Residential Services for People with Developmental Disabilities

Follow-Up on VFM Section 3.10, *2014 Annual Report*

RECOMMENDATION STATUS OVERVIEW					
	# of Actions Recommended	Status of Actions Recommended			
		Fully Implemented	In Process of Being Implemented	Little or No Progress	Will Not Be Implemented
Recommendation 1	1		1.0		
Recommendation 2	1		1.0		
Recommendation 3	3		2.0	1.0	
Recommendation 4	1		1.0		
Recommendation 5	5		3.5	1.5	
Recommendation 6	5	3	1.0	1.0	
Recommendation 7	1				1
Recommendation 8	2	1		1.0	
Recommendation 9	4	1	2.0	1.0	
Recommendation 10	4		3.0	1.0	
Recommendation 11	4	1	3.0		
Total	**31**	**6**	**17.5**	**6.5**	**1**
%	**100**	**20**	**56**	**21**	**3**

Background

The Ministry of Community and Social Services (Ministry) funds residential and support services for people with developmental disabilities to help them live as independently as possible in the community. The Ministry funds two kinds of residential services for children (group homes and associate living similar to foster care), and five types for adults (ranging from supported independent liv-

ing to intensive-support residences that provide 24-hour care). About 18,300 people received residential services in the 2015/16 fiscal year (17,900 in 2013/14, of which 98% were adults). Another 14,900 adults were on a wait list at year's end (14,300 in the 2013/14 fiscal year).

In 2015/16, the Ministry paid a total of $1.3 billion to 236 not-for-profit community agencies that operated nearly 3,000 residences that provided residential and support services to people with developmental disabilities ($1.16 billion in 2013/14 to 240 agencies to operate nearly 2,100 residences).

Of this total, 97% was for adult services (similar to 2013/14). The Ministry, through regional offices, is responsible for overseeing program delivery for most residential services by agencies. Children's residential services are overseen primarily by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

In our *2014 Annual Report*, we noted that during the previous four years, the number of Ontarians with developmental disabilities receiving provincial services and supports grew only 1% to 17,900, while spending on those services and supports rose 14% to $1.16 billion. A portion of this funding increase was intended to accommodate 1,000 more people over four years, but only 240 more were being served by the end of the third year. As such, program costs were increasing faster than the number of people served. As well, as of March 31, 2014, the number of people waiting for services was almost as high as the number of people who had received services in the previous 12 months.

In 2004, the Ministry began work on a comprehensive transformation of developmental services in Ontario; however, the project was still unfinished at the time of our 2014 audit. We reported that the Ministry had made some progress by, for instance, establishing Developmental Services Ontario as a single access point for adult developmental services.

Some of the most significant findings of our 2014 audit were as follows:

- From 2009/10 to 2013/14, the number of people waiting for adult residential services increased 50% while the number served increased only 1%. We calculated that it would take 22 years to place everyone who was waiting for a residence at the time of our audit, assuming no one else joined the list.

- Eligibility and needs assessment of applicants had improved, but the Ministry still needed to complete the development of a consistent and needs-based prioritization process. People with the highest priority needs were not usually placed first because residential services placements went to people who were the best fit for the spaces that became available, rather than to those who were assessed as having the highest priority needs.

- The Ministry needed to revise funding methods to link residential funding to residential level of care needs. Ministry funding to service providers was based on what the providers received in previous years, rather than on the level of care they needed to provide the people they were serving. A new funding method based on a reasonable unit cost for services by level of care could lead to savings that would allow more people on wait lists to be served.

- We found wide variations in the cost per bed or cost per person across the system for 2012/13. We calculated the cost per bed for adult group homes ranged from $21,400 to $310,000 province-wide. We also found large variances within regions. The Ministry was unable to explain the variances.

- About 45% of adult residences had not been inspected since 2010. Inspections typically included a review of agency policies and procedures, board documents, and staff and resident records, in order to assess the physical condition of a residence, the personal care provided to residents, the management of residents' personal finances, and whether the residence has a fire safety plan. For those inspections conducted, we found that issues were not being followed up on or resolved in a timely manner. The results of residence inspections were not made public.

- Ontario had few care standards and they were general in nature and open to interpretation.

- The Ministry did not have meaningful performance indicators to assess the quality of residential care provided.

- The Ministry created the Developmental Services Consolidated Information System database in 2011 to combine existing client information maintained by the various service providers. However, there were problems with

the accuracy and completeness of the wait management data within the system.

