



VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Compliance and Commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

5 Calls to Action for Child Welfare

May 2022



Strategic Priorities

1. Enhance and implement culturally and spiritually appropriate strategic services and practices to facilitate moving children, youth, and families beyond continuing care.
2. Design, develop, implement, and review effective communication and risk management strategies.
3. Ensure strong governance and continue building the capacity of VACFSS.
4. Sharing our Aboriginal experiences in developing and implementing VACFSS Aboriginal child welfare policies and practices.

Mission Statement

Provide holistic service delivery that culturally and spiritually strengthens Aboriginal children and families.

Vision Statement

A balanced and harmonious Aboriginal community.

VACFSS Values

1. **Humility** - is putting others first by giving up what you think you deserve; Mother Earth for she provides our every need and loves us even when we do not listen to her; a newborn baby coming into this world with nothing but their small presence asking only to be loved and cared for; recognizing what we give in our lives and being thankful for each new day.
2. **Strength-Based Practice** - VACFSS incorporates a strength-based approach to service delivery. We believe in empowering people to trust that they have both the capacity and mastery to take responsibility for their own healing. By carrying the teachings of our ancestors and incorporating Aboriginal cultural customs within our social work practice, we can facilitate healing opportunities and share in the successes of Aboriginal children, families, and the community that are involved with VACFSS.
3. **Integrity** - doing the right thing even when nobody is watching.
4. **Belonging** - is creating authentic connections that encourage healthy and caring relationships with our children, families, and community.
5. **Respect** - flows freely from the Creator to and through everyone and without judgment, from the tiniest child to the oldest everything Elder. It is the basic law of life that allows feeling and showing honor for all the Creator's creations; all cultures, all ways, and all paths to the Creator which keeps the circle flowing in a good way.



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Introduction

In June 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released an Executive Summary report of its findings and 94 Calls to Action to "redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation." These Calls to Action are divided into "Legacy" and "Reconciliation." The are 5 Calls to Action for child welfare listed under the Legacy Category and pertain to redressing the harms resulting from the Indian residential schools.

Through our commitment to the 5 Calls for Action of the TRC, VACFSS continues to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in child welfare intervention through policies and practices to prioritize children being connected to their culture, their families, and their communities. Essential to this is ensuring social workers have adequate training to provide culturally appropriate trauma-informed interventions that address poverty, addiction, housing, and intergenerational effects of residential school through prevention-based services instead of neglect investigations. We continue to collaborate and invest in community partnerships to enhance the creation and implementation of programs to provide community-based services, including access to ceremony and cultural healing.

VACFSS has reviewed compliance, reaffirmed commitment to the TRC 5 Calls to Action, and noted recommendations and questions for future practice.

First Call to Action

1. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care by:

i. Monitoring and assessing neglect investigations

- ✎ Monitor the number of neglect investigations through multi-year data tracking.
- ✎ VACFSS has reduced the number of children in care from 421 in 2015 to 388 in 2020.
- ✎ The number of children coming into care continues to decrease on an annual basis from 95 in 2015 to 59 in 2020.
- ✎ The number of children in out-of-care options (OOCO) (s.35.2(d) or 41.1(b) or s.8) was 64 children in 2020.
- ✎ The number of children placed with a family member under permanent transfer of custody (s. 54.01) in 2020 was 67.
- ✎ Resources are approved for food, clothing, furniture, and emergency supplies to address health and safety concerns for families experiencing financial hardship. This ensures workers engage in the least intrusive measures and provides concrete intervention. VACFSS recognizes that poverty is not equivalent to an assessment of child neglect.
- ✎ Engage in Collaborative Practice with families, communities, and partners and recognizes the role of poverty and its impact.
- ✎ Offer stabilization through focused intervention such as entering into Voluntary Support Services Agreements with families to provide daycare subsidy, respite care, alternate school placements, and referrals to Indigenous and non-Indigenous community service providers.
- ✎ Utilize Family Development Response as an alternative to investigation in matters where the circumstance meets the definition of neglect.
- ✎ Implemented prioritized response criteria to address the needs of families:



- Time limited intervention (8 weeks maximum)
 - Goal specific (1-2 goals)
 - Reduces risk of removal
 - Reduces the length of time a child is in care
- ✎ Family Preservation and Reunification Program ensures that progress reports are regularly submitted to Child Protection and Guardianship on their engagement with families.

