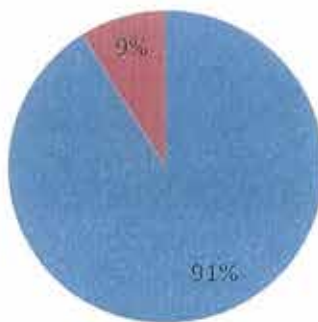


**TEMPORARY/RE-UNIFICATION UNIT-
MAIN OFFICE REPORT**

**FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL CHILDREN IN
CARE BREAKDOWN:**

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE: 50

■ Federal ■ Provincial

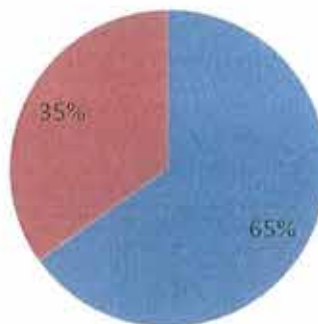


VOLUNTARY FAMILY SERVICE AND FAMILY PROTECTION FILES:

**VOLUNTARY FAMILY SERVICE FILE
BREAKDOWN:**

NUMBER OF VFS FILES: 6

■ FEDERAL ■ PROVINCIAL

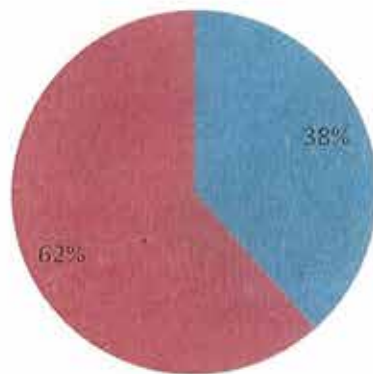


TEMPORARY/RE-UNIFICATION UNIT- MAIN OFFICE REPORT

REASONS WHY VFS FILES OPEN

NUMBER OF VFS FILES: 6

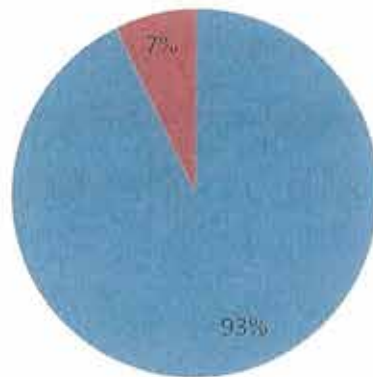
■ Request for Service ■ Minor Parent



FAMILY PROTECTION FILES BREAKDOWN

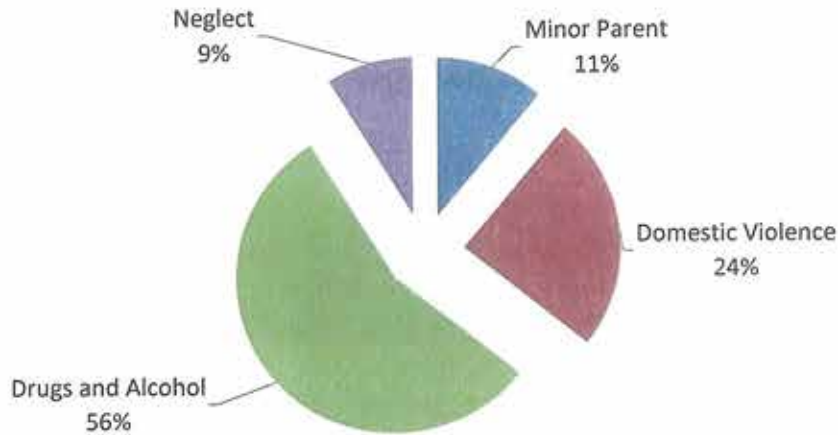
NUMBER OF FAMILY PROTECTION FILES: 57

■ FEDERAL ■ PROVINCIAL



MAIN OFFICE REPORT

REASONS WHY FAMILY PROTECTION FILES ARE OPENED



“Coming together is a beginning,
Keeping together is progress,
Working together is Success”

Henry Ford

Family Enhancement Program

The family enhancement program provides an early intervention for low risk families. The idea is to have early intervention and prevention services available to families and support them in keeping their children at home. This year we did this by providing basic provisions for families, moccasin making, a youth gathering, grief and loss, Positive Anishinabe Parenting, as well as, a Christmas food drive.

