



First Nations Social Development Society 6th Annual Conference 2010

*Working Together Building Sustainable
Communities for Our Future*

Presentation

Children Out of the Parental Home Program



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) Overview



What is the Children Out of the Parental Home Program?

- The Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) program, introduced on January 1, 2010, provides income assistance to children who are placed with a relative living on-reserve.
- It replaces the Guardian Financial Assistance (GFA) program.
- If eligible, COPH assistance is paid to the relative on the child's behalf



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) Overview



How is COPH different from GFA?

- COPH requires the relative and all other adults who live in the relative's home to consent to a screening check.
- The findings of the screening checks must show no evidence of risk before COPH assistance will be provided to the child.



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) Overview



Why did INAC introduce the screening checks requirement?

- As required by INAC funding authorities to be reasonably comparable to the provincial Child in Home of a Relative (CIHR) program's requirement for screening checks, which was introduced in December 2007.
- The change may enhance the safeguard of children being cared for in the home of a relative.



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) Overview

What kind of screening checks will be required?

- **A Prior Contact Check**

a review of any records of previous involvement that MCFD may have had with the individual

and

- **A CORNET Check**

a check of any criminal charges and convictions (including convictions that have been pardoned), probation, stay of proceedings, alternative measures and unsealed Young Offender offences from British Columbia's correctional system.



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) Overview

Who will be conducting these checks?

INAC has made arrangements with the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) to have their After Hours Office conduct the COPH screening checks because the staff have access to records held in BC CORNET and the experience to conduct the screening checks. The After Hours Office also conducts screening checks for all new applications for the provincial CIHR program.

Who will assume the costs?

INAC will assume the costs related to the COPH screening process conducted by MCFD After Hours staff. There will be no added costs to the administering authorities.



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) Overview

Who will be affected?

- COPH child-applicants
- Relative-caregivers of the child-applicant
- All other adults (persons over the age of 18) who live in the relative's home either full or part-time, for example:
 - the relative's husband, wife, partner, boyfriend or girlfriend of a family member who lives with the relative
 - a dependent who turns 18 years of age
 - a tenant/roommate who shares common living space with the child



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) Overview



When will the screening checks begin?

- Effective January 1, 2010, all relatives and adults (18 year and older) living in the household of a new COPH applicant will be required to undergo screening.
- Existing GFA cases will not be screened until their annual review.
- Between April 1, 2010 and December 2010, administering authorities will review all their former GFA caseload (approved before January 1, 2010).
- All adults in households of COPH recipients who are former GFA recipients will be required to undergo screening checks in order to establish the child(ren)'s ongoing eligibility for COPH assistance.



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) Overview

What happens if an adult refuses to consent to the screening checks or there is evidence of risk?

- The COPH application is denied.
- Payments will be discontinued for all other children, if any, in receipt of COPH assistance living in the relative's home.
- The administering authority will send a letter to the relative informing them of the decision to deny the application for COPH assistance and, if applicable, to discontinue any existing COPH payment.



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) Overview

If there is evidence of risk, will the BSDW or the relative know which adult is causing the risk?

- MCFD After Hours staff will only inform the BSDW of the screening result of “evidence of risk” NOT which adult(s) is/are the cause of the risk.
- BSDW will advise the relative of the “evidence of risk” result and provide a list of risk criteria to the relative who may wish to discuss the issue with each adult living in the home.
- BSDW may also inform relative that they may contact their FN Child and Family Services Agency or local MCFD office to discuss alternative support services to assist them in caring for the child(ren).



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) Overview

If there is evidence of risk, will MCFD conduct a child protection investigation?

- MCFD will only proceed with a child protection investigation when warranted by the evidence.
- The BSDW will be advised that there was evidence of risk, not what the evidence was, nor what action MCFD will take as a result of the screening checks.



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) Overview



What if the relative has questions about the result of the screenings?

- BSDW will advise the relatives to contact the MCFD After Hours office at (604) 660-4927 (Lower Mainland), or Toll Free: 1 800 663-9122. .
- If upon review, the MCFD After Hours worker determines that an error was made in applying the screening criteria to the COPH applicant, the worker will inform the administering authority worker of any change to the original finding in writing.



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) Overview



What do BSDW do when an application has been denied and the worker is concerned about the child's well-being?

