

2023

**Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY)
Recommendations Action Planning (RAP) Committee
Response to MACY**

High Level Summary

In May 2023, the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY) Recommendations Action Planning (RAP) Deputy Minister Committee provided detailed responses on progress made since 2022 on 60 open recommendations directed at Manitoba. These recommendations were from 11 reports released after October 2018.

Twelve recommendations were completed by the Government of Manitoba prior to 2023. An additional two recommendations were directed to the Government of Canada and two at the Child and Family Services (CFS) Authorities.

MACY released a 12th report with recommendations in June 2023. According to MACY’s process, these four recommendations will be first reported on by the province in 2024.

The submission process used by MACY for provincial government submissions, their evaluation, scoring and tracking is based on a model from the European Union.

This document provides a high-level summary of the detailed submissions provided to MACY in May 2023 as part of their annual submission process.

The material submitted represented work since June 2022. Actions undertaken in previous years can be found in the provincial submissions made in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 available on this site. Over the past year, government departments worked with community stakeholders and continued to make progress on recommendations made by MACY. Main themes of the work undertaken are outlined below, by department.

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning

The following recommendations for Education and Early Childhood Learning have been assessed as fully compliant:

Boys Report 2:	Continue work on an Indigenous Inclusion Strategy in schools, in collaboration with school divisions
Circling Star 2:	Conduct a review and develop a province wide strategy to limit exclusionary practices
Matthew 1:	Highlight and promote provincial learning objectives focusing on mental health literacy and well-being coping skills
Matthew 2:	Develop a province-wide strategy to limit, reduce and phase out exclusionary practices
Matthew 3:	Continue promoting the Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole School Approach to Planning for Safety and Belonging in School Division, all schools in Manitoba should be implementing the optional tools

Tina Fontaine 1:	Review measurement of absenteeism, suspensions, expulsions and create a province-wide strategy to address issues
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The department is committed to fully addressing the following recommendations that have been currently assessed as Partially Compliant:

Every Two Hours: A Special Report on Children and Youth Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence in Manitoba

Recommendation Seven:

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that Manitoba Education develop and distribute learning resources for teachers, school clinicians, and other school staff on teaching healthy relationships for each grade-level, and understanding the effect of IPV exposure on children and youth.

Department progress to date:

- Work is ongoing to redevelop the Kindergarten to Grade 12 Physical Education/Health Education curriculum in Manitoba, featuring a more comprehensive set of learning expectations related to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) related topics such as: 1) Healthy Relationships and Communication, 2) Boundaries and Consent, 3) Sexual Health, 4) Online and Media Safety, and 5) Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
- Curriculum rollout is expected to include implementation guidelines and professional development resources for educators. IPV/GBV experts and stakeholders are being engaged to inform development of resources.
- Resources for children and youth will be developed to indicate what healthy relationships look like, including trauma-informed programming for victimized children and youth.
- External programs that enhance educator and student understanding of healthy relationships, bullying and abuse (such as Project 11, Thrival Kits, Sources of Strength, Respect in School, Respect in Sport, and Kids Help Phone Counsellor in the Classroom) are being integrated into classroom instruction.
- A list of trauma-related hotlines will be included as a new IPV/GBV resource for classrooms.
- Curriculum development is being informed by research and consultation with groups such as SIECAN and SERC (Sexual Education Resource Centre) to ensure learning expectations and resources are age-appropriate for K-12 students.
- Full implementation of the updated curriculum is projected for the 2025/26 school year, with possible piloting taking place in 2024/25.

Finding the Way Back: An Aggregate Investigation of 45 Boys Who Died by Suicide or Homicide in Manitoba (also referred to as The Boys Report)

Recommendation Three:

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends the Department of Education, in consultation with school divisions and relevant stakeholders, demonstrate the development or continuation of sustainable initiatives in anti-racist education generally, and anti-Indigenous racism specifically, for all students, administrators, teachers, and support staff in Manitoba schools to enhance understanding of racism in education with a view to eradicate inequities and system barriers.