The Family Enhancement workers have a lower case ratio than that of protection workers because the families are provided a more intense level of service. Families may move back and forth between protection and family enhancement service areas based on new concerns or positive assessments.

The agency will be working closely with the community resources that are already available and providing services within the community. The goal of the agency is to network within the community and build partnerships to enhance the services that are currently being offered to community members.

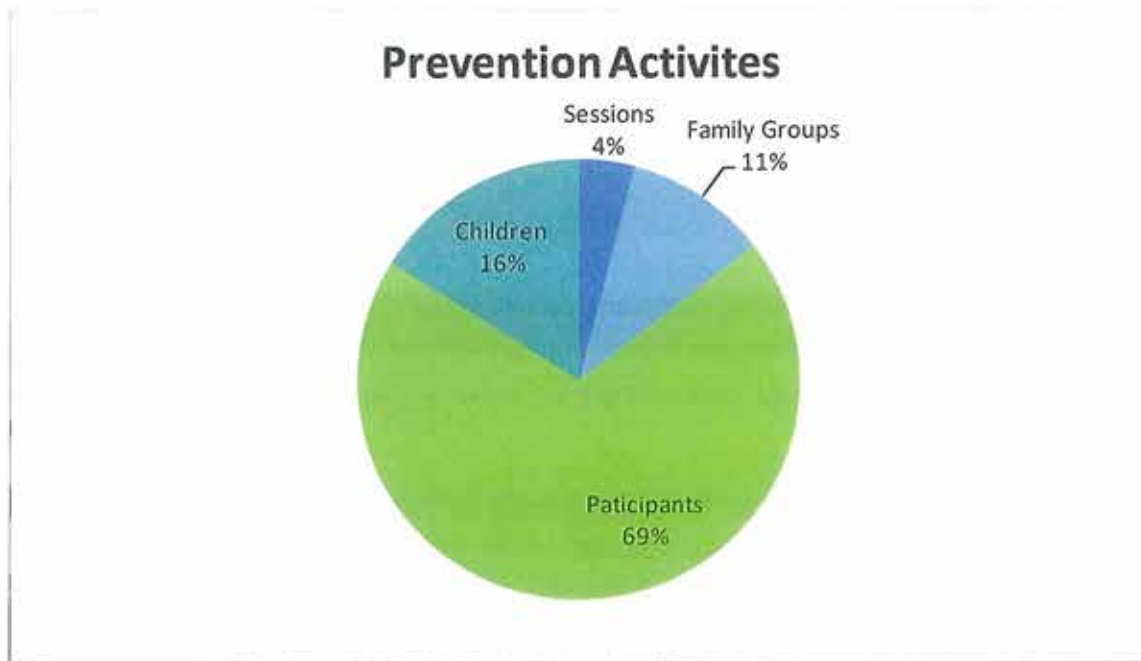
The Family Enhancement Unit has 2 workers and one supervisor who work at both offices. There is one Family Enhancement worker at each of our offices, one in Sagkeeng and one in the Winnipeg office that helps families and builds on the families strengths'. The goal of family enhancement is to keep children in their own homes, identify the strengths of the families and build upon them. The family enhancement program will assist families with gaining the skills they need to care for their children.

The agency would like to continue to provide culturally appropriate services. The agency is working on building a healthy, strong community. The agency is looking forward to the upcoming year and offering some culturally appropriate programs to families.