- The segregation of roles between the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services regarding children's residential services was confusing: one ministry was responsible for contracting, funding and managing the relationship with service providers and another ministry was responsible for handling complaints, and licensing and inspecting those service provider premises. Confusion could arise over who was accountable for the overall delivery of children's residential services. As well, there was no consistent single access point for children's residential services.

We made a number of recommendations for improvement and received commitments from the Ministry that it would take action to address them.

Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

The Ministry of Community and Social Services provided us with information in the spring and summer of 2016 on the current status of our recommendations. According to the information provided, 76% of our recommended actions have either been fully implemented or progress had been made on implementing them. Little progress was made on 21% of our recommended actions—ones that pertained to wait management, inspection of residences, and oversight of financial reporting. Specifically, the Ministry still has a lot of work to do in the areas of establishing a reasonable length of time for a person to accept or decline a placement offer and move in, expanding inspection procedures to include verification of service data and compliance with government directives for the broader public sector, requiring regular Canadian Police Information Centre and vulnerable sector screening of people providing direct care to individuals with

developmental disabilities, and providing guidance on expenditure data to be included in audited financial information submitted by service providers. One of the recommendations will not be implemented. This pertains to establishing benchmarks for standards of care, which we continue to believe should be implemented to ensure that all residents receive at least a minimum standard of care.

The status of the actions taken on each recommendation is described in the following sections.

Program Funding, Expenditures and Performance Measures

Recommendation 1

To ensure that funding for residential services and supports for people with developmental disabilities is equitable and tied to the level of support required by individuals in care, the Ministry of Community and Social Services should establish a funding model based on the assessed needs of people requiring services.

Status: In the process of being implemented by March 2019.

Details

At the time of our follow-up, the Ministry was developing a framework to allocate funding based on individuals' assessed needs and risk. The Ministry had met with stakeholders and experts, and had commissioned an independent consulting firm to review funding methods in other jurisdictions. The consultant's report noted a trend away from the practice of historically based funding to the creation of budgets in which funding is tied to the outcome of a standardized needs assessment. Alberta currently has and Manitoba is developing such funding models for their programs supporting people with developmental disabilities.

The Ministry has developed a draft funding formula that applies a weighting factor to each element of daily activity support needs, medical and behavioural risks, and other risks (such as, whether the person is able to understand spoken language

or requires overnight assistance) to arrive at the estimated hours of support needed. The Ministry has yet to conduct a case study to test and finalize the funding model. The Ministry plans to implement the new funding model in phases, starting on April 1, 2018, and concluding by March 2019.

Recommendation 2

The Ministry of Community and Social Services should review performance measures used in other jurisdictions to evaluate residential services provided to vulnerable people and, where appropriate, adapt these to develop relevant performance measures for residential services for people with developmental disabilities.
Status: In the process of being implemented by June 2017.

Details

At the time of our audit in 2014, we found that the Ministry did not have performance indicators that could be benchmarked, measured and reported on. In addition, we found that information collected from service providers measured only output, not outcomes.

As part of its Data Analytics and Evaluation Strategy, the Ministry plans to develop client-outcome and system-level performance measures to continually improve service quality and achieve long-term strategic objectives. In January 2016, the Ministry identified what a performance measure framework should include and what other jurisdictions are doing. It looked at quality-of-life measures used by programs that provide service to people with developmental disabilities in Alberta and British Columbia, and national indicators established by the United States.

In February 2016, the Ministry began consultations with service providers on performance indicators. Examples of performance indicators being considered by the Ministry include the percentage of people with developmental disabilities who engage in regular community activities, who report that they have choice in where they live, who report

feelings of belonging, and who find employment if they so desire.

The Ministry informed us that it has yet to conduct a gap analysis to identify whether new data is needed, and hadn't yet established a baseline measurement for selected indicators. The Ministry plans to have performance indicators developed and a gap analysis completed by June 2017.

Accessing Residential Services

Recommendation 3

To ensure that services are administered consistently and equitably, and that those most in need receive required services, the Ministry of Community and Social Services should:

- *complete timely needs assessments for all eligible individuals waiting for residential services;*
  Status: Little or no progress.

Details

We calculated that in 2013/14 it took an average of almost seven months from the time an application was received until a needs assessment was completed, the majority of this time being after eligibility had been confirmed.

To address this, the Ministry invested $3.5 million in additional funding to the nine Developmental Services Ontario access centres to hire a total of 37 new assessors. These people were hired by September 2015.