Recommendations and questions for future practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Train all staff on assessing neglect and responding appropriately to the factors that contribute to an assessment of neglect. ✓ Continue to build and enhance community partnerships for the provision of supports to address the needs for safe and affordable housing, food, health, transportation, and childcare. ✓ Liaise with local schools to inform on VACFSS' concrete needs support services where neglect is identified. ✓ Redefine neglect in VACFSS policy to align with the federal legislation, <i>Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children youth and families relating to parental health and poverty</i>. ✓ Monitor and analyze neglect investigations to further determine how neglect is impacting practice decisions regarding court applications and children coming into care.

ii. Providing adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside.

- ✎ All programs adhere to s.10 of the federal Act, *Respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children youth and families* regarding the best interest of the Indigenous child. *The Child, Family and Community Services Act (CFCSA)* outline children's rights (s.70) and the placement priority matrix (s.71). These sections direct the placement and connection of children in care with their extended family, community, and cultural heritage.
- ✎ Provide in-home support for parents and/or children who have medical needs.
- ✎ Due to the lack of affordable housing in the City of Vancouver, support families in finding appropriate housing through established social housing authorities and where required, secure tenancy with a deposit through the concrete needs funding. This also includes partnerships with community and subsidized housing organizations providing temporary shelters and supported housing.
- ✎ In cases of domestic violence, workers seek alternatives for child removal, such as applications for a Protective Intervention Order or restraining order are submitted to the court to ensure an offender is unable to attend a residence in which the child resides.
- ✎ Create safety plans that involve the least intrusive measures, such as having an extended family member, or another adult reside in the family home and provide supervision of the children when parents are unable to do so.



- ✎ Collaborative Practice meetings bring together the child's circle with the involvement of parents, family, and extended family to identify placement options, with a preference for OOCO provision.
- ✎ *Inclusive Foster Care Policy* and *Access Policy* supports and ensures access visits for children in care with their parents, siblings, extended family, and other significant people.
- ✎ Provide in-house and community Elder support to children youth and families.
- ✎ Provide financial support for cultural services and protocol requirements. This may include, but is not limited to honorariums for the Elder/Knowledge Keeper and/or food for feast, regalia, language classes, teachings for cultural expression such as art (drum making), and movement.
- ✎ Notify children's and parents' respective Nations, in accordance with the *CFCSA* and the *Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children youth and families*.
- ✎ Collaborate with First Nations, Delegated Aboriginal Agencies, and/or Indigenous Governing Bodies to create cultural plans for their member children.
- ✎ *Touching the Land of our Relations Policy* supports children, youth, and families to return to their home community for visits, community events, and ceremonies.
- ✎ Where the child(ren) is at imminent risk of coming into care, the worker will engage the family in identifying a caregiver for their child(ren).
- ✎ Honours parents and children to acknowledge their healing journey and strength as a family with a Homecoming Ceremony when children are returned to their parents.
- ✎ Prevention provides alternatives to the removal of children by strengthening the family's system of support through intensive family preservation counselling, concrete needs, and in-home support.
- ✎ Dedicated to facilitating the return of children to their families through intensive family preservation counselling, in-home support, and coordinated intervention with the child's worker.
- ✎ *Inclusive Foster Care Policy* ensures that permanency for children is achieved by keeping them connected to family, culture, Nation, and community.
- ✎ Culturally appropriate respite can restore balance by providing opportunities to biological parents for short-term care for children and youth (up to 14 days per month) to allow a parent to focus on their health and well-being and prevent children from coming into foster care.
- ✎ Lifelong Connections workers support and strengthen a child's circle of family and community connection with extensive family finding, organize homecomings, and develop cultural plans of care in partnership with the Nation, Indigenous Governing Body.
- ✎ Guardianship workers engage in building meaningful relationships with the child and extended family.