Unit Staff

Betty Mousseau – Family Enhancement Worker
Melodie Baptiste- Family Enhancement Worker
Naomi Ferland- Family Enhancement Supervisor

Family Enhancement Program



Prepared By:
Naomi Ferland, Family Enhancement Supervisor

“Life, Love and Laughter – what priceless gifts to give to our children” – Phyllis Dryden

Intake / Afterhours

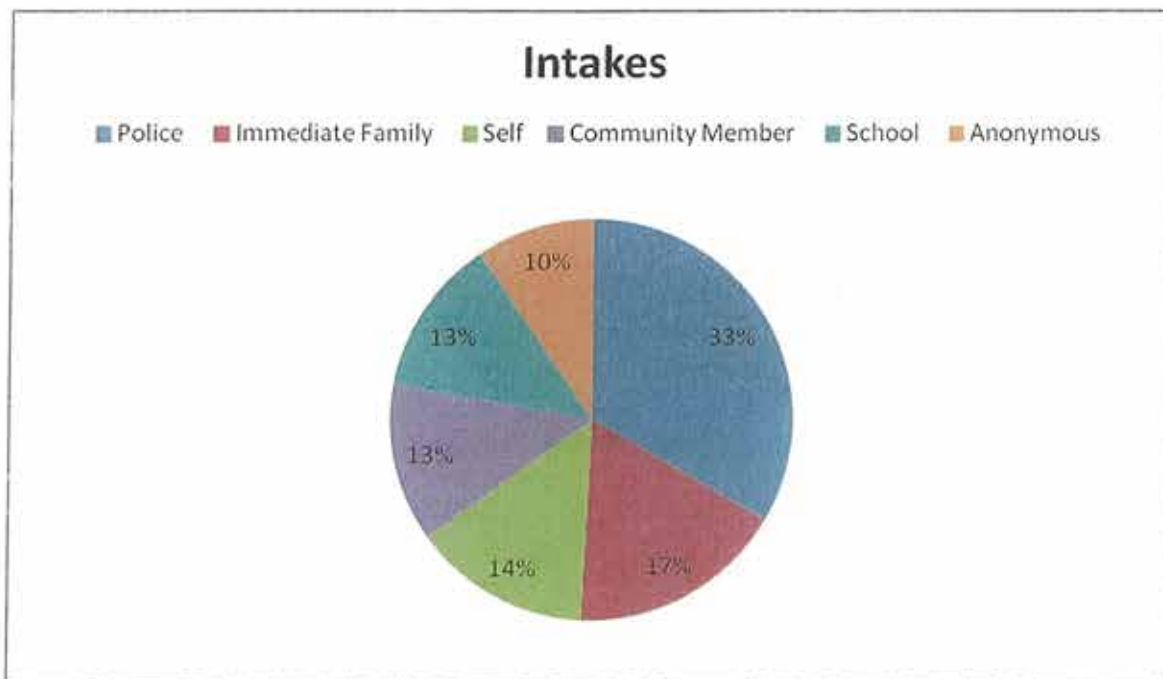
The on-reserve intake services are provided by one designated Intake worker. There is also a rotating schedule for a backup Intake Worker when the Intake Worker is absent or unavailable. The rotating schedule includes all CFS workers. The intake unit is comprised of one CFS worker and a supervisor.

Current statistics do not reflect a true number of actual intakes. This is due to the insufficient current data collection process and because the position was vacant, therefore; responsibilities of intake were rotated. The chart below outlines the major referral sources for the agency on reserve. The other referral sources include Children's advocate, health system, extended family members, community professionals, therapists, daycare, and other CFS agencies.

