



Questions & Answers Report of the Director of Child and Family Services, 2017-2018

Questions and Answers about the report:

Q: Why is there a 'Report of the Director of Child and Family Services'?

A: The *Child and Family Services Act* states that the Director of Child and Family Services prepare and submit an annual report to the Minister. The report is due every year on October 1.

Q: What is in the 'Report of the Director of Child and Family Services'?

A: The *Child and Family Services Regulations* state that the report must capture a fiscal year on the administration of the *Act* and share statistics on children in the temporary and permanent custody of the Director. The report must also list the number of children placed in permanent custody for purposes of adoption and display information on plan of care agreements and all voluntary support services agreements. It can also report on any initiatives in child and family services at the territorial and community level.

Q: How are the statistics generated for the 'Report of the Director of Child and Family Services'?

A: This year, the data is generated from both the legacy Child and Family Services Information System, also known as CFIS, as well as the new information system, Matrix NT. Data is combined where appropriate or reported on separately. Adoptions information is documented and extracted manually.

Q: Will the new child and family information system be able to produce the same statistics?

A: The new child and family information system (Matrix NT) is a different system with different reporting abilities. While some indicators are comparable to previous statistics, there are many new and interesting statistics available. For example, we are able to provide statistics on the reasons that people are requesting voluntary services. We are also able to provide statistics on the type of abuse and neglect concerns that are being reported.

Q: What changes will be made to Child and Family Services as a result of the report?

A: The report will help inform and influence the future delivery of services to children, youth and their families. By examining 10 years of data, this provides for a greater timeframe of statistical analysis to inform future service delivery. Monitoring trends enables the Department of Health and Social Services to assess whether changes that have been made in the Child and Family Services System are potentially making an impact.

Q: How are the charts interpreted within the report?

A: Every chart is designed to show how data from the current reporting period (fiscal year) compares to the nine (9) previous reporting periods. Each chart provides a snapshot of child and family services trends and is explained in the interpretation of the data analysis at the bottom of each figure.

Questions and Answers about the content:

Q: What are some significant trends?

A: In the past 10 years, there is an increasing trend of:

- The rate of youth between the ages of 16-18 receiving services
- The rate of children and youth are remaining in their home while receiving services
- The rate of children receiving Voluntary Service Agreements

In the past 10 years, there is a decreasing trend of:

- Rate of children between the ages of 0-15 receiving services
- The proportion of children removed from their home and community.
- The rate of children with a court order (supervision order, temporary custody order, and permanent custody order)
- The rate of children in the permanent care of the Director
- The proportion of Non-indigenous children receiving services

In the past 10 years, there has not been a significant change in:

- The proportion of First Nation, Inuit, and Metis children who are receiving services
- The rate of children in Out-of-Territory Placements

Q: Are there more children receiving services in the NWT?

A: The number of children receiving voluntary and protection services has remained relatively stable over the past ten years, with a slight decrease in recent years. Since the overall child population in the NWT has also declined, this has resulted in no significant change being seen in the rate of children receiving services in the past ten years..

Q: Why are there more youth (16-18) receiving services?

The number of youth receiving voluntary and protection services has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years, however the overall youth population in the NWT has substantially declined. Because of the decline in youth population, an increased rate of youth receiving services is shown.

Q: Does this mean that we have more children in care?

A: No. When reviewing voluntary and protection services separately, rates differ drastically: the rate of children receiving voluntary services has increased over the past 10 years whereas the rate of children receiving protection services has decreased. The rate of children with a Plan of Care Agreement has not changed. Children receiving voluntary services are more likely able to stay in their home and do not always need to be in the care of a foster family.

Q: Why are there fewer children in permanent care?

A: There has been a decrease in permanent custody orders which has led to an overall decrease of children in permanent care.

Although we cannot say with certainty, the decline of children in permanent care may reflect the discussions Child Protection Workers have with families that review alternatives to prevent the child from becoming a permanent ward of the Director. This could include Custom Adoptions, Guardianship Agreements or Plan of Care Agreements.

Q: What are voluntary services? What are protection services?

A: Voluntary services allow families to access supports and services to strengthen families and address or prevent child protection concerns. When child protection concerns cannot be adequately addressed in this way, a child protection order may be sought from the court to ensure the safety of the child. If a Child Protection Worker and the family can reach an agreement outside of the court system, then a Plan of Care Agreement is offered. Voluntary services include Voluntary Services Agreements, Support Services Agreements and Extended Support Service Agreements. Protection services include Interim, Supervision, Temporary and Permanent Custody Orders.

Examples of services provided under both Voluntary Services Agreements and Plan of Care Agreements include counselling, addictions treatment, temporary foster or respite care, and financial or material assistance such as food or rent. Support Services Agreements address the needs of youth, who are not in need of protection, but nevertheless require supportive services such as counselling, housing supports or addictions treatment.

Q: Are the majority of children receiving services Indigenous?

A: The majority of children and youth receiving voluntary and protection services are Indigenous. In 2017-18, 75% of children receiving services were First Nations, 19% were Inuit, 5% were Metis and 2% were non-Indigenous. This does not mean that the majority of Indigenous children are receiving care.

Q: Why can't you explain the trends with certainty?

A: The information provided in this report describes the basic features of the data, however it is not possible to interpret the data or draw conclusions as to why these changes are being seen. There may be many factors involved that explain the 10 year trends seen in Child and Family Services. While definitive causal conclusions cannot be made, below are potential explanations as to why changes are being seen in certain areas:

- Amendments made to the *Child and Family Services Act* now address the gaps in services for youth age 16-18. However the increasing trend in youth receiving services was seen prior to April 1, 2016 as there was already a need to provide services to this age group.
- The majority of services are by agreement with the parent and/or child/youth which allows the family to receive services within the home.

- The increase in voluntary services may reflect the commitment of the Child and Family Services System to work with families to prevent protection concerns from arising or working with families when they do arise. This has been accomplished by better training and promotion of prevention services to both staff and families.
- The decline of children in permanent care may also reflect the discussions Child Protection Workers have with families that review alternatives to prevent the child from becoming a permanent ward of the Director. This could include Custom Adoptions, Guardianship Agreements or Plan of Care Agreements.
- Grandparents and extended family are always the first consideration as a foster home placement if a child or youth is placed outside the family home. Extended family foster homes are often in the same community.