<p>Recommendations and questions for future practice</p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide additional training for workers regarding the full implementation of the Act, <i>Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children youth and families</i>. ✓ Increase partnerships to access more culturally relevant preventative support services to enhance children youth and family safety and wellbeing. ✓ Advocate for additional prevention services with local and provincial government. |
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- ✓ Strengthen partnerships with housing authorities and organizations that address mental health and treatment services.
- ✓ Increase the concrete needs budget for immediate health and safety intervention for all programs.
- ✓ Develop a second dedicated respite resource.
- ✓ Increase commitment to support initiatives that allow parents/extended family members to co-parent their children in foster homes and/or other placement resources.
- ✓ Design an additional audit component for Guardianship practice to ensure that every child in care has a meaningful separate cultural plan and a relationship with community.
- ✓ Increasing the number of protocol agreements with Nations and ensuring workers are adhering to and following the requirements set out in the protocol agreements.

iii. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the history and impact of residential schools.

- ✎ Provide staff training on VACFSS policies: *Keeping Our Children Safe, Raising our Children Together, Inclusive Foster Care, Standing with Families, Touching the Land of our Relations, Elders and Knowledge Keepers Policy and Indigenous Core Cultural Competencies.*
- ✎ All new staff is required to complete the cultural component of their delegation training through the Indigenous Perspectives Society.
- ✎ Provide ongoing staff training specific to trauma-informed practice, residential schools' history and its impacts, culturally relevant/responsive services/resources, and the intergenerational disruptions created by the child welfare system.
- ✎ Provide an annual two-day cultural immersion camp for staff.

- Recommendations and questions for future practice
- ✓ Continue training new social workers on VACFSS' policies, focusing on trauma informed practice.
 - ✓ Continue with restorative and culturally appropriate training for all social workers related to emerging policy and practice requirements of the Federal Act: Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children youth and families.
 - ✓ Consider the benefits of the Gladue requirements in court submissions including multi-generational impacts of residential schools.
 - ✓ Establish a parent's advisory committee to ensure voices of parents are included in receiving services in all program planning.
 - ✓ Develop a community advisory to assure collaboration with stakeholders and community partners.

iv. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the potential for Aboriginal communities and families to provide more appropriate solutions to family healing.



- ✎ Staff work in collaboration with Indigenous service agencies to ensure culturally appropriate healing services are available for children youth and families.
- ✎ Cultural supports to families; Elders (in-house and contracted), ceremony through Knowledge Keepers and Elders.
- ✎ Collaborative Practice meetings with the family to complete a service plan that identifies both risks to be addressed and supports available.
- ✎ In response to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) National Inquiry and the TRC 5 Calls to Action, VACFSS partnered with Atira Women's Resource Society to develop a therapeutic access program to support mothers whose infants are in care to promote healthy attachment and successful reunification.
- ✎ In response to the MMIWG National Inquiry, two training sessions for staff have been delivered on the MMIWG with the Chief Commissioner of the Inquiry, Honourable Judge Marion Buller.

Recommendations and questions for future practice

- ✓ Enhance the use of “high risk and complex case reviews”, to include community members, service providers, Knowledge Keepers, and Elders.
- ✓ Development of Family Systems training for Resource social workers.
- ✓ Continue to provide training opportunities for staff regarding the MMIWG, multi-generational trauma related to Indian Residential School, implementation of the Act, *Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children youth and families*, restorative supervision, Indigenous Core Cultural Competencies.

v. Requiring that all child-welfare decision makers consider the impact of the residential school experience on children and their caregivers.

- ✎ In addition to applicable CFCSA legislation and the Act, *Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children youth and families*, staff must consistently demonstrate adherence to VACFSS' *Indigenous Core Cultural Competencies*, *Keeping Our Children Safe Policy*, *Raising our Children Together Policy*, *Inclusive Foster Care Policy*, *Standing with Families Policy*, and participate in cultural training.
- ✎ All staff are evaluated through the *Restorative Supervision Policy* and guided by the Indigenous Core Cultural Competencies.
- ✎ Engage in research that includes the lived experience of children youth and families with whom we support.
- ✎ Host a tri-annual conference on evidence-based practice with Indigenous families.
- ✎ Strong support and engagement of children in foster homes minimize multiple moves and a reduction of trauma associated with disrupted attachments. VACFSS' inclusive foster care training ensures that caregivers understand and comply with the expectation that a healthy, cultural identity for children in care requires ongoing connection to family, culture, and Nation.



Recommendations and questions for future practice

- ✓ That social workers understand that the care system can cause additional harm and compound inter-generational trauma if measures to keep children culturally safe and connected are not prioritized.
- ✓ A trauma-informed approach that considers the cycle of intergenerational trauma is the basis for our work with children youth and families.
- ✓ Social work practice continually seeks intervention points to address the cycles of trauma using culture as healing, and community as a resource.
- ✓ Increase work across systems to identify areas in which families continue to experience barriers.