Deb Spence – Intake Worker

Charlotte Bushie- Intake Worker

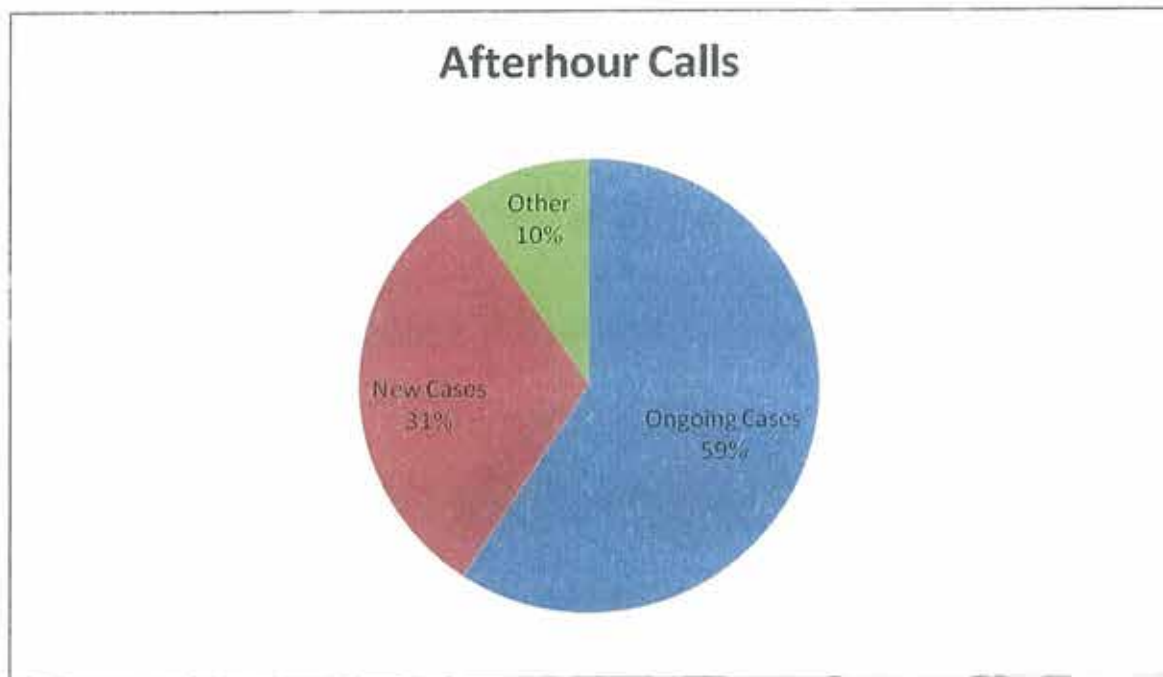
Naomi Ferland – Intake Supervisor



Intake / Afterhours

On Call / After Hours

After Hours services in the community of Sagkeeng First Nation are provided by current CFS workers. All CFS workers provide afterhours service on a weekly rotational schedule. Additionally, one CFS Supervisor is also required to be on-call and also follows a weekly rotational schedule. All on-call/afterhours staff is financially compensated for this additional responsibility. Sagkeeng CFS is the Designated Intake Agency for the community of Sagkeeng First Nation.



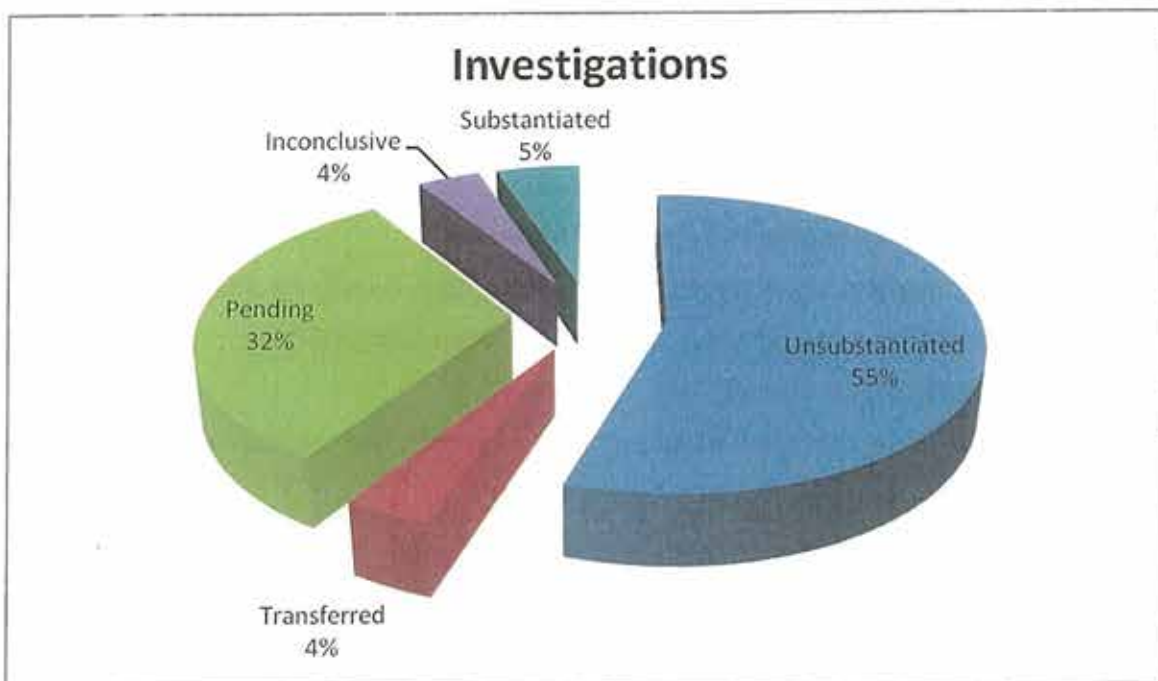
Prepared by:
Naomi Ferland, Intake supervisor

