

APIN Lunch and Learn October 19/2016

About the Office of the Children's Advocate

The Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA) is an independent office of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. The OCA represents the rights, interests and viewpoints of children and youth throughout Manitoba who are receiving, or who should be receiving, services under The Child and Family Services Act and The Adoption Act. This includes advocating directly with children and youth and by reviewing services after the death of any young person who received child welfare services in the year preceding his or her death. The OCA also regularly publishes information and resources for the public on its work with Manitoba's children and youth. Website: www.childrensadvocate.mb.ca

This lunch and learn session was presented by Dawn Gair – Intake Assessment Officer and Ada Uddoh – Special Investigator, from the Office of the Children's Advocate. They started off by saying that they get 2000+ calls per year and that there are over 11,000 children in the care of Child and Family Services. ANCR (All Nations Coordinated Response) fields 200 calls/day.

The OCA was established in 1993 after a report on adoption practices of Manitoba children. The legislation that governs them is part of the Child and Family Services Act. They are an independent office as of 1999, and report to the Children's Advocate not the Minister.

Their role is to: Review, Investigate, Advocate and send a report to the Minister if necessary, for example investigating the excess of children being housed in hotels in Winnipeg. They can access and assess both sides of the story but can't always reveal to the caller details of the plan for the child.

They stressed that their role includes education and intervening with agencies. They don't assess risk in situations and don't carry a protection mandate. Their most frequent calls are related to case planning regarding quality of care, from birth parents, schools, grandparents, etc. All sources of referral are protected under the CFS Act and therefore are confidential but they encourage callers to reveal their identity so they can follow up if needed. With regard to calls from parents regarding newborn babies, they provide education regarding parental rights. They cannot stop apprehensions but can help parents regarding their rights.

What they do:

- Want to listen to the child/youth calling them
- Make sure C&FS is following the CFS Act
- Lots of education regarding meaning of different apprehension orders

38% of calls are from children/youth, 36% from family members, 13% from other professionals (nurses, school staff)

4 people on intake for the whole province. They encourage self-advocacy for youth

Special Investigation Review:

- Investigates deaths of children in care within 1 year of death
- Ensure service was provided in accordance with regulations
- Do not assign blame for child's death