Second Call to Action

2. We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, to prepare and publish annual reports on the number of Aboriginal children who are in care, compared with non-Aboriginal children, as well as the reasons for apprehension, the total spending on preventive and care services by child-welfare agencies, and the effectiveness of various interventions.

- ✎ VACFSS provides annual statistics and narrative reports to the board of directors on the following:
 - Child Protection: Number of incidents received, including those coded as Family Development Response (FDR) and Investigation (INV); number of support services (SR) requests; After Hours memos; breakdown of s.13 CFCSA concerns; reporter type for incidents; number of open files (further broken down by Family Service, child in care, OOCO, in custody of another person); OOCO is further broken down by placements of Kith and Kin OR court-ordered, and placements under s.54.01 (permanent transfer of guardianship); number of parents/caregivers lost due to the opioid crisis; number of removals; number of Continuing Custody Order; Number of Collaborative Practice Meetings; number of Elder referrals; number of Ceremonies (Honouring our Sacred Bundles and Homecomings).
 - Family Preservation and Reunification: Number of referrals; breakdown of children by age; number of participants for the Strengthening Group Programs, Honouring our Sacred Life Givers, and Circle of Security groups; hours of service by contracted service providers; supervised access hours of service; hours of service for transportation; number of hours of cultural supports provided by Elders and Family Preservation Counsellors (FPCs); and number of hours for in-home supports services.
 - Guardianship: Number of children and youth VACFSS represented as their legal guardians; number of youth aging into community; education level achieved; youth eligible for CLBC services; youth graduating with high school diplomas and leaving certificates; number of moves while in care; permanency plans, including the number of orders rescinded, and transfers of guardianship to someone other than a parent (which includes adoption); youth engagement programs (i.e., YAC, CRUW, CIRCLE); and review of care plans in partnerships with Nations.



- Resources: Number and age group of children supported in all levels of care; number of children residing with foster caregivers; number of children in staffed group home care; foster placements in other provinces; children in independent living; children living with family or significant others; respite care services and placements; number of children in child-specific resources; cultural events provided to support family and culture connectedness; number of foster homes; skill level of foster caregivers; number of restricted foster care homes; number of Indigenous foster caregivers; placement break down by number and age of child, including “replacements” and their circumstances; sibling groups placed together; number of protocol investigations by concern; number of Quality of Care Reviews; number of Caregiver Support Plans; foster caregiver attendance for education and specialized training; number of community housing (provided by community partners) for foster caregivers and youth suites; number of foster caregiving inquiries, new applications to foster, and new homes opened; and program expenditures.
- ✎ Disaggregate funding expenditures for preventative services, such as concrete needs, support to families, OOCO, supervised access, in-home support, respite care, Homecomings, temporary shelter, therapeutic transitions to parental care, and other support services.

Recommendations and questions for future practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Continue annual child protection review report reasons for apprehension, the total spending on preventive and care services. ✓ Review effectiveness of various interventions. ✓ Continue to decrease the number of Indigenous children in care through community and family engagement, increasing alternatives to care, and least intrusive measures. ✓ Review use of court proceedings and effectiveness of the Director’s contracted legal counsel for restorative practice interventions.

Third Call to Action

3. We call upon all levels of government to fully implement Jordan's Principle.

“Jordan’s Principle is a child first principle calling on the government of first contact to ensure First Nations children can access public services on the same terms as other children. In December 2007, Motion-296 in support of Jordan’s Principle passed unanimously in the House of Commons.”

- ✎ Ensure that all immediate health-related needs are met without awaiting external funding.
- ✎ Jordan's Principle is a child-first and needs-based principle used in public policy and administration in Canada to ensure that First Nations children living on, and off reserve have equitable access to all government-funded public services.

Recommendations and questions for future practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure that protocol agreements are in place with community partners, key stakeholders, and various levels of government to continue supporting urban Indigenous children youth and families in receipt of services across all program areas.



- ✓ Ensure that the rights of all Indigenous children and youth whom we support receive the necessary supports and services without delay.
- ✓ Continue submitting eligible expenses to FNHA for payment.
- ✓ Ensuring all VACFSS policies reflect Jordan's Principle.