Child Abuse Investigation Unit Report 2014 to 2015

Sagkeeng CFS has one Child Abuse Investigator in the Unit comprised of an Investigator/Supervisor. The abuse Investigator is responsible for conducting abuse investigations in our community, as well as, areas outside the city of Winnipeg when a disclosure is made in one of our foster homes. In the City of Winnipeg, the All Nations Coordinated Response Unit (ANCR) is the mandated agency to conduct all abuse investigations. The Abuse Unit works in partnership with the local RCMP as required in joint investigations. Within the organization, the unit works hand in hand with front line workers providing direction and investigational oversight when required.

Sagkeeng CFS and the Child Abuse Investigation unit have a mandatory Child Abuse Committee (CAC) who meets monthly, as required under the Act. The CAC reviews abuse referrals made to the committee and makes decisions to recommend individuals being placed on the Registry. The CAC can also make recommendations to the CFS Workers regarding the children and their best interests. CAC members are comprised of the following: a) Child Abuse Coordinator, b) Police Officer c) Educational Representative d) Duly qualified medical practitioner e) Agency staff member other than the Abuse Coordinator.

Sagkeeng Child Abuse Investigation Unit conducted total of (78) investigations between 2014 and 2015. As illustrated below, you will find a breakdown for the year end and the outcome of those investigations.



Child Abuse Investigation Unit Report 2014 to 2015

Reporting a child in need of protection (Duty to Report)

18(1) Subject to subsection (1.1) of the Child and Family Services Act, "where a person has information that leads the person reasonably to believe that a child is or might be in need of protection as provided in section 17, the person shall forthwith report the information to an agency or to a parent or guardian of the child".

Section 17(2) of the Child and Family Services Act identifies "a child is in need of protection where the child is abused or is in danger of being abused".

The Act defines abuse as:

"abuse" means an act or omission by any person where the act or omission results in

- (a) physical injury to the child,
- (b) emotional disability of a permanent nature in the child or is likely to result in such a disability, or
- (c) sexual exploitation of the child with or without the child's consent

If you suspect or receive a report of abuse and/or neglect contact your local Authority Sagkeeng CFS at (204)367-2215 24/7 with on call support.

What to do if a disclosure is made:

- ✓ Listen to the child.
- ✓ Stay calm
- ✓ Let the child know you believe them and is telling the truth.
- ✓ Use the child's language or vocabulary and do not use big or complex words.
- ✓ Let the child know they are not alone, and that they are not the only one.
- ✓ Reassure the child that to disclose is the right thing to do.
- ✓ Emphasize that whatever happened was not the child's fault, and that the child is not bad.
- ✓ Let the child know that some adults do wrong things.
- ✓ Let the child know that it is difficult to talk about such things.
- ✓ Be honest and tell the child that you have to report to the appropriate authorities so that they can help stop the abuse.
- ✓ Reassure the child that by telling you they have done the right thing.
- ✓ Let the child know you will support them.

Child Abuse Investigation Unit Report 2014 to 2015

If you suspect abuse, but the child has not told anyone, be aware of the emotional distress that the child may be experiencing. Approach the child in a caring and sensitive manner and assure them that you are willing to listen and to help if there is a problem.