As well, the Ministry has developed a new reporting template through which data will be collected to allow the Ministry to monitor assessor capacity and productivity by access centre. Beginning March 2016, access centres were required to report on a monthly basis the number of assessors on staff and on a quarterly basis the number of assessments completed. According to Ministry data, there was a 20% increase in the number of needs assessments completed in the 2015/16 fiscal year compared to 2014/15. Although the Ministry does not track how long it takes to complete a needs assessment from

the time an application is received, it has measured wait times based on the time between eligibility confirmation and completion of an assessment. Based on the Ministry's internal reporting, the time between confirmation of eligibility and assessment completion has gotten progressively worse over the last three years. The average time in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16, respectively, was 6.4 months, 10.2 months and 11.9 months. The Ministry stated that assessments are completed for high-priority individuals first and that the majority of new applicants (over 60%) have an assessment completed within six months.

- *develop a consistent prioritization process across the province; and*
  Status: In the process of being implemented by September 2017.

Details

The Ministry developed the Provincial Prioritization Tool in April 2014 to help identify people with developmental disabilities who were most urgently in need of services/funding. This tool was implemented for use in 2014/15 in the Passport Program, which provides self-directed funding to adults with developmental disabilities to enable them to participate more fully in the community.

The Ministry has conducted evaluations of this tool to see if it could be used in other programs for people with developmental disabilities, including residential services. In 2014, the Ministry compared prioritization scores using the tool with the service needs ratings from assessments conducted by access centres, and found lower than expected agreement between prioritization scores and service needs. In 2015, the Ministry compared scores using the tool on the risk of adverse outcomes with the ratings from assessments conducted by access centres. Although it found a better correlation of results than in the 2014 analysis, it was still lower than expected. The Ministry determined that additional work is required before the tool can be used for prioritizing applicants for residential services.

The Ministry plans to implement the prioritization tool for use in the residential services program by September 2017.

- *validate all information in the Developmental Services Consolidated Information System.*
  Status: In the process of being implemented by March 2017.

Details

Prior to 2011, service providers maintained client data in their own systems. In 2011, the Ministry launched the Developmental Services Consolidated Information System (DSCIS) database to maintain in a centralized system personal and service details about every adult with a developmental disability who requested or received services or supports. At the time of our audit three years later, the Ministry had not yet finished validating the data entered into the system, either for those receiving services or those waiting for services.

The Ministry's latest data validation efforts of information for individuals receiving residential services was conducted in July 2013. At that time, the Ministry confirmed that the scope of the data validation did not address completeness, accuracy or authenticity of the DSCIS data, but rather focused on other issues within the system which allowed for incorrect data to be present.

The Ministry told us that DSCIS data validation of the residential wait list began in the fourth quarter of 2014/15. Each quarter, access centres provide the Ministry with a list of people waiting for services. Data validation may include reconciling clients' information across other data sources. This process is completed via teleconference and email with access centres based on specific data issues that arise when the Ministry is consolidating the data for provincial reporting. As of March 2016, about 14,900 people were waiting for residential services and 11,980 (or 80%) of those had had an assessment completed to validate their information in the system.

Recommendation 4

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services should develop a policy that is applicable to all children's residences that are funded by the government of Ontario. This would include implementing a consistent access mechanism and wait-list management process across the province for residential services for children and youth with developmental disabilities.

Status: In the process of being implemented. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services will have a plan developed by spring 2017, but is unable to provide a date for full implementation of the plan.

Details

Although both the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services fund residential services for children with developmental disabilities, access to these services is managed by the latter.

In July 2015, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services established a Residential Services Review Panel to review child and youth residential services in Ontario across all sectors (e.g., child welfare, mental health, youth justice and complex special needs). The panel's mandate was to build on the foundational work of previous reviews and reports to government, and to provide advice on what is needed going forward to improve residential services for children and youth. The panel had discussions with key stakeholders, including youth with experience in residential services, foster parents, service providers, front-line workers, provincial associations, and the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. In February 2016, the panel submitted its final report with 33 recommendations to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. With regards to access, the panel recommended the following:

- The Ministry should create one unified, integrated governance structure within the Ministry (a Quality of Residential Care Branch/Division) to provide systematic oversight and accountability for all residential services through mechanisms that focus on the foundation and elevation of quality of care. The

new structure is envisioned as having four core components: a quality inspectorate; a data analytics reporting unit; a continuity of care unit; and an advisory council.