Fourth Call to Action

4. We call upon the federal government to enact Aboriginal child-welfare legislation that establishes national standards for Aboriginal child apprehension and custody cases and includes principles that:

i. Affirm the right of Aboriginal governments to establish and maintain their own child-welfare agencies.

The federal Act: *Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children youth and families'* states: "the purpose of this Act is to: (a) affirm the inherent right of self-government, which includes jurisdiction in relation to child and family services; (b) set out principles applicable, on a national level, to the provision of child and family services in relation to Indigenous children; and (c) contribute to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

S.92.1(1) and 92.1(2) CFCSA

92.1 (1) If a First Nation, the Nisga'a Nation, or a Treaty First Nation is prescribed by regulation under section 103 (2) (d.1), a director may make an agreement with the First Nation, Nisga'a Nation or Treaty First Nation respecting the referral of child protection reports under section 16 (1) (b) or (2) (d) in respect of the Indigenous children of the First Nation, Nisga'a Nation, or Treaty First Nation.

(2) A director may make an agreement with a First Nation, the Nisga'a Nation, a Treaty First Nation, or a legal entity representing another Indigenous community for one or more of the following purposes:

(a) to involve the First Nation, Nisga'a Nation, Treaty First Nation, or Indigenous community in one or more of the following:

(i) the development of plans of independence for youth who are Indigenous children of the First Nation, Nisga'a Nation, Treaty First Nation or Indigenous community;

(ii) assessments under section 16 (2) (b.1) respecting the Indigenous families of the First Nation, Nisga'a Nation, Treaty First Nation or Indigenous community;

(iii) investigations under section 16 (2) (c) respecting the Indigenous children of the First Nation, Nisga'a Nation, Treaty First Nation or Indigenous community.

(iv) the development of plans of care for the Indigenous children of the First Nation, Nisga'a Nation, Treaty First Nation or Indigenous community;

(v) planning for the needs of the Indigenous children of the First Nation, Nisga'a Nation, Treaty First Nation or Indigenous community who are in the custody, care or guardianship of a director;



(vi) placement decisions under section 71 respecting the Indigenous children of the First Nation, Nisga'a Nation, Treaty First Nations or Indigenous community.

- ✎ All program areas work with Indigenous Governing Bodies and Nations to fully implement the Act, *Respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children youth and families* to develop and implement care plans, cultural plans, and permanency planning.
- ✎ Programs work in collaboration with other Delegated Aboriginal Agencies across the province and Canada.
- ✎ Work in partnership with First Nations in relation to their members through the following:
 - Collaborative Practice and planning meetings.
 - Supporting families who are involved with court/legal proceedings, providing information for First Nations who are a party under s.92.1(1) and 92.1(2) of the CFCSA.
- ✎ Work to increase the number of kith and kin caregivers and consult with First Nations communities when seeking caregivers for their member children.

Recommendations and questions for future practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Continue to update social workers regarding Nations that have new Indigenous Governing Body (IGB) status.✓ Continue to ensure that Nations are involved in significant measures involving their member children youth and families.✓ Prioritize, expedite, and complete kith and kin Home Studies consistent with the child's wellbeing and the importance of continuity and familiarity in relationships.

[ii. Require all child-welfare agencies and courts to take the residential school legacy into account in their decision-making.](#)

- ✎ Identify any history of residential school and/or child welfare involvement of each family with whom we support to ensure that decisions take into account the multi-intergenerational impacts similar to the Gladue requirements.
- ✎ Utilizes a Collaborative Practice meeting at initial contact with families to prevent legal court involvement by:
 - Mediation to minimize the length of legal court involvement.
 - Ensure access is maintained and facilitated for all children in care with their biological and extended family.
 - Refer families to the Client Support Elder Program and to community Elders to assist with traditional healing and support.
- ✎ Keeping siblings together and facilitating sibling reunification into one supportive foster home is a priority.
- ✎ Given the wider association with the historical residential school system, kith and kin placements, and inclusive foster care, the term “residential” has been removed from the program title of “Residential Resources Program” in 2020.



- ✎ Poverty, addictions, housing, mental health, food insecurity, and inequitable access to education and other resources remain a priority and they are not the subject of neglect investigations.