Avoid the following:

- ✓ Do not make promises you cannot keep, such as promising that you will not tell anyone.
- ✓ Do not push the child into giving details of the abuse. Your role is to listen to what the child wants to tell you and not to conduct an investigation (beware of asking any direct questions of the child as this may prejudice any subsequent investigation).
- ✓ Do not discuss the circumstances of the child with others not directly involved in helping the child.

Anthony Gabriel,

Child Abuse Investigator
Sagkeeng Child and Family Services Inc.

References

ANCR Child Abuse Investigations Manual.
Southern CAS/What to do if a child discloses to you.
The Child and Family Services Act, Manitoba.

Senior Administrative & Resource Support Service Coordinator

My name is Mary Felix and I'm Senior Administrative & Resource Support Service Coordinator. I started this position in May 2014 and have been with the agency for 8 years this Fall.

In my position as Senior Administrative & Resource Support Service Coordinator, I work with all administrative staff; Beatrice Guimond, Michelle Mazawasicuna, Jon Guimond, and Jessica Guimond.

I'm responsible to oversee the day to day functioning of Winnipeg Office and the Main Office Receptionist. I travel back and forth from the Main office and the Winnipeg sub-office.

Now I would like to introduce the hard working individuals that make both offices work effectively and manageable and their names are:

Michelle is the receptionist for our Winnipeg sub-office and she was hired in October/2014 and her job is quite a handful, throughout this fiscal year April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015 reception handled a total of 18, 117 calls.

Jessica is the receptionist for the Main Office, throughout this fiscal year of April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015 reception handled a total of 19, 617 calls from collaterals, families etc.

Beatrice is our file clerk situated out of Winnipeg sub-office and handles all children in care files and has been with the agency for 10 years and going strong.

Linda Bunn has been with the agency for 16 years and is the file clerk at the Main Office and is a very dedicated worker who handles all our children in care files.

Jon Guimond is our CFSIS data clerk and he also travels back and forth from the Winnipeg sub-office and our Main Office to help with all CFSIS data entry.

Our Administrative staffs are a very dedicated bunch that enjoy working with Sagkeeng CFS and love working with all employees of the agency, including support/respice workers, foster parents and all people along our travels.

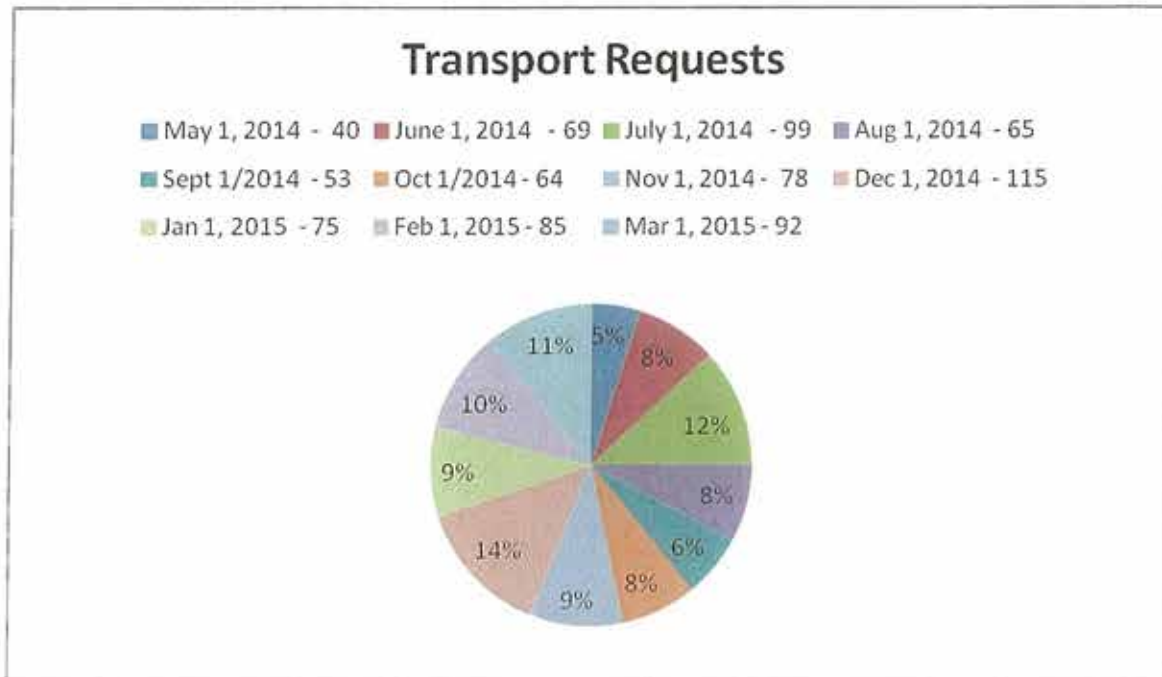
We look forward to meeting community members at the AGM and hope everyone enjoys their time.