- The placement of young people in a residential service should be based on a match between the needs and strengths of the young person, and the strengths and demonstrated capacities of the various program service providers.
- A centralized, publicly accessible, web-based directory of all licensed service providers in the province should be created to maximize opportunities for system planning, placement decisions and oversight of residential services.

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services informed us that it will be developing a plan for the reform of child and youth residential services, which it expects to have completed by spring 2017. The plan is to encompass the recommendations of the panel and is expected to focus on improving the quality of care for children and youth, and enhancing oversight and licensing requirements in residential settings. As well, the plan will focus on data and analytics to inform decision-making at all levels. According to the Ministry, it is too early in the process to know when implementation of the plan will be completed.

Wait Management

Recommendation 5

To improve the management of wait times for residential services for people with developmental disabilities, the Ministry of Community and Social Services should:

- *promote consistent recording of wait information, including tracking both wait times and wait lists;*
  Status: In the process of being implemented by June 2017 for wait list information only. But little or no progress on tracking wait times for residential services.

Details

The Ministry stated that improvements were being developed in its Developmental Services Consolidated Information System (DSCIS) database that are expected to address data quality, including tracking wait list information, but not wait times. Specifically, work is continuing to expand system capacity and enable access centres to match clients to available resources identified by service agencies. The Ministry's design includes a new web-based information-sharing portal through which service agencies will provide information to access centres on available services and supports. The portal, which feeds into the system, will also be used by access centres to share information about people who are identified as potential matches for available services and supports so they can be linked up with those agencies.

At the time of our follow-up, the Ministry had consulted with access centres on training and data migration to help plan implementation. As well, the system had been demonstrated to key internal and external stakeholders. The information system improvements are expected to be implemented by June 2017.

At the time of our follow-up, the Ministry did not have accurate and reliable information regarding wait times for residential services.

● *establish guidelines for the length of time an applicant may take to accept a placement, and then to move in;*
   Status: In the process of being implemented by March 31, 2018.

Details

At the time of our audit, we noted that the average time to fill a vacancy in 2013/14 ranged from 92 to 128 days. We also noted there were no mandated timeframes for an applicant to accept a placement offer, or for when they must move in after accepting.

The Ministry revised its vacancy management guidelines in 2016. The revised guidelines, which took effect at the start of 2016/17, state that under ideal circumstances, the goal is to have vacancies remain open for less than 90 calendar days. This period should include the time it takes for a person to accept a proposed residential placement and begin the transition into their new home. For residential resources that remain available for 90 days or longer, details are to be provided in a quarterly residential resource report to the Ministry that documents the circumstances contributing to the length of time.

The revised guidelines do not adequately address the need to shorten the time to fill a vacancy. The time period under the Ministry's new guideline is considerably longer than that required for a long-term-care home vacancy, where a person has 24 hours to accept or decline a placement offer and must move in within five days of the offer. Furthermore, under the old guidelines, the Ministry required agencies to provide an explanation when a vacancy had not been filled within 60 days; this has now been extended to 90 days. The Ministry's average to fill a vacancy in the first quarter of 2016/17 was 81 days. The median was 65 days. The Ministry plans to revisit its target of 90 days in 2017/18.

● *consider making wait times public to increase transparency and accountability;*
   Status: Little or no progress.

Details

The Ministry told us that because people with developmental disabilities are prioritized for residential services according to their unique needs and risk factors rather than by how long they have waited for these services, the Ministry and service providers did not want to make wait time information public until a more transparent mechanism was established. The Ministry informed us that it is continuing to work with the sector to publicly report information on average wait times to receive specific services.

● *assess, on the basis of the needs of individuals on the wait list, what the mix of residential service*

types should be, to enable those with the highest needs to be placed first, as practical, in the future; and

Status: In the process of being implemented by March 2017.

Details

In December 2015, the Ministry completed the first phase of a strategy for using a multi-year approach to residential planning. This phase involved collecting information from community planning tables on the highest-priority people waiting for services. In addition, service providers will be permitted to repurpose and combine vacancies to serve more or higher-needs people.

The Ministry found that regional offices and access centres identified almost 1,500 people as highest priority for residential services over the next two years. The most common type of residential setting required was group homes (61%), followed by supported independent living, host family residences (similar to foster care) and intensive support residences. The residential setting required for 10% of those identified as highest priority was unknown.

The Ministry is planning to place 1,400 high-priority individuals within the next two years.

- *use the Developmental Services Housing Task Force to develop alternative housing solutions to alleviate demand as quickly and cost-effectively as possible.*

  Status: In the process of being implemented by September 2018.