Recommendations and questions for future practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Continue to recognize the inherent right of Nations as a “party” to child protection court proceedings consistent with the <i>Federal Act: Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children youth and families</i>.✓ Training provided to workers on culturally appropriate trauma-informed approaches in restorative child welfare interventions.✓ Adherence to the <i>Federal Act: Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children youth and families</i> on significant measures with priority to kinship care, preservation of cultural connections, and involvement of community, Nation, and band in decision making.✓ Ensure that neglect investigations do not perpetuate the colonial impact of residential schools.

iii. Establish, as an important priority, a requirement that placements of Aboriginal children into temporary and permanent care be culturally appropriate.

- ✎ Adheres to the priority placement of Indigenous children as defined under s.71.1(3) of the *CFCSA* and s.16 of the *Federal Act: Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children youth and families*.
- ✎ Reviews the placement of Indigenous children every six months and meets with them every 30 days, as defined by the *CFCSA*.
- ✎ Work to place children with extended family when they are unable to reside with their parents through the following:
 - OOCO through s. 35.2(d) and 41.1(b) of *CFCSA*.
 - Safety plans with family and friends.
 - Agreements with kith and kin through s. 8 of *CFCSA* – Extended Family Plan.
 - Permanent transfer of custody to kith and kin through s.54.1 and s.54.01 of the *CFCSA*.
 - Ensuring siblings are placed together in foster care. Where this is not possible, visitation between siblings is scheduled on a consistent basis.
 - Creating care plans for children in care that support their cultural development and identity with concrete action steps for foster caregivers, in partnership with the child’s Nation.
 - Arranging opportunities for caregivers and biological family to partner in the care of the children, including attending appointments, celebrations, cultural events, and Ceremony.
- ✎ VACFSS foster caregivers are required to participate in foster care education, including a specialized curriculum of workshops designed to build trauma-informed cultural capacity and sensitivity in supporting Indigenous children youth, and families. Embedded in this targeted caregiver training is Indigenous cultural awareness, regarding historical antecedents, the



effects of Canada's legacy of colonization and the impact, historically and currently, on Indigenous Peoples.

- ✎ The Resources Recruitment Team strives to increase the number of Indigenous foster caregivers to provide respite and short-term and long-term care to Indigenous children.
- ✎ The Lifelong Connections worker is a dedicated position that continuously seeks lifelong connections for children and youth in continuing care.
- ✎ Reviews care plans annually with Nations and develop cultural plans in partnership.

Recommendations and questions for future practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure kith and kin placements and family caregivers are identified through family finding and lifelong family connections initiatives. ✓ Formal training on family finding for workers. ✓ Present information as outlined in the Interim Guide for Ongoing Reassessment of Placement to collaborative practice meetings. ✓ Review and modify the elements of the Safe Home Study that discriminate against Indigenous kith and kin caregivers.

Fifth Call to Action

5. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families.

- ✎ VACFSS offers the following programming for children youth and families: *Strengthening Families, Strengthening Fathers, Sacred Life-Givers Group, and The Gathering Our Medicine*
- ✎ Partner with contractors that provide in-home counselling, skill-building, and practical support to foster caregivers and OOCO caregivers.

Recommendations and questions for future practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Expand partnership of the <i>Indigenous Early Years Program</i> to provide parenting support/education to parents with young children. ✓ Evaluate the efficacy of VACFSS programs. ✓ Increase access to culturally appropriate mental health services and complex trauma including addictions. ✓ Increase staff awareness and participation in all cultural ceremonies for children youth and families. ✓ Indigenize the 'Circle of Security' and 'Strong Start' programs for children content. ✓ <i>Gathering Our Medicine Workshop</i> to be made accessible to kith and kin caregivers in the OOCO and in care, resource continuum.