Support Service Coordinator

The overall responsibilities of my position as the, Support Service Coordinator is to provide support services to our children in care. I receive all support/respice worker requests/intakes and schedule interviews for these positions for the both offices of Sagkeeng CFS. It is my responsibility to ensure I have drivers for our children in care to attend visits, medical appointments, as well as, support workers to work with our children in care and their foster families.

Initially when I started my position we had a low count of drivers and support staff along with respice providers. After some recruitment for these positions, support worker applications started to come in and set out completing interviews and followed up with applicants. As an agency we were successful in hiring more drivers, respice, and support workers. In the meantime, when I'm not coordinating driver schedules, I am always active at increasing my pool of support staff. The numbers for our support staff are always fluctuating, as visits are higher in the summer time and around the holidays.

The following is a breakdown of the statistics for transport requests received from workers for children in care attending visits and/or appointments on a month by month basis.



Support Service Coordinator

At the Main Office, my support staffs are also assisted with these types of requests through the help of our case aides, who also assist frontline staff at the Main Office with driving parents, and children in care to appointments and visits as well. The case aides are Breydon Arthurson and Vera Bruyere.

Our agency drivers, support, and respite workers are an integral part of the agency as they assist in getting our children and families where they need to be. Below is a list of the types of referrals that we receive for our children in care:

- Winnipeg Sub-Office
- Sagkeeng Main Office CFS
- Hollow Water CFS
- Sagkeeng Treatment Centre
- Winnipeg school pick up and drop off
- Main office school pick up and drop offs.
- Out of office visits with parents in the community.
- Weekend visits with grand parents
- Weekend visits with parents.
- Therapy Appointments
- Pritchard House visits
- B & L Resources visits
- Pre-placements visits
- Doctors or Dentist Appointments
- Parent Drug Testing Appointments
- Winnipeg International Airport drop off
- Court Office
- Cultural Sweats
- Funeral Services

My future goals are to increase my support staff pool specifically out of our main office, thus, essentially providing employment for community members to work with Sagkeeng Child and Family Services.

Thank-you.

Mary Felix,

Administrative Assistant & Resource Support Service Coordinator

ALONE by Joey L

Growing up I felt confused didn't know who I really was.
Removed from my biological family. Uprooted.
Placed in CFS at the age of 3 to remain a permanent ward until 18
I was always told "my momma loves me" I think about my dad and ask,
Who was he? Was he a thinker? I know he was a drinker
Even though I didn't know him, he had a problem with anger
It doesn't hurt when I think about him, because I can't mourn for a stranger
So I never had a father figure, I struggled
And it constantly ate at me
I felt alienated, hated because of my skin tone
In white home, with a white fence, I felt all **ALONE**
At school, I felt different; I couldn't do my work unless I was shown
Diagnosed with ADHD, to a certain extent it meant nothing for me.
Because I did not understand, all I knew was I could not focus
And that nothing made sense; I kept dreading going back to the home with the White fence.
I began to feel angry because I came to an age where I knew something was wrong
But I didn't know what,
I was still too young and childish to realize that,
I was an overactive, hyper-packed kid with an anger problem
I laugh as I'm writing this because I'm painting a picture in my mind
Of myself, with endless energy, running for hours.
O just see it as funny, 'cause in the picture I'm younger
And I used to feel fat
I was teased but i\|d rather not write about that
Because it still makes me mad to this day
The only time I was happy was when I was with my friend Dee, he was exactly like me
But his life was reversed
He was white in a brown home alienated, **ALONE**.
We clicked like the Lego blocks that we played with
I hated whom I stayed with, vice versa for Dee
Growing up we grew apart I had to move to a different foster home
He went his way and me I went my own.
I grew some new roots then they were ripped back up, and it stung
Because the pain was still raw, I moved on and fell down
More than once, twice or thrice, I felt I had nothing
So I made some bad choices, Joined a gang, did some drugs
I never, ever dreamed of taking on the role of a thug,
Gradually my soul become corrupt, like the wings on the Fallen Angel
Become darker with time