Department progress to date:

- A consulting firm has been contracted to lead consultations on racism in schools and how Manitoba can best address this issue. Consultation will take place in the first half of 2024, with the final report expected in July 2024. This report will lay the foundation for a provincial anti-racism policy directive and action plan.
- Implementation of Manitoba's Framework for Learning has been initiated, ensuring that that subject area curricula and assessments are inclusive and rigorous, and reflect the full diversity of Manitoba's peoples—promoting human rights and responsible citizenship with a focus on Indigenous perspectives, inclusive practices, gender diversity and anti-racism.
- Liaisons have been nominated by school divisions and independent schools to engage in a series of focused implementation sessions to prepare them to lead and champion implementation of the Framework for Learning in their respective school divisions/schools. Anti-racism is woven throughout the Global Competencies articulated in the Framework.
- The Framework for Learning has been aligned with the principles of *Mamahtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With - An Indigenous Education Policy Framework*. Through provincially led implementation and information sessions Mamahtawisiwin is gaining steady momentum throughout schools and school divisions as it clearly articulates role and responsibilities for students, teachers, school-based teams, school leaders (principals), school division leaders and the department in ensuring an Indigenous-inclusive education system.

Manitoba Families

Modernization of Child and Family Services Practice Standards

Previous reports have noted the work underway to streamline and modernize CFS practice standards.

Following completion of phases 1 and 2 of this work, the updated version of CFS Standards was posted and effective June 1, 2023. The work completed means that

redundancies and outdated information were removed and some information was updated to ensure links and references were accurate, and to incorporate some specific recommendations from MACY and from other reports. The Standards have also been condensed and made more easily accessible, and reflect current day leading practices. They also now include language to ensure compliance with National Standards for child welfare practice including placement priorities.

Some specific recommendations from MACY about Standards will be addressed in Phase 3, which has begun. This stage of Standards Modernization will be undertaken by the Child and Youth Services Division and the Authorities and will identify the base core Standards to be central, and those where Authorities will develop detailed and culturally appropriate practice Standards.

The 2023 amendments to the CFS Act will require Authorities to develop practice Standards and frameworks for alternate care agreements, and this work will be completed prior to the rest of Phase 3 work.

The following recommendations have seen progress with this work:

- Circling Star, Recommendation 6
- Angel's Story, Recommendation 4
- Infant Sleep Conditions, Recommendation 13

The following recommendations have been completed through this work.

- Tina Fontaine, Recommendation 5
- Infant Sleep Conditions, Recommendation 12

Enhanced Training

Training continues to be a focus of work with community partners to include current best practices and priority areas to support front line services.

Roll out continues for the pilot training program that was developed in Abuse Investigations training, and for supervisor training. Both are key to supporting best practices and strong outcomes for children and families. Training roll out will continue to reach more staff, and to work on subsequent modules of training.

Broad training across the Department of Families and for Manitoba continued, with specific focus on trauma and the history of colonization and racism.

The input from community partners is informing training content as well as supporting delivery.

The following recommendations have shown progress through this work:

- Circling Star, Recommendation 6
- Angel's Story, Recommendations 2, and 4
- Infant Sleep Conditions, Recommendations 1, 13
- Maltreatment Under age 5, Recommendations 1, 5

The following recommendations have been completed through this work:

- Angel's Story, Recommendation 1, 3
- Infant Sleep Conditions, Recommendation 12
- Tina Fontaine, Recommendation 5
- Female Youth Suicide Aggregate, Recommendation 3

Tracia's Trust Strategy and Work to Support Sexually Exploited Youths

The Tracia's Trust Strategy is the strategy working across government to respond to the issue of sexual exploitation of youth. Oversight of the strategy has moved to be with the MMIWG2S+ and Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet with support from Women and Gender Equity.

Many initiatives led by the Department of Families are part of this work including in the areas of prevention, intervention, legislation, coordination, research and evaluation.