Glossary of Terms

Chapter 3 – Child Protection Response Policy	Chapter 3 comprises the policies, standards, and procedures that support the duties and responsibilities carried out by delegated child protection workers under Part 3 of the CFCSA. The policies and standards are consistent with the guiding principles of the CFCSA, a fundamental component of which is the right of children and youth to be protected from abuse, neglect, and harm or threat of harm. The Child Protection Response Model is informed by Structured Decision-Making Assessment tools.
Child Protection Mediation	A collaborative way to reach an agreement on the best plan for a child's safety with the help of an impartial mediator and the involvement of legal counsel.
Collaborative Planning Conference	A collaborative planning conference is social work driven with family input, designed to help the social worker develop a case plan about a child's safety. The conference includes families and children in the decision-making and encourages a worker/family relationship.
Delegation	C3: Support services for families, voluntary care agreements, and special needs agreements. C4: Guardianship services for children in care. C6: Full range of child protection services.
Family Development Response (FDR)	FDR is a protection response that is available under Chapter 3, Child Protection Response Policy, when parents are willing to work collaboratively with the social worker in mitigating the safety concerns identified.
Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) Conference	An FGDM Conference is a way for family and others close to the family and child to come together to develop a plan that considers the wishes, needs, and culture of the family.
Gladue Requirements	Gladue refers to a right that Aboriginal People have under s.718.2 of the Criminal Code. Gladue is also a sentencing principle that recognizes that Aboriginal Peoples face racism and systemic discrimination in and out of the criminal law system, and attempts to deal, with the crisis of overrepresentation /inequities of Aboriginal Peoples in custody, to the extent possible, by changing how judges sentence.
High-Risk and Complex Case	The presence of certain concurrent risk factors is associated with a high risk of future harm. The interaction of these factors in a case



increase risk and contribute to its complexity. These cases are very challenging to manage and require a high degree of collaboration, consultation, and clinical support. These concurrent risk factors include:

- ✎ Parental substance use
- ✎ Domestic violence
- ✎ Mental health disorder
- ✎ Homelessness, and
- ✎ Child vulnerability due to young age and special needs.
- ✎ These cases are especially challenging for staff with limited experience, knowledge, and confidence in managing these cases.

Incidents

Child protection response policy requires all reports to be registered as incidents. Incidents are registered at After Hours, MCFD District Offices, and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies. Reports of suspected maltreatment of children are coded as Offer Support Services (OSP), Investigation (INV), or Family Development Response (FDR).

Intake – assessment, and investigation

Intake is a specialized function of protective services whereby reports are screened and assessed for follow-up. The intake process requires the need to make timely decisions to ensure a child's immediate health and safety. It is also the beginning of the agency's involvement with the family, including receiving, assessing, and responding to reports of abuse and or neglect under the Child Protection Response Policy (Chapter 3).

Least Intrusive Measures

Refers to the decision-making process to determine the most appropriate level of service needed for children at risk of maltreatment. Child removal is also known as apprehension should only be used as the last resort after having explored all other options.

Out-of-Care Options (OOCO)

An alternative to foster care, children may, in some circumstances, live with a relative or another significant person with whom the child is comfortable and connected. The OOCO program provides support to caregivers, who provide daily care for the children of extended family or friends. These living arrangements permit children to remain connected to the larger family network and avoid placement in foster care.

Restorative Supervision

- ✎ VACFSS' Restorative Supervision Model is grounded in, mirrors and supports Restorative Child Welfare, an approach that honours our collective wisdom as to how best to help Indigenous children youth, and families with whom



we support. It supports collaborative, reciprocal supervisor-supervisee relationships that are rooted in VACFSS' 5 values.

s.13

- ✎ A child has been or is likely to be, physically harmed, sexually abused, or sexually exploited by a parent/caregiver or another person and the parent/caregiver is unwilling or unable to protect the child,
- ✎ The child has been or is likely to be physically harmed because of neglect by the child's parent/caregiver,
- ✎ The child is emotionally harmed by living in a situation where there is domestic violence by or towards a person with whom the child resides,
- ✎ The child is deprived of necessary health care,
- ✎ The child's development is likely to be seriously impaired by a treatable condition and the child's parent/caregiver refuses to provide or consent to treatment,
- ✎ The child's parent/caregiver is unable or unwilling to care for the child and has not made adequate provisions for the child's care,
- ✎ The child is or has been absent from home in circumstances that endanger the child's safety or well-being,
- ✎ The child's parent/caregiver is dead and adequate provision has not been made for the child's care,
- ✎ The child has been abandoned and adequate provision has not been made for the child's care, or
- ✎ The child is living in a situation where there is domestic violence by or towards a person with whom the child resides.

s.54.01

Under the CFCSA, the primary goal is to have children return to their parents wherever possible. In the event that a parent(s) is unable to resume care of their child, it is important to have an alternate plan so children don't have a long period of uncertainty about who will care for them. This alternate plan often includes the permanent transfer of custody to a proposed guardian. When a child is unable to return to parental care at the end of an out-of-care Extended Family Program (EFP) agreement or out-of-care court order, permanent custody can be legally transferred to extended family or other individuals who have a significant relationship with, or cultural or traditional responsibility to the child.

s.8 and Extended Family Program

When circumstances prevent a child from living with their parents, the preferred option is for the child to be with someone they know.