Details

The Developmental Services Housing Task Force (Task Force) was established in September 2014, with a mandate to, among other things:

- develop a framework for capacity-building projects and identify and recommend demonstration or research projects for government investment and evaluation beginning in 2015;
- develop and compile web-based resources to help individuals and families get information,

network, collaborate and support each other in exploring and creating successful housing solutions; and

- provide a report to government with recommendations related to housing for people with developmental disabilities.

The Task Force established a Facebook group, and worked with connectability.ca to develop a library of online resources for innovative housing ideas, including online resources for individuals and families and a library of resource material with examples of innovative housing solutions.

A request for proposals for innovative housing solutions was posted publicly on the Ministry's website in Spring 2015. The Ministry received 80 submissions, which were reviewed and scored by the Task Force, resulting in 12 projects recommended and approved by the Ministry for $3.47 million over two years. These projects are expected to provide residential services for 67 people.

A second request for proposals of housing solutions was posted publicly on the Ministry's website in December 2015. The Ministry received 69 submissions and six projects were selected and approved at a cost of $2.13 million over two years. These projects are expected to provide residential services for 46 additional people. Summaries of the details of the selected projects from both requests for proposals are available on the Ministry's website. Although this is a good start, the number of people expected to be housed (113) is a very small portion of those currently waiting for residential services (14,900 in total, of which 1,500 were high priority).

According to the Ministry, the Task Force will be in place until September 2018.

Quality of Service Providers

Recommendation 6

To help ensure that inspections of residences contribute to the safety and security of the environments where people with developmental disabilities live, the Ministry of Community and Social Services should:

- *continue to use a risk-based approach and set a maximum time allowed before lower-risk residences need to be inspected;*
  Status: Fully implemented.

Details

At the time of our 2014 audit, 45% of about 2,100 adult residences had not been inspected since 2010.

As part of a new compliance framework for inspections released by the Ministry in February 2016, the Ministry has committed to conduct annual reviews of agencies, during which a number of residential sites will be inspected each year. As part of this framework, the Ministry has also committed to inspect each lower-risk residential site at least once every five years, whereas higher-risk residences are to be inspected more often based on identified risks (e.g., serious occurrence reports, complaints to the Ministry and last inspection date).

- *conduct unannounced inspections;*
  Status: Fully implemented.

Details

According to Regulation 276/10 under the *Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008*, the Ministry may only conduct unannounced inspections where there are grounds to believe the agency has misappropriated funds, or there is an immediate threat to the health, safety and well-being of a person receiving services and supports from the service agency.

In March 2016, through the Ministry's Serious Occurrence Reporting Process, the Ministry implemented a protocol for conducting unannounced inspections in response to reported health and safety concerns or misappropriated funds. This has resulted in three additional unannounced inspections to date.

The Ministry also informed us that it is developing a team—comprised of representatives from the regional office, corporate compliance team and senior management—to plan investigation activities where there are allegations of health and safety concerns, and/or misappropriation of funds.

- *distinguish between the severity of non-compliance items and ensure appropriate and timely follow-up where significant issues are noted;*
  Status: Fully implemented.

Details

The Ministry developed a prioritization matrix in February 2016 that it has been using in its inspections to categorize the differing severity of non-compliance issues. A risk rating (of immediate, high, medium or low) is applied to each of the 280 inspection requirements, as well as timelines for corrective action by service providers based on level of risk. For example, for non-compliance that poses an immediate threat to the health, safety or well-being of a client, the service provider must correct the situation at the time of inspection or submit documentation that meets Ministry expectations confirming that the corrective action was taken within 24 hours. Further, the Ministry will not sign off on the inspection until it confirms that the service provider has addressed that immediate risk. For non-compliance rated as high risk, the Ministry requires corrective action within 10 business days. For non-compliance rated medium and low risk, service providers are allowed up to 40 days to take corrective action. If a service provider still does not comply, the Ministry may issue a notice that requires compliance within 14 days. Failure to rectify issues after this may result in the Ministry withholding future funding to the agency.

- *expand inspection procedures to include verification of service data reported to the Ministry, and test compliance with Broader Public Sector Expenses Directives on a sample basis; and*
  Status: Little or no progress.

Details

At the time of our follow-up, the Ministry had not adjusted its site inspection procedures to verify

service data or to test compliance with Broader Public Sector Expenses Directives, and had no plan to do so. The Ministry stated it would determine the current practices of regional offices and explore options to verify agency service data to address any significant anomalies or issues.