New funding for the forensic community nurse examiner will include young people 16 years of age and older, to be operated by Klinic and Ka Ni Kanichihk. Funding was provided to Toba Centre for Children and Youth to pay for capital costs for a medical suite, as Klinic is exploring using their space as a satellite site for their program when it is operational.

The work of the regional teams continues to lead outreach and awareness in communities across Manitoba.

StreetReach continued to provide services in Winnipeg and Thompson to high-risk youth. New partnerships were developed with health providers in Winnipeg to support improved service coordination.

A new Safe Ride program to assist sexually exploited youths return to safe placements was launched and is seeing strong uptake. A new missing children protocol was implemented exactly as outlined by MACY and is in place, with training and support to help implementation.

The following recommendations have seen progress with this work:

- Angel's Story, Recommendations 2
- Tina Fontaine, Recommendations 4

The following recommendations have been completed with this work:

- Angel's Story Recommendation 3
- Tina Fontaine Recommendation 5

Child Welfare Transformation and New Initiatives

Work to support Indigenous jurisdiction has continued, with additional amendments to the CFS Act and changes to practice Standards to support this. The work on this for Manitoba is led by the Indigenous Jurisdiction Transition Office. Exciting progress in this area means more children and families will receive services that are no longer under the oversight of Manitoba.

This transition was supported through significant amendments to the CFS Act which provide greater ability to support Indigenous jurisdiction and include Family Supports, Voluntary Care Agreements, as well as kinship and customary care agreements as alternatives to support families and children. Work is now underway with the Authorities who are developing a framework to do this work in a way that addresses the need to identify and mitigate risk, as well as ensuring those providing care in alternative agreements have the supports and resources they need.

In the past year, Manitoba enacted a new regulation to bring into force the final section of The Advocate for Children and Youth Act – serious injury reporting. This will help MACY provide greater insights into how to improve services and supports for children and families.

Supports for vulnerable children and youth have been increased, such as the significant funding increase provided to Toba Centre for Children and Youth. This has allowed them to expand their services to include animal therapy, case navigation, increased cultural supports, and expanded forensic interviews. They have been able to move into a newly renovated space where they can collocate with partners such as child and family services and law enforcement. Work has started to enable better early referrals for young people disclosing abuse so they can receive expert supports early and minimize potential trauma.

The following recommendations have seen progress with this work:

- Angel's Story Recommendation 4
- Maltreatment Under Age 5 years 1 (Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry Recommendations), 2, and 5

- Male Suicide/ Homicide report 1

The following recommendations have been completed with this work:

- Angel's Story Recommendation 1
- Matthew Report Recommendation 8

Bridging the Gaps: Achieving Substantive Equality for Children with Disabilities in Manitoba

The Department of Families has continued to support two respite pilot projects for children with disabilities and their families, which aim to stabilize the home environment and reduce the need for CFS involvement. St.Amant and New Directions each offer temporary out-of-home respite, to assist families of children with exceptionally high care needs that cannot be safely managed by other available supports. These initiatives include interdisciplinary clinical teams that provide holistic, therapeutic support to help address families' challenges and improve their ongoing well-being.

In 2022, the Department of Families began collaborating with St.Amant to deliver and strengthen case management services for children with autism. A significant number of cases have already been transferred from Children's disABILITY Services (CDS) to St.Amant, enabling CDS workers to serve more families and reducing wait times for case management.

Efforts have also been made to increase awareness and referrals to the Children's Therapy Network of Manitoba. These services are available to children who are not meeting developmental milestones in many domains and do not require a diagnosis. The Department of Families provided a funding increase of \$2.5 million to children's therapy services in 2022, which are delivered by the Children's Therapy Network of Manitoba and partner agencies in addition to developing a new website for families looking for information regarding therapy in Manitoba.

In April 2023, CDS guideline rates for self-managed care were increased to a baseline of \$19.00 per hour to help families recruit and retain qualified staff. In August, CDS released the Guide to Self-Managed Services to support families who opt for this form of service, which is publicly available online.

