

**■■■ Social Care Facilities  
Review Committee**



**Annual Report  
2006/2007**

**Alberta**  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES

# Table of Contents

---

■ ■ ■	Message from the Minister.....	3
■ ■ ■	Report from the Chair .....	5
■ ■ ■	Committee Members.....	7
■ ■ ■	Operating Principles.....	11
■ ■ ■	Social Care Facilities Review Committee .....	12
■	Reviews.....	12
■	Social Care Facilities.....	14
■	Highlights of the Review.....	19
	Visits to Day Care Facilities.....	19
	Visits to Out-of-School Care Facilities.....	24
	Visits to Foster Homes .....	30
	Visits to Child and Youth Facilities.....	36
	Visits to Women’s Emergency Shelters .....	42
■	Feedback on Visits .....	46
■	Complaint Investigations.....	49
■ ■ ■	Expenditures .....	49
■ ■ ■	What Committee Members Heard .....	49
■ ■ ■	Changes, New Initiatives and Achievements.....	54
■ ■ ■	Acknowledgements.....	55



## Message from the Minister

---

I am pleased to present the Social Care Facilities Review Committee's Annual report for the April 2006 to March 2007 review period.

Working with families, communities and other partners to make Alberta a safe place for children is a priority for the Ministry of Children's Services. We work hard to help children and youth develop positive lifelong relationships and connections to family, culture and community. Social care facilities perform a vital role in the lives of many children, youth and women in difficult situations who are in need of protection. I commend foster parents and facility caregivers for the excellent service they provide to individuals who need society's help.

Between April 2006 and March 2007, members of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee spoke with individuals at a variety of social care facilities across Alberta. They met with children and youth at foster homes and child and youth facilities, as well as parents of children attending day care and out-of-school care facilities and adult residents at women's emergency shelters. They also spoke with caregivers, including foster parents and staff members at the facilities. The level of satisfaction expressed by these individuals is a measure of the success of the services offered at the facilities and their feedback will guide future changes to practice and policy to better the lives of children and families in Alberta.

Several Alberta Children's Services initiatives are in place to respond to what we are hearing from Albertans.

We know bullying can have very serious consequences and hold children back from reaching their full potential. The Alberta government has developed a number of resources to help start discussions about bullying prevention and provide support to those who may be affected by bullying. The website [www.bullyfreealberta.ca](http://www.bullyfreealberta.ca) provides resources and information on bullying prevention. As well, help is available through a provincial, 24-hour toll-free help line (1-888-456-2323).

New legislation to recognize the government's commitment to ensuring Albertans have better access to quality child care was introduced in the Alberta Legislature in March 2007. Bill 4, the *Child Care Licensing Act*, is the first legislation in Alberta to focus solely on child care. This legislation encourages innovative approaches to creating new child care programs and places a priority on the safety of the children. A new \$1.5 million bursary program was added to existing programs offered by the provincial government to help child care providers attract and retain staff. The Children's Services Child Care Bursary will help staff in preschool and out-of-school child care programs

continue their education. Additionally, to assist child care programs in addressing severe labour market pressures, the Staff Attraction Incentive Allowance, offered under the Alberta Child Care Accreditation Funding Program, provides an allowance to recruit back trained staff who have left the child care field and agree to return to work in a licensed day care centre. As well, an increase in wage top ups by 40% will be effective January 2008.

In April 2007, the Alberta government invested an additional \$1.5 million in women's emergency shelters to help individuals and families affected by family violence. The funding included money to establish the Women's Shelter Leadership Bursary to support professional development of senior staff working with family violence prevention programs and women's shelters. Additionally, the funding will also address the child care needs of parents who go to shelters and support training of frontline workers. As well, in 2007/2008 shelter staff will receive another 3.5% increase to their salaries and benefits.

