

Provincial Protocol Framework

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the *Provincial Protocol Framework*?

- Success in School for Children and Youth in Care is a cross-ministry initiative by the ministries of Education and Children and Youth Services to promote strategies and working relationships between partners that support success in school for children and youth in care.
- The *Provincial Protocol Framework* will form the basis for and guide the development of local regional agreements between school authorities and Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs), and other partners such as Delegated First Nation Agencies (DFNAs), Alberta Health Services, and Solicitor General and Public Security.

What purpose will the *Provincial Protocol Framework* serve?

- The *Provincial Protocol Framework* and regional agreements will lay the foundation for positive working relationships between the child or youth in care, educators, CFSA and DFNA staff, caregivers and other partners to share information and engage in joint decision-making.

Why is the *Provincial Protocol Framework* necessary?

- Children and youth in care are a particularly vulnerable group of students who often have extraordinary needs due to their life circumstances. Currently, educators consider children and youth in care as part of a larger category of students with at-risk factors, and caseworkers recognize education as one component among many other needs of children and youth in care.
- Current practice is not achieving adequate positive educational results for children and youth in care, particularly when compared to overall results for all students in Alberta. The Protocol will help us focus on these young people in more purposeful ways and improve outcomes.
- The most recent educational results for children and youth in care compared to all Alberta students show:
 - Children and youth in care comprise about one per cent of all Alberta students.
 - Children and youth in care take longer to complete high school compared to other Alberta students.
 - More children and youth in care drop out of school compared to other Alberta students.
 - The average in all grades and subjects for provincial achievement test results at the acceptable standard is lower for children and youth in care compared to other Alberta students.
 - Provincial achievement test results for children and youth in care declined from Grades 3 to 6 at both the acceptable and excellence levels.
 - A higher number of children and youth in care (Grades 1 to 9) had a special education code, compared to the provincial average.

How is the *Provincial Protocol Framework* being developed?

- The protocol was drafted by Children and Youth Services and Education based on stakeholder consultation, review of research and current best practices.
- Revisions have been influenced by stakeholder feedback and input.
- Consultation with participants through sounding board sessions, focus groups with youth in care and work with key partners in the field to draft regional agreements are influencing identification of areas for future revisions.
- The demonstration sites in four areas representing urban, rural and Aboriginal communities will provide valuable information with respect to systemic issues and pressures related to implementation.
- The PPF will be revised based on the learnings from the demonstration sites.

How will the protocol impact teacher and caseworker time and workloads?

- Children and youth in care are on existing caseloads and in many classrooms.
- Strategies within the protocol include joint planning that allows teachers and caseworkers to be proactive rather than reactive.
- The protocol strategies are intended to align with current practices, such as meeting with parents and students at report periods or for Individual Program Planning during the school year, and face-to-face meetings with caregivers, children and youth as part of ongoing casework practice.

Why is the protocol directed at all children and youth in care – why not just those who are struggling?

- Research indicates that learning challenges, such as language or academic delays and emotional or behavioural problems, are more prevalent in children and youth in care, often resulting from the traumatic or neglectful situation that brought them into care in the first place.
- Teachers need to be proactive and focus on all children and youth in care because the educational results data shows children and youth in care are behind by Grade 3 and fall further behind through Grades 6 and 9. This data reinforces the need to work together as professionals on their behalf and not wait for obvious signs of difficulty.
- Acknowledging children and youth in care who experience success has positive impacts for them and their families, so it is important to encourage all children and youth in care to do well and recognize them when they achieve success.

Will there be additional resources made available to implement the protocol?

- The protocol will align with the new special education delivery model, the Casework Practice Model and Outcome-Based Service Delivery. Potential resource implications will be explored once the demonstration sites have field tested the Protocol.

What if regions already have a protocol in place for working with children and youth in care?

- The *Provincial Protocol Framework* was developed with consideration of existing regional protocols.
- Relevant sections of the existing local protocols can be inserted into the appropriate areas of the regional agreements. Regional partners can take this opportunity to review, discuss and enhance their agreements to meet current needs while aligning with the *Provincial Protocol Framework*.

If students have an Individualized Program Plan, will they need a Success in School plan, as well?

- No, but it will be necessary to add components of the Success in School plan to the Individualized Program Plan and recognize that the entire core team has a role to play in implementation of the plan. For example, the Success in School Plan has holistic goals, and information will be added to the Individualized Program Plan to outline who to contact and involve in specific situations.

What are the next steps?

- Four demonstration sites are field testing the protocol and will provide valuable feedback regarding strengthened relationships between children and youth in care and their caseworkers, teachers, caregivers and other professionals (May 2009 to June 2010).
- Opportunities for feedback and input are available through a sounding-board process, whereby people interested in this work participate face-to-face in Edmonton or via videoconference.
- The outcomes of the demonstration sites will inform how the protocol is implemented into the future, including the need for resources across the province, and suggest a range of effective strategies to support school success for children and youth in care.
- Learning events will be held in spring 2010 to share best practices from the demonstration sites.
- Resources that outline successful strategies to use with children and youth in care will be shared with stakeholders in spring 2010.

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