- *publish the results of inspection reports to increase the transparency and accountability of the process.*
  Status: In the process of being implemented by March 2017.

Details

Effective January 2016, the Ministry released a policy directive that requires service providers to post a hard copy of either their letter of compliance or non-compliance following annual inspection, within three business days of receiving it from the Ministry. The letter must be posted at or near the main entrance of the agency and be clearly visible to those who enter. These letters summarize the results of the inspection and indicate whether the service provider has met all requirements or not. In the case of a non-compliance letter, the areas requiring corrective action are identified.

Further, service providers are required to respond to queries or provide information on their current compliance status and the results of their ministry compliance inspections, to anyone who requests them.

However, at the time of our follow-up, the Ministry had no plans to publish on its website results of inspections on residences for people with developmental disabilities to allow quick access to comparative information.

Recommendation 7

To help ensure the well-being of people with developmental disabilities living in Ministry-funded residences, the Ministry of Community and Social Services should establish further standard-of-care benchmarks, such as staff-to-resident ratios and the minimum number of times a year that each resident

should be seen by health professionals such as physicians and dentists.
Status: Will not be implemented. We continue to believe this recommendation should be implemented.

Details

The Ministry has said that because people with developmental disabilities have a wide range of needs—some need minimal support (e.g., for learning how to take public transportation independently or addressing personal issues as they arise) and others need intensive support (e.g., 24/7 support with all aspects of daily living, and to manage challenging behaviours, such as self-harm)—it is difficult for the Ministry to accurately set a standard for staff-to-client ratios that is meaningful and appropriate for people who live in developmental services settings or participate in other Ministry-funded programs.

Rather, the Ministry feels minimum standards are not needed because it already requires that funded service agencies develop an individual support plan for every person receiving services, and that these plans identify the community resources that may be required or accessed by the individual, including medical resources.

We continue to believe that this recommendation should be implemented to ensure that all residents receive at least a minimum standard of care.

Recommendation 8

To help ensure that people applying for developmental services have their support needs properly assessed, and that those living in residences funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services receive quality services, the Ministry should:

- *ensure that all assessors and residential staff complete the required training; and*
  Status: Fully implemented.

Details

Although the Ministry has mandatory training requirements for access centre staff who assess

people's support needs and for agency staff who provide care, during our 2014 audit we found that some staff had not received all required training. In December 2015, the Ministry revised its policies to require Ministry staff to review the training records of all agency staff and volunteers to ensure they have completed all required training according to quality assurance measures and policy directives for service providers. Service providers found not complying with the training requirements must take immediate steps to do so.

According to Ministry records at the time of our follow-up, all access centre staff responsible for conducting needs assessments were up to date on their training requirements.

- *ensure that all residential staff who provide direct care to residents undergo regular vulnerable sector screenings and Canadian Police Information Centre checks.*
  Status: Little or no progress.

Details

During our audit in 2014, we noted that regulation 299/10 of the *Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act* requires a background check through the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC), including vulnerable sector screening. This check is to be conducted before a person can be hired to provide direct care to people with developmental disabilities. However, neither the legislation nor Ministry policy requires that staff regularly update their CPIC checks, including vulnerable sector screening.

At the time of our follow-up, the Ministry informed us it was assessing the feasibility of requiring regular updates of vulnerable sector screenings and CPIC checks for agency staff. To this end, the Ministry had examined how often police records checks were required for people working in residential services for people with developmental disabilities in British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Ministry also reviewed practices in

other sectors in Ontario in which people are working with vulnerable individuals (e.g., long-term-care homes, elementary and secondary schools, and child care). As well, the Ministry told us it had had preliminary discussions with selected internal and external stakeholders, but no meeting minutes were available for our review.

The Ministry said it is planning to review and update regulation 299/10, and, as part of that review, will consider whether any changes or additions are necessary.

Oversight of Service Providers

Recommendation 9

To help ensure the prudent use of government funds, and improve agency governance and accountability processes, the Ministry of Community and Social Services should:

- *ensure completion of all agency risk assessments;*
- *ensure completion of all action plans to correct deficiencies noted during risk assessments and annual attestation of compliance;*
  Status: In the process of being implemented by March 2017.

Details

Service providers must complete a risk-assessment questionnaire every two years that determines their ability to meet service delivery objectives. This self-assessment is reviewed by the Ministry. Where risks are identified, the Ministry requires the service provider to develop an action plan to mitigate those risks.