A new \$2-million bursary program for senior staff working in agencies contracted to provide social services on behalf of the provincial government was introduced in June 2007. This bursary program will help retain staff and ensure Alberta's children, youth and families continue to receive high quality services. The Ministry has invested \$20 million over the past two years to address recruitment and retention issues in the contracted agencies. The funding has gone towards staff salary and training.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all of the children, youth and adults who participated in the reviews, as well as to the Committee members for their continued dedication to the review process. Together, you have made this report possible.

Janis Tarchuk  
Minister  
Children's Services

## Report from the Chair

---

The Social Care Facilities Review Committee prepares an annual report each year, summarizing information gathered from visits to facilities that fall under the jurisdiction of Alberta Children's Services. These facilities include day cares, out-of-school care facilities, foster homes, child and youth facilities and women's emergency shelters.

During the April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007 review period, the Social Care Facilities Review Committee conducted reviews of 237 facilities in six Child and Family Services Authorities. Committee members interviewed and/or surveyed almost 2,300 service recipients, foster parents and staff members. Overall, service recipients reported satisfaction with services in all five types of social care facilities.

Parents with children who attended day care or out-of-school care facilities expressed satisfaction with the care and services their children received. They were pleased with the opportunities they were given to be involved in the programs, and stated they were impressed with the child guidance, rules and interactions between the staff members, themselves and their children. In instances where significant concerns were heard, regional staff immediately followed-up.

Many of the children and youth residing in foster homes or child and youth facilities indicated they were satisfied with their care, accommodations and treatment. Children and youth stated they were happy with their involvement in social activities, education, meals and their overall care and comfort level was good. Some children expressed dissatisfaction with the level of support received during a move to a new facility, while others said they were unaware of their case plans. Where significant concerns were heard from children and youth, these concerns were addressed and followed-up to ensure they were resolved satisfactorily.

Residents at women's emergency shelters commented to Committee members that they were pleased with the quality of services they received, relationships with staff and the physical accommodations. The women expressed concern regarding the difficulties accessing community services due to a shelter's location and obtaining affordable housing or second stage housing after their stay at a shelter.

Service providers within the five types of social care facilities reviewed expressed overall satisfaction with the programs and services they provided. They also shared some concerns and provided suggestions for improving services. Day care and out-of-school care staff highlighted the many strengths in their programs, but stated they were dissatisfied with their current wages.

Additionally, some operators discussed the challenges they experienced in recruiting new staff members. Foster parents were pleased with the access to services and the support they received from caseworkers, support workers and their agencies. Foster parents relayed concerns with regional staff turnover and the need for improvement to some government policies. Child and youth facility staff members spoke positively about the programs they provided to the children in their care and the training they received. They expressed the need for higher wages and discussed the challenges in recruiting and retaining staff. Staff members from women's emergency shelters spoke positively about their work, colleagues and relationships with residents. Of greatest concern to staff was the need for affordable housing for women and children leaving the shelters and wages for facility staff.

During the April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007 review period, the Social Care Facilities Review Committee received one written and three verbal complaints. All of the complaints related to facilities that do not meet the definition of a social care facility under the *Social Care Facilities Review Committee Act*. Consequently, the Committee referred the callers to appropriate authorities. No investigations were conducted during this review period.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Committee members for their commitment to the children, youth and families of Alberta. Without their hard work and dedication to the review process, none of this would be possible. The expertise, insights and professionalism they bring to the Committee has led to its overall success.

Finally, to each child, youth and adult who participated in the reviews, please accept my sincere appreciation for sharing your time, experiences and insights. Your input has been summarized in this report and will provide a collective message to service providers and government. Your contributions help improve the quality of services experienced by all individuals at social care facilities in our province.

Art Johnston  
MLA, Calgary-Hays  
Chair, Social Care Facilities Review Committee

## Committee Members

---

During the April 2006 to March 2007 review period, the Social Care Facilities Review Committee consisted of 12 members, including the Chair and Vice-Chair. Art Johnston, Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Calgary-Hays has been Chair of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee since November 2004.