- BSDW are required to report child protection concerns promptly to an MCFD or Delegated First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) agency child protection social worker.
- BSDW who are unsure about whether to report may call and discuss their concerns with an MCFD child protection worker. MCFD will assess the matter to determine if there are protection concerns.
- BSDW may also advise relatives to discuss alternative support services to assist them in caring for their children with their FNCFS Agency or local MCFD



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) *Overview*



Does COPH involve additional work for BSDWs?

- The new screening requirements are not expected to have a significant impact on the workload of the BSDW.
- The COPH screening checks policy requires BSDW to explain the new policy to parents and relatives of applicants, to complete a new COPH application form, and to process the COPH screening consent forms.
- BSDW are encouraged to read and familiarize themselves with the new policy and forms to reduce intake time.



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) Overview



Questions

&

Comments

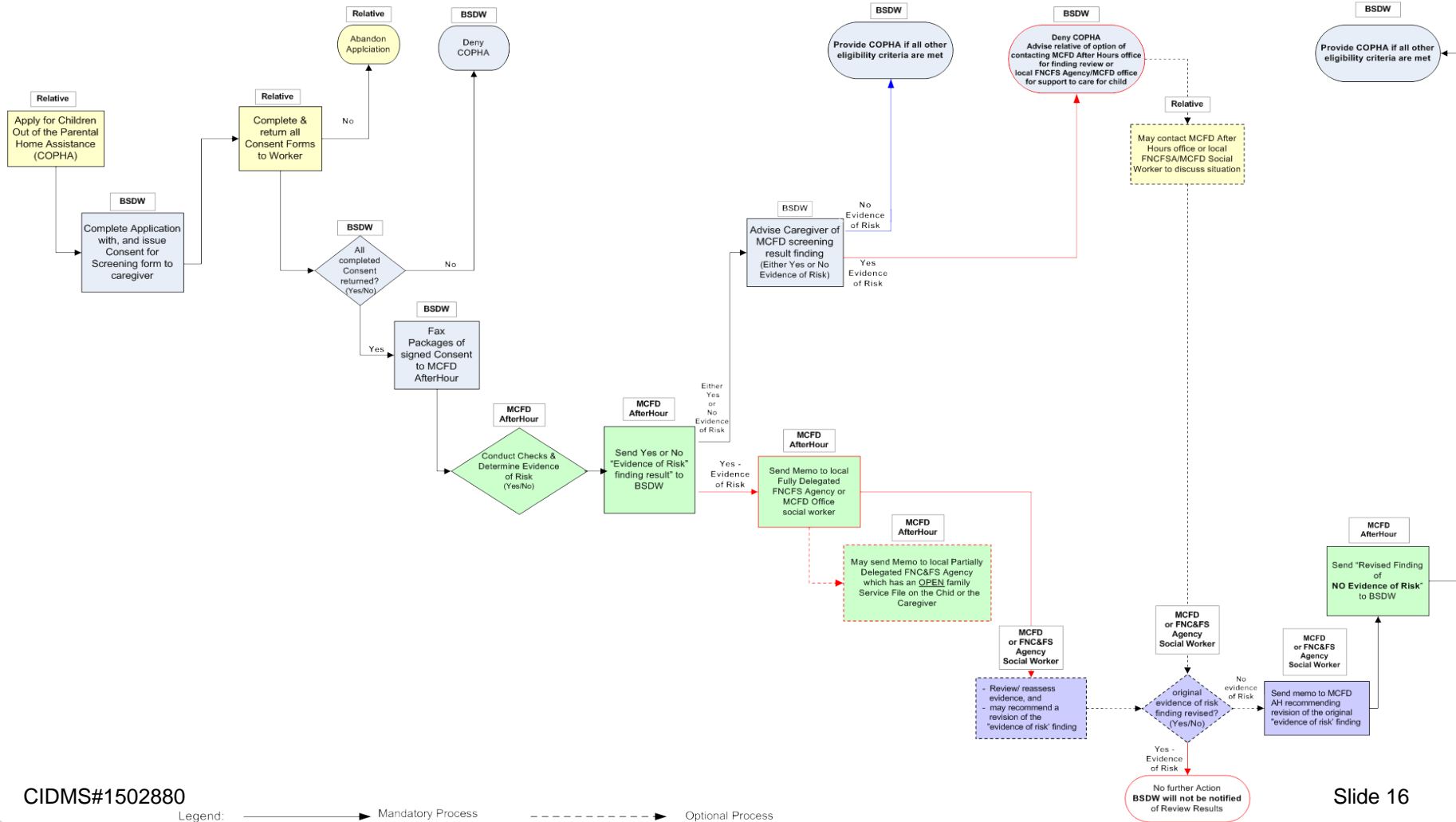




Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) Summary of the Application & Approval Process