To help ensure that risk assessments are completed and identified deficiencies corrected, the Ministry has been developing a new transfer payment risk assessment process and tool, which includes a web-based application allowing for basic reporting, and will also provide staff with built-in alerts for monitoring whether there has been progress on correcting deficiencies. The Ministry

also informed us that monitoring is to be done at the regional office level and the Ministry's corporate office will receive a summary report indicating whether compliance has been achieved. As of August 5, 2016, the summary report showed that 31% of risk assessments required to be completed in 2015/16 had not yet been started by either the service provider or the Ministry, and no assessments had been fully approved or completed.

The Ministry indicated that the new processes being developed, to complete risk assessments and monitor progress on correcting deficiencies, will be fully implemented by March 2017.

- *conduct periodic independent verification to obtain assurance that agencies comply with the government's directives for the broader public sector; and*
  Status: Little or no progress.

Details

As noted earlier, the Ministry has no plans to independently verify that agencies are complying with the government's directives for the broader public sector.

As was the process at the time of our audit, the Ministry continues to require that each service provider agency complete and return to the Ministry an annual attestation signed by both its chief executive officer and the chair of its board that they have complied with the requirements of the *Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010*, and its directives. The attestation is also to indicate corrective action it will take for any issues of non-compliance. Despite the attestation, at the time of our audit we found that many agencies indicated they were not in compliance, and the Ministry did not always follow up with the service providers to ensure that corrective action had been taken.

At the time of our follow-up, the Ministry had developed a preliminary draft guideline to support regional offices in reporting, following up and taking corrective action on issues of non-compliance, including those identified by service providers

through their annual attestation. The Ministry informed us that it was working with the Treasury Board Secretariat to finalize the draft guidelines so they could be implemented. However, this would not address our recommendation for independent verification of compliance with government directives for the broader public sector.

- *encourage Ministry staff to attend agency board meetings.*
  Status: Fully implemented.

Details

The Ministry informed us that as a best practice, Ministry staff attend agency board meetings wherever possible. The Ministry further stated that its staff are reminded during their training sessions about the need to collaborate with agencies and attend agency board meetings.

Recommendation 10

In order to better hold agencies accountable for the residential services they provide to people with developmental disabilities, the Ministry of Community and Social Services should:

- *ensure that agencies submit all required data;*
- *periodically validate the accuracy of information submitted; and*
  Status: In the process of being implemented by March 2017.

Details

Agencies funded by the Ministry are required to report quarterly on expenditures and service levels, and to reconcile expenditures to funding received at year-end. Agencies are also required to explain significant variances from targeted amounts.

In February 2016, the Ministry developed a data integrity framework to address data quality issues and to outline the Ministry's approach to ensuring the quality and completeness of agency data. Specifically, the framework includes cross-checks against other sources (i.e., budgets submitted) and

identification of data anomalies (including missing data) through quarterly and annual variance reports, and year-over-year comparison or trends in key service data.

One staff member from each Ministry regional office was to be trained on using the software that supports the framework in September and October 2016. The Ministry expects to fully implement this recommendation by March 2017.

- *require that quarterly reports provide information for individual residences as well as for agencies, to enable better cost comparisons among entities providing similar services; and*
  Status: In the process of being implemented by March 2017.

Details

The Ministry's analysis of performance and service delivery was being done at the agency level, not at the individual residences. To conduct meaningful comparisons among residences of similar type and capacity, the Ministry established client service performance indicators and operational performance indicators. Client service indicators include number of clients served by level of support, number of clients served per full-time employee, annual hours each individual receives support from a care worker, and number of full-time employees per bed. Operational indicators include annual cost per person served, cost per day of care, cost per hour of support provided by a care worker, and administration-to-cost ratio.

To date, the Ministry has analyzed 10 agencies with high costs relative to other agencies offering the same type of residential service. Based on this analysis, the Ministry found that cost variances were due to poor or inconsistent administration of programs and services in six agencies, incorrect data in two agencies, and differences in business attributes or level of client service at one agency. The analysis of one agency was inconclusive. Based on this initial analysis, the Ministry has noted that robust financial monitoring and more detailed

review of transfer payment agencies are needed. The Ministry said that, starting in March 2017, its program monitoring will include cost analysis of agencies on an ongoing basis.

- *provide guidance on useful expenditure data to be included in the audited financial statements and supplemental segregated financial information.*
  Status: Little or no progress.

Details

To confirm that funding is being used for its intended purpose, agencies must submit audited financial statements, supplemental financial information segregated by service provided, and a reconciliation of agency spending with the amount of Ministry funding provided. However, at the time of our audit in 2014, the reconciliation and supplemental information were not at the same level of detail to allow for verification of the breakdown of expenditures.