This usually means an immediate family member – a grandparent, aunt or uncle, or an older sibling – it can also include someone with an established relationship or cultural connection to the child and their family.

s.35(2)(d) and 41(1)(b)

Interim and temporary transfer of custody that a child is placed in the custody of a person other than a parent with the consent of the other person and under the director's supervision.

Service Request

A support service request received from a family member is registered as a Service Request. These requests are for support services that do not include any child protection concerns under s.13 of the CFCSA.

Structured Decision Making (SDM)

Structured assessment tools systematically focus on the critical decision points in the life of a case, increasing worker consistency in assessment and case planning. Such tools are considered to make assessments more objective as decision-making is guided by the facts of the case.

- 👤 Screening Assessment
- 👤 Vulnerability Assessment
- 👤 Family and Child's Strengths and Needs Assessment
- 👤 Vulnerability Reassessment
- 👤 Reunification Assessment



Indigenous Core Cultural Competencies

While VACFSS has been weaving Indigenous cultural knowledge and practice into our programs and services for many years, the newly defined Indigenous Core Cultural Competencies (ICCC) are an important guide that clearly characterize how each employee at VACFSS can ground their work in relation to Indigenous knowledge. They have been incorporated into our staff selection and evaluation processes for every position within the agency. For social workers, the ICCC's are an important prompt to keep redirecting us to integrate culture into our practice with the children and families we serve. The six ICCC's are:

1. Relational Engagement

Defines how an employee relates to children, families, communities, each other, and the environment. Relationships are developed and nurtured through respectful communication and interaction with others; demonstrates an acknowledgment of the land/ territories, and the Peoples who have stewarded the land for generations. VACFSS respects and acknowledges the cultural practices of the Coast Salish Peoples while honouring the diverse Indigenous cultures of the children and families with whom we support.

2. Leadership

Based on the values of respect, integrity, belonging, humility, strength-based practices VACFSS leaders provide holistic service delivery that culturally and spiritually strengthens Aboriginal families in order to realize our vision and VACFSS' strategic priorities. Leadership is the ability to motivate, inspire and lead people. In doing so, the employee has the ability to engage and/or articulate the service pathways for children, youth and families. It is also the ability to manage the delivery of this vision by coaching and building the team. Demonstrates the willingness and ability to utilize models of traditional leadership pathways.

3. Collaborative Planning and Decision Making

Utilizes collaborative processes to achieve engagement with and advocacy for children, youth, families, and community. Develops appropriate service/support plans while responding to changing circumstances. Decision making occurs within the context of Bill C-92, CFCSA, related policies, and the rights of Indigenous children, youth, families, and community.

4. Emotional Competency

Emotional competency is the ability to maintain emotional self-regulation in delivery of service to children, youth, families, partners, communities and other employees in the context of colonialism, oppression, racism, trauma and adversity. Recognizes and intervenes in conflict between individuals, to be present, observant with composure and empathy. The ability to recognize one's response and privilege to a perceived situation when working with children, youth, families and other employees. Understanding the principles of trauma informed practice and how they apply throughout the programs and departments.

5. Resilience

The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, (systemic racism, structural inequality), trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress such as family, co-workers, relationship problems, physical and mental health problems, or workplace and financial stressors (American Psychological Association). Recognizes the sources of resiliency, for example: self awareness and efficacy, family, friends, Elders, community, environment, self expression, cultural and spiritual teachings and practices.

6. Cultural/Spiritual Expression

Understands, respects, and safeguards the diversity of Indigenous cultural and spiritual principles and the common threads that support and promote culture while ensuring cultural safety. Envisions a holistic system of nurturing, support, spiritual grounding, and teaching in developing service pathways. Achieves cultural connection(s) and identity(ies) for children, youth, and families. Nurtures the spirit of the child, consistent with customary law, family and community connections as outlined in VACFSS policies. Expands awareness through training and participation with a shared understanding of the teamwork required to deliver cultural support and programming.