### **Art Johnston, Chair, Calgary (November 2004 – Present)**

Art Johnston was elected to his first term as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Calgary-Hays on November 22, 2004. In addition to his role as MLA and Chair of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee, Mr. Johnston currently serves on the following committees:

- Chair of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee;
- Member of Public Accounts Committee;
- Member of the Private Members' Business Committee;
- Member of the Standing Committee on Community Services; and
- Member of the Cabinet Policy Committee on Community Services.

Mr. Johnston has previously served as:

- Chair of the Special Constable Review Committee;
- Member of the Standing Policy Committee on Justice and Government Services;
- Member of the Private Bills Committee;
- Member of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Review Committee; and
- Member of the Select Special Personal Information Protection Act Review Committee.

Beginning in 1970, Mr. Johnston served 11 years with the Canadian Armed Forces, obtaining the rank of sergeant. He attended the University of New Brunswick in 1979 before beginning a 25-year career serving with the Calgary Police Service and retired as a patrol sergeant in 2003.

Mr. Johnston is active both politically and within his community. He has served as a director with the Shawnessy Community Association from 2001 to 2002 and director of the Calgary Shaw Progressive Conservative Association from 2002 to 2004. He volunteered in Calgary Buffalo during the 2001 provincial election and ran for alderman in Calgary, ward 12 during the 2001 municipal election.

Throughout his life and career, Mr. Johnston has been honoured with several awards and distinctions.

- United Nations Medal (Cyprus), 1972;
- United Nations Medal (Europe), 1975;
- NATO Service Medal, 1977;
- 12-year Police Service Medal;

- 20-year Police Exemplary Medal, 2000; and
- Centennial Medal.

Mr. Johnston and his wife, Shirley, have four children: Ed, Eric, Don and Darcy. In his spare time he enjoys reading, recreational hockey and badminton.

**Jean Wilkinson, Vice-Chair, Edmonton (March 1998 – May 2007)**

Jean Wilkinson received a Bachelor of Education degree (with Distinction) from the University of Alberta and A.R.C.T. (Piano Teacher) from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. She has worked in the education field in both Ontario and Alberta. Her volunteer activities are varied, and have included Board President for the Hope Foundation of Alberta, Vice-Chair of the Edmonton Community Board for Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Co-Chair of the Special Events Committee for the opening of the Winspear Centre for Music, and leadership roles in Toastmasters International. Ms. Wilkinson has received many honours for services to her community, province and country including the 1993 Governor General's Community Medal and the 2005 Alberta Centennial Medal. Most recently, she was appointed to the Government House Foundation Board.

**Lori Brooks, Cardston (November 2001 – Present)**

Lori Brooks is a music teacher and a member of the Royal Conservatory of Music. She previously worked in the public service and was a foster parent for five years. Ms. Brooks is active in her community as a member of a variety of committees and boards related to community awareness, children's festivals and adult education.

**Diane Caleffi, Calgary (August 2004 – March 2007)**

Diane Caleffi is the owner/operator of her own business - E.A. for a Day, where she provides executive and personal assistant care, and conducts executive assistant searches for companies. She serves on the Board of Directors for the Calgary Health Region and is Vice-Chair of the Seniors' Advisory Council for Alberta. Ms. Caleffi has also served as a member of Executive Women International and has dedicated community time to the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter's Turning Points Dinners and the Calgary West Little League. She currently volunteers on the Statesmen Life Centre's Advisory Board. Ms. Caleffi received the 2005 Alberta Centennial Medal.

**Wayne Doan, Red Deer (October 2003 – Present)**

Wayne Doan operates a small farming business in Central Alberta. He completed an undergraduate degree in Education at the University of Saskatchewan, and began graduate studies at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia. Mr. Doan brings over 17 years of experience with various children's programs to his work with the Committee.