CHILDREN OUT OF THE PARENTAL HOME (COPH) SCREENING CHECKS PROCESS FLOW CHART (January 2010)





Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) *Policy & Procedures*



Social Development Policy and Procedures Manual Chapter 6.1 (Handout)

General Principle – page 1

Policy

- Definitions – page 1
- Eligibility Outlined – page 2
- Relative Employment Obligations – page 3
- Treatment of Income – page 4
- Eligibility for Supplements – page 4
- Determining Risk – page 5
- Eligibility Effective Date – page 7
- Duty to Report Child Concerns – page 8



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) *Policy & Procedures (Continue)*



Procedures

- Processing COPH applications – page 9
 - Review COPH 01 Form
 - Review COPH 02 Form
 - Review COPH 03 Form
- Screening Checks – page 9
 - No Evidence of risk
 - Evidence of risk
- MCFD overturning original screening outcome after review – page 12
- Change in Household Composition – page 12
- Persons in the Home Refuse to Provide Consent – page 13
- File Review – page 14



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) *Policy & Procedures*



Questions & Comments





Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) *The GFA Pilot Project*



What is the GFA Pilot Project and Why?

Recognizing that screening checks could impact families and households on reserve, INAC BC Region undertook a pilot project with the following seven First Nations administering authorities to test the screening checks requirement in their communities and provide input on the best way to implement the screening process throughout the province:

- ✓ Blueberry River
- ✓ Cowichan
- ✓ Gitxsan
- ✓ Musqueam
- ✓ Squamish
- ✓ Sto:lo Nation
- ✓ T'laz'ten



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) *The GFA Pilot Project*



What happened during the Pilot Project?

- The GFA Pilot Project ran from October 2008 to December 2010 – completed screening checks on 176 GFA applications.
- Workers from the Pilot FN implemented the screening checks requirement based on the *GFA Policy & Procedures Manual* developed for Pilot Project on all new applications for GFA.
- Representatives from the pilot First Nations, MCFD, the First Nations Social Development Society (FNSDS) and INAC participated in regular teleconferences to review and resolve policy and implementation issues related to the screening checks requirement.
- A report on the Project will be completed by March 31, 2010.



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) The GFA Pilot Project



GFA Screening Checks October 2008 – December 2009

(Source: MCFD After Hours Office)

- 176 children from 133 households applied for GFA
- 317 adults signed consent to have MCFD conduct screening checks on them
- **104** (78 percent) households were found to have **NO evidence of risk**
- **29** (22 percent) households were found to show **EVIDENCE of risk**
- 15.7 calendar days is the average time MCFD takes to process screening checks and report to the pilot First Nations



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) *The GFA Pilot Project*

Pilot FN Feedback – Challenges & Concern

- Lack of emergency support for caregivers
- Time frame for approval once denied still sporadic
- The wait – receive angry calls from relatives
- Length of time for the screening process
- Workers could not help client through the appeals process
- Local MCFD was not aware of the changes to GFA



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Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) *The GFA Pilot Project*

Pilot FN Feedback - Recommendations

- Advise caregivers that the screening process could take up to 6 weeks
- Department consider moving the COPH program from IA to Child Family Services
- Develop an official inquiry form for After Hours concerning the approval or denial
- Develop general brochure outlining the process
- Distribute official training model for social workers in areas where that are not familiar with the process and their obligation
- Establish time frame from application to assessment and final approval
- Provide a short training on the forms
- The screening process is helpful - more support service is needed



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH)

The GFA Pilot Project

Pilot FN Feedback – Best Practices

- Developed a colour-coded package and a cover letter in point form – helped to take the fear away and help client understand what the changes was and why (selling point)
- Kept applications on a spreadsheet for tracking
- Not be intimidated by the changes in processing. It did take time before workers are comfortable with all the paper work
- Liked the process – meant to ensure that children are placed in a home where there are no child protection concerns
- Process could alleviate the harm for the children
- Worked out a new relationship with MCFD in building a healthier community



Children Out of the Parental Home (COPH) *The GFA Pilot Project*



Questions & Comments