The light in my life faded I couldn't see the end of the tunnel vision

Depressed I felt helpless **ALONE**.

And I hated it; still hate it, the feeling of hopelessness

We became well acquainted, my innocence tainted

My soul remains stained, how I wish I could bleach it

I used to think happiness was too far for me to reach it,

Violence and Pain became my friends, hatred my nature,

My words tell a story but my scars tell it better.

My heart became calloused before I started writing my ballads

On ballots of paper, they meant nothing for me

Little did I know I was expressing myself?

When I couldn't do it verbally without cursing

I'd write verses about caskets and hearses

There were my dark times

When I still felt gangster, I embraced it

I started rapping my kicks

I saw the most beautiful girl watching me spit,

Rhyme and rhyme

Time after time, I saw her, before we finally spoke

She told my life story as her own

My heart broke

She grew up **ALONE**

And we clicked like my homies hanging out in the hood

She had problems like I had mine, results from our pasts

We spent a lot of time together

We could weather the weather

My heart made of leather, became softened for her

I got arrested and locked away, she's always send letters,

Then on Valentine's Day, I got one piece of paper,

Only half-written with no effect at all

It said

"Joey, I'm sorry, but I've waited too long, I'm moving on

I'll always love you. Keep your head up, stay strong"

It hurt. Once again my heart broke

This time I was confined with nothing but my thoughts

And inside a part of me died

I asked myself, " who sends a letter like that

On Valentine's Day? "

I moved on once again

Once again, I was **ALONE**.

I hurt for a while, I'd dream of her smile,

Her perfume in my dreams so realistic it seemed

She was right next to me

Then I woke she was gone

I took the time to write her a song but I never did send it, because it all felt too wrong
Like the lines weren't just right
Eventually I realized I was wasting my time
Holding onto broken dreams even though they were fine
Enough to make an Angel cry
I moved on for good this time.

It was around this time I started showing people my poetry
I was shy at first because I was n't used to the praise
And it wasn't me,
Wasn't who was supposed to be
A relatively well-known gang member, quick to temper
To be writing poetry ?
it was unheard of, unthinkable, a taboo
I'm glad I stuck to it
Or else I'd still be stuck in that same place where I was,
Robbing and stealing.
That wasn't really me
Just a masquerade to hide the pain
I'm trying to change.

Sometimes I think if my dysfunctional life
And I ask myself how the hell did I survive?
All the things I've went through, there has to be a reason
There was a point in my life where I thought burning (in hel.) would be better than freezing,
In Winnipeg, Manitoba
But that was when I was blinded by my anger and sorrow
When I never used to care about yesterday or tomorrow
Now I'm more optimistic
I found my sense of belonging
I'm working on leaving the gang behind
But it's entrenched in my mentality
It was reality for me, I got used to it

I'm 17 now; I don't know what happened to Dee.
Is he alive, and well, or did he end up like me?

What happened to me? Who am I?
Still don't know, confused as ever more or less **ALONE**.
I'm happier now, I'm more optimistic
A new set of roots of Poetry, I can grow. Blossom
Create a new life and I think it's awesome.
When I write a new poem, I no longer feel Alone.

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