**Dawne Fowler, St. Albert (November 2001 – Present)**

Dawne Fowler has worked in the public relations field for more than 18 years and is self-employed. During her academic and professional career, Ms. Fowler provided marketing expertise to CBC Communications, the Alberta

Medical Association, CFRN TV News, Alberta Culture Heritage Sites, Esso Agriculture, McDonald's Restaurants and the Northern Alberta Ronald McDonald House. She has also been a member of a variety of educational and public relations committees.

**Lydia Graham, Cochrane (February 2004 – Present)**

Lydia Graham was Mayor and Councillor of Cochrane for 15 years. She received the Community Builder Award and an Alberta Municipalities Association Award of Excellence for Civic Leadership. Ms. Graham is actively involved in many community projects and is serving on several boards and committees. Ms. Graham was a recipient of the 2005 Alberta Centennial Medal.

**Delina (Del) James, Calgary (May 1999 – May 2007)**

Delina James has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Sociology from the University of Alberta. She worked as a social worker for the Alberta government, and Vancouver Catholic Family Services before becoming a community school coordinator for the Calgary Board of Education. After one year as a school and nursing home liaison for the local MLA, she retired, but remains actively involved in her community.

**Kelly Sackley, Calgary (August 2004 – Present)**

Kelly Sackley studied Business at Rick's College. She has devoted many years to supporting her church and community in volunteer positions, such as President of her church's youth group, Vice-President, Juvenile Coordinator and Facilities Representative for the South Fish Creek Basketball Association, Community Representative on the Design Committee for the local high school, and Vice-President of Recreation with the Midsun Community Association. During these years, she also focused on raising her four children.

**Laura Hunt, Edmonton (April 2006 – Present)**

Laura Hunt has a Bachelor of Science degree in Household Economics from the University of Alberta. She is currently a Home Economist with the ATCO Blue Flame Kitchen and previously worked as a Customer Service Agent for several airlines as well as a social worker for the City of Edmonton. Laura is actively involved in her community working with organizations such as Kids with Cancer and the Victoria School for the Performing Arts. Laura also has served on the Canadian Airlines Charitable Foundation and has been a volunteer Aquafit Instructor for the YMCA.

**Tracey Smith, Calgary (April 2006 – Present)**

Tracey Smith has worked 19 years in a family practice medical clinic and is currently the Office Manager. She is an active volunteer in her community, specifically as a member of several school councils, a Playground Coordinator and member of the Calgary Home and School Association. Ms. Smith helped to establish a Reading Literacy program in her local junior high school.

**Nicole VanKuppeveld, Sherwood Park (October 2003 – Present)**

Nicole VanKuppeveld is the principal of Organizations by Design, where she assists groups, teams and organizations in transitions by helping them to create healthy work environments. Ms. VanKuppeveld facilitates customized leadership courses to industry leaders through the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. She is an active volunteer in her community and a past president of the Junior League of Edmonton. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Occupational Therapy and is currently enrolled in a Masters of Business Administration program.

## Operating Principles

---

The Social Care Facilities Review Committee's work is guided by the operating principles below.

The Social Care Facilities Review Committee will work with clients and their families, service providers and government representatives to:

- facilitate open and neutral communication;
- focus on the current mandate of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee;
- promote awareness of the mandate;
- respect the rights and obligations of all parties;
- empower clients by providing a "voice" for them;
- be objective, open-minded and receptive to all parties;
- be professional in manner and appearance;
- listen to and understand the needs and concerns of clients;
- be observant of the physical and social environment;
- develop and maintain respectful, supportive relationships with government representatives and among Committee members;
- operate in a way that makes optimal use of available resources; and
- respect the right of confidentiality.