CDS and Child and Youth Services Division (CYSD) continue to work closely to ensure coordination between the two systems. Information has been shared to ensure staff in both programs are aware of the scope and parameter of services available to support families.

As well, CDS continues to welcome community feedback. Regular meetings are held with the Family Advocacy Network (FAN), the Children's Coalition, Abilities Manitoba,

Community Living Manitoba and other stakeholders to help inform service delivery and opportunities for improvement.

Women and Gender Equity Manitoba (WAGE MB)

Every Two Hours: Special Report on Children's Experience of Intimate Partner Violence was released in June 2022, and made seven (7) recommendations to the province, of which two are directed to/led by WAGE MB.

1. *That Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet (GBVCC) publicly recognize children exposed to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) as primary victims and rights-holders under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child who are entitled to supports.* Next steps in response to this recommendation include (those with an asterisk are already underway):
 - Updating the Standards Manual to recognize children exposed to IPV as primary victims*
 - Reviewing and updating service purchase agreements (SPAs) to include recognition of children exposed to IPV as primary victims*
 - Updating Manitoba's Framework: Addressing Gender-Based Violence to recognize children exposed to IPV as primary victims*
 - Performing a review and gap analysis of services available to children exposed to IPV
 - Developing and implementing a plan to provide supports to children exposed to IPV
 - Reviewing Manitoba's Framework: Addressing Gender-Based Violence to identify opportunities to include activities and services related to children exposed to IPV

6. *Enhance funding to each of the ten family violence shelters in Manitoba to ensure employment of a child-focused trauma specialist.* Next steps in response to this recommendation include (those with an asterisk are already underway):
 - Exploring funding options to support the provision of child trauma-specialists in shelters*
 - Developing a review and gap analysis of services available to children exposed to IPV within the Manitoba GBV sector
 - Updating the Standards Manual to include standards related to responding to children who have experienced or witnessed IPV.

Manitoba Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care

Funding Specialized Resource(s) that Provide Culturally Safe Therapeutic Supports for Children Exposed to IPV

In February 2023, an interdepartmental working group was formed to gather input from community partners and Indigenous leadership on how best to address two recommendations related to children exposed to intimate partner violence from the Safe Sleep Report (i.e., Every Two Hours: A Special Report on Children and Youth Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence, Rec. 4 and 5). The Department is committed to ensuring a comprehensive strategy that fosters an all-of-government approach and is currently working with other departments and health system partners to build upon the information compiled from the stakeholder engagement sessions. The next steps will include identifying priority areas for funding to support culturally safe, therapeutic supports for children.

Reinstate the Review of Sleep-related Infant Deaths

In line with Recommendation 11 from the MACY report titled “Safe and Sound: A Special Report on the Unexpected Sleep-Related Deaths of 145 Manitoba Infants,” the Department is collaborating with Shared Health to support their transition in assuming the lead role in defining and implementing provincial quality and patient safety clinical standards regarding maternal, perinatal, and child health. This work is particularly centered on reinstating health systems reviews for pediatric and maternal/perinatal care, in addition to the re-establishment of systematic reviews of child and maternal/perinatal morbidity and mortality.

Provision of Safe Sleep Public Awareness and Education

The department, in collaboration with health system partners, continues to demonstrate progress in its efforts to enhance public awareness and education on safe sleep practices in alignment with Recommendations 3 to 7 from the “Safe and Sound Report” regarding infant sleep conditions. Notable initiatives undertaken by the Department as part of its ongoing efforts to create tools tailored for diverse audiences of infant caregivers across various settings include: a targeted social media campaign during Safe Sleep Week in March 2023, an updated bilingual handout on diverse risk factors associated with sleep-related infant deaths, a safe sleep e-learning module launched in June 2023, and the distribution of Safe Sleep Posters amongst service delivery organizations.