The Ministry informed us that the Transfer Payment Administrative Modernization Office at the Treasury Board Secretariat, which has a mandate to identify and implement efficiencies in the administration of transfer payments to organizations, was expected to begin working with the ministries of Health and Long-Term Care, Community and Social Services, and Children and Youth Services in late 2016 to develop a common year-end financial reconciliation process for transfer payment agencies. The proposed model included one summary statement of revenue and expenses and supporting documents, including an income statement breakdown for each funded program.

The Ministry informed us that the Transfer Payment Administrative Modernization Office may engage an accounting firm to propose model financial statements that will facilitate review and confirmation of financial information. This includes guidelines for reporting financial data.

Recommendation 11

In order to improve the usefulness of the serious occurrence reporting process, the Ministry of Community and Social Services should:

- *ensure that serious occurrence reports are entered into its data system on a timely basis;*
  Status: Fully Implemented.

Details

Following the last two fiscal years, the Ministry has required regional office directors to attest in writing that all serious occurrence reports submitted up to the fiscal year-end have been uploaded, closed and signed off in the Serious Occurrence System. Regional office directors are also required to describe the process they have in place to keep the Serious Occurrence System up to date.

For the purpose of our follow-up, regional directors attested that all serious occurrence reports had been uploaded into the system as of June 30, 2016.

- *refine the categories and promote consistent reporting;*
  Status: In the process of being implemented by December 2016.

Details

At the time of our audit in 2014, some of the serious occurrence categories were too broad and not detailed enough to analyze and identify trends for specific issues and any corrective action needed.

To address this, the Ministry established a Serious Occurrence Improvement Project team to refine and enhance the categories, levels, timelines and reporting process for serious occurrences, as well as to identify the IT requirements for developing a new database.

At the time of our follow-up, the categories had been revised and approved, but not yet shared with service providers. The revised categories included death, restrictive intervention, serious injury/illness, allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation, administrative error, serious complaints, client/individual actions (e.g., suicidal behaviour, contra-

band), and service disruption/emergency situation. The Ministry expected to communicate the revised categories and descriptions to service providers by December 2016.

To help ensure consistency in reporting in the interim, in July 2016, the Ministry updated the Q & A document attached to the existing 2013 Serious Occurrence Reporting Guidelines to clarify for service providers the reporting of serious occurrences.

- *reconcile annual serious occurrence summary reports from service providers with occurrences reported throughout the year to ensure completeness; and*
  Status: In the process of being implemented by March 2017.

Details

The Ministry, along with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, has established a Serious Occurrence Improvement Project team, whose work includes the integration of information that will enable the Ministry to reconcile annual serious occurrence reports from service providers. Specifically, to enable this, the Ministry is developing an automated IT solution that will provide notification and reporting capabilities to both service providers and the Ministry, including the ability to review and manage serious occurrence summary reports.

The Ministry expects that a process for data reconciliation will be developed and implemented by March 2017. In the interim, in April 2016, the Ministry sent a memo to all regional directors that included a reminder to reconcile serious occurrence reports throughout the year with service providers' records.

- *analyze serious occurrences to identify anomalies and systemic issues, and to inform decision-making.*
  Status: In the process of being implemented by March 2017.

Details

In October 2015, the Ministry produced a five-year summary report of serious occurrences, which identified the number and type of serious occurrences reported, agencies that were not reporting at all, and submission of incomplete and late reports. Based on this analysis, the Ministry reported the following to its senior management:

- Despite decreases in the total number of logged serious occurrences, there were decreases in those that were on-time and complete. Provincially, the use of physical restraints and complaints made by or about a client were consistently the top two types of serious occurrences.
- Provincial and regional trends indicated that a backlog still existed in logging serious occurrences into the Ministry's IT system. In each of the last five fiscal years, approximately 40% of Ministry-funded agencies did not have a serious occurrence logged. For the last five fiscal years combined, 19% of the agencies that received Ministry funding did not have a logged serious occurrence.
- Serious occurrences were entered into the system without linking them to a program, making analysis of serious occurrences by program and type of residential setting impossible.

At the time of our follow-up, the Ministry had not yet identified issues, anomalies and trends at the system, regional and agency levels. It expected to conduct such an analysis for the current fiscal year by March 2017, and thereafter annually. The Ministry said that once this analysis was completed, it would drive investigations and corrective measures.