Government Commitments in Support of Children’s Health

In addition to the focused work of implementing MACY’s recommendations, the mandate letter issued to the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care further demonstrates tangible ways the Government is prioritizing this work through commitments that are guiding high level strategic work within the health system.

Specific commitments that will indirectly help improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of services provided to children, youth, and young adults include, but are not limited to:

- Implement our health human resource strategy to fix the staffing crisis in health care by hiring 400 doctors over 5 years; 300 nurses in Winnipeg with a corresponding commitment to rural and Northern Manitoba; 200 paramedics and 100 homecare workers.
- Work with health care workers and the Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness to reduce child mortality over two terms by doubling the Manitoba prenatal benefit and implementing a province-wide suicide prevention strategy which will include a focus on 2SLGBTQ+ youth.
- Collaborate with local leadership and communities to support new and innovative ways to deliver Indigenous health

Manitoba Housing, Addictions and Homelessness

Improving the mental well-being of children, youth, and families throughout Manitoba is a priority for the Government of Manitoba. The province remains committed to supporting initiatives which address recommendations made by MACY.

The Province of Manitoba continues to invest in Integrated Youth Services, centralized at service sites around the province, known as Huddle. Manitoba has invested nearly \$8 million in six huddle sites. These Huddle sites bring multiple health and community service partners together to provide easy-to-find, inclusive and welcoming wrap-around supports to Manitobans aged 12 to 29 and to their families. Huddle sites also bridge Indigenous and Western models of health care to better serve diverse youth.

- In January 2023, Huddle Selkirk officially launched, becoming Manitoba's sixth fully operational Huddle Site.
- Huddle NorWest in Winnipeg, with capital investments from the province, expanded to a new, larger location in early 2023. This new centre provides increased mental health and addictions services, enhanced training and education opportunities and expanded community programming.
- These investments address several MACY recommendations, including:
 - Stop Giving Me a Number, Recommendations 5 and 6
 - Circling Star, Recommendation 3
 - The Slow Disappearance of Matthew, Recommendations 4 and 5

In addition to the Huddle hubs, the Government of Manitoba is dedicated to providing and supporting accessible services across the province. The province continues to work

towards decreasing barriers and improving access to mental health services for children and youth.

- In May of 2023, as part of its commitment to promote mental health and wellness and to increase access to early intervention and suicide prevention activities, the Manitoba government invested almost \$3 million in new and ongoing funding in mental health service improvements for children and youth across the province. The increased investments into programs such as Huddle Manitoba, Child and youth services at Health Sciences Centre, and the Strongest Families Institute will improve access to youth-centred, family-connected supports.
- The Child and Youth Mental Health Services initiative at Health Sciences Centre (HSC) Winnipeg is a multi-staged project that includes the hiring of specialized staff, construction of new physical space and development of service pathways to reduce wait times for children and youth seeking mental health supports. The Manitoba government has so far invested \$4.2 million over three years in this expansion and will invest \$2 million annually to support the increased services.
- In 2023, Manitoba removed referral requirements for Strongest Families Institute (SFI) programs. SFI provides free, bilingual, proven skill-based programs to families of children aged three to 17 with mild to moderate mental health and well-being concerns.
- Additionally, Kids Help Phone (KHP) provides 24/7 e-mental health services to Manitobans ages five to 25. KHP services include clinically-based self-directed tools, health promotion and mental illness interventions, activities, crisis support services and professional counselling and community-based resource referrals.
- These initiatives address several MACY recommendations, including:
 - Circling Star, Recommendation 3
 - Stop Giving Me a Number, Recommendation 2, 7
 - The Slow Disappearance of Matthew, Recommendation 5

The Government of Manitoba outlined the priorities for the Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness in the October 2023 Mandate Letter. This direction included the following initiatives:

- Work with the Department of Justice to hire 100 mental health workers to work alongside law enforcement and community organizations. This direction aims to address several MACY recommendations, including:
 - The Butterfly Report, Recommendation 1
 - Angel's Story, Recommendation 6
- Work with health care workers and the Department of Health to reduce child mortality, including implementing a province-wide suicide prevention strategy,

with a focus on 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. This direction aims to address several MACY recommendations, including:

- Circling Star, Recommendation 4
- Angel's Story, Recommendation 5
- Tina Fontaine, Recommendation 2
- Stop Giving Me a Number, Recommendations 1, 2 and 7
- The Slow Disappearance of Matthew, Recommendation 7

Manitoba Justice

The Youth Justice Branch provides a dedicated focus on advancing youth justice priorities, including supporting a whole of government approach to youth at risk of involvement with the justice system. This includes providing whole of government and cross-divisional responses to MACY and fostering collaborative relationships across departments and sectors to improve outcomes for justice-involved youth or youth at-risk of involvement with the criminal justice system.

This holistic approach shows evidence of progress towards meeting the recommendations set out by MACY. Manitoba Justice remains committed to fully address the outstanding recommendations and will continue to work collaboratively with MACY, across government and with communities with a focus on responding to the varying needs of youth at risk of, or involvement in the justice system.

The following list below of programs and initiatives highlight work throughout the province that respond to recommendations made by MACY in the following Special Reports: Learning from Nelson Mandela: A Report on the Use of Solitary Confinement and Pepper Spray in Manitoba Youth Custody Facilities; Documenting the Decline: The Dangerous Space between Good Intentions and Meaningful Interventions; Every Two Hours: A Special Report on Children and Youth Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence in Manitoba; and Finding the Way Back: An Aggregate Investigation of 45 boys who Died by Suicide or Homicide in Manitoba:

- The Lighthouse programs support communities and organizations to provide youth with positive alternatives after school and on weekends, a safe healthy environment, and personal skill development (leadership, communication, problem solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, anger management, etc.).
- Turnabout Coordinators in Winnipeg and Thompson support children (under the age of 12) and families in accessing community-based prevention supports with the objective of intervening early to promote positive development and avoid future involvement with the criminal justice system.

- The department continues to support Restorative Justice and diversion programs to support youth before they enter (or become entrenched in) the Criminal Justice system.
- The Block-by-Block Community Safety and Wellbeing Initiative is a collaborative, provincially led initiative that draws on the expertise of various partner agencies and provides a platform for the creation of sustainable solutions to address systemic barriers and improve community safety.
- Community Safety and Wellbeing (CSWB) planning supports a collaborative approach to addressing local priority risks to safety and wellbeing through the implementation of programs and strategies in four planning areas, including social development, prevention, risk intervention and incident response. Several First Nations have been engaged to participate in Manitoba's CSWB Planning Project.
- The department supports community mobilization initiatives in Manitoba where individuals, groups, and organizations in a community come together to address social issues associated with health and safety, crime prevention, and community development.
- The department has partnered with Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak on the creation and operation of a youth healing lodge in Thompson intended to provide culturally led justice resources in the north, reduce youth recidivism rates and decrease the use of Thompson's RCMP cells for non-violent youth who have been detained.
- The Kakiskinawtahitonan Program (Reducing Youth Justice Social Impact Bond) provides culturally safe, wraparound programming for youth involved in the Justice system with the goal of reducing the number of days in custody.
- The Youth Justice Branch is prioritizing culturally relevant approaches across the Justice system including but not limited to Community and Custody Corrections staff utilizing a trauma informed approach in providing frontline services to youth involved in the justice system. Another example is Indigenous Cultural Days held at the Manitoba Youth Centre, which include teachings and activities such as dancing, singing, drumming, ceremonies, preparing crafts and traditional foods.
- The department has partnered with the federal government on the creation of Manitoba's Guns and Gangs Suppression Strategy. This strategy works to decrease the risk and opportunity for youth recruitment/involvement.
- Policing Standards are in development including the creation of an Investigative Guide on Intimate Partner Violence to ensure child victims are supported throughout the process from interview and investigation and to ensure proper resources and services are available.