# ■■■ Social Care Facilities Review Committee

---

The Social Care Facilities Review Committee was established in June 1980 under the *Social Care Facilities Review Committee Act*. An amendment made to the *Act* in 2002 limited the Committee's mandate to facilities that are funded, wholly or partly, by Alberta Children's Services including foster homes, child and youth facilities, day care facilities and women's emergency shelters. As a result of a change in the *Child Care Regulation* to include out-of-school care centres as regulated facilities, the Committee commenced reviews of out-of-school care facilities in 2005-2006. In addition, the Committee conducts investigations of facilities, as directed by the Minister of Children's Services.

During the 2006-2007 review period, the Committee consisted of one Member of the Legislative Assembly who chaired the Committee, and 11 private citizens. Committee members are located throughout the province and provide unique perspectives based on their diverse backgrounds, expertise and work experience. They are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and are not employees of the provincial government.

## ■ **Reviews**

The Social Care Facilities Review Committee conducted reviews in foster homes, child and youth facilities, day care facilities, out-of-school care facilities and women's emergency shelters. The reviews took place in six Child and Family Services Authorities:

- Southwest (Region 1);
- Calgary and Area (Region 3);
- Edmonton and Area (Region 6);
- Northwest (Region 8);
- Northeast (Region 9); and
- Métis Settlements (Region 10).

Facilities were randomly selected in each of the chosen regions to ensure an unbiased, representative sample from the population of facilities and individuals being served and to include a representative selection of communities in each region. As part of their preparation for the visits, Social Care Facilities Review Committee members met with Chief Executive Officers and some regional staff from the six Child and Family Services Authorities.

During visits to facilities, Committee members encouraged participants to talk about their level of satisfaction with services received. Committee members asked service recipients open-ended questions around themes relevant to the type of facility and the type of services provided. Due to the qualitative nature of the interviews, service recipients did not comment on every theme.

Where service recipients were children, there were no age limits on participation in the interviews, as long as children were able to understand and

respond to questions. As parents were considered the service recipients at day care facilities, children did not participate in those interviews. Committee members spoke with children from out-of-school care facilities when their parents were present to provide consent for the interview.

To provide a balanced perspective, Committee members gave foster parents and staff members at the facilities an opportunity to express their views on the services they provide. Survey forms were made available to some service recipients and providers who wished to share their views, but were unable to take part in the Committee's visit. Individuals within the Ministry were not contacted to share their views on concerns raised. As a result, the information provided in this report represents the perspectives of the interviewees.

All individuals who participated in interviews or completed surveys were advised that the Committee collects information in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Participants were also made aware their comments could be included in Social Care Facilities Review Committee reports.

Following each visit, Committee members wrote an individual facility report summarizing the views and comments of those interviewed and/or surveyed. In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of children in small facilities, copies of the individual facility reports were sent only to large-scale child and youth facilities (minimum 20 children) where there was less likelihood of compromising the children's confidentiality. Day care and out-of-school care facilities also received a copy of the individual facility report which parents could access. Individual reports on facilities such as foster homes, small child and youth care facilities and women's emergency shelters were sent only to the Minister of Alberta Children's Services.

This Annual Report provides a provincial overview of the individual facility reports and feedback obtained during visits conducted from April 2006 to March 2007. To develop statistics for this report, individual facility reports were analyzed for common themes. All comments in the reports were coded positive to indicate satisfaction, neutral to indicate a perception of adequate service and negative to indicate dissatisfaction. Additionally, where respondents provided general information and/or indicated a theme was not applicable, comments were classified as neutral. Positive, neutral and negative comments were counted and grouped by theme and reported as percentages. The Annual Report is distributed to all participating facilities, as well as the Alberta Foster Parent Association.

## ■ **Social Care Facilities**

Under the *Social Care Facilities Review Committee Act*, social care facilities are defined as:

- 1) facilities that provide care, treatment or shelter and are funded, wholly or partly, by the Department of Children's Services; and
- 2) a day care facility, as defined in the *Social Care Facilities Licensing Act*.

A total of 237 facilities were visited from April 2006 to March 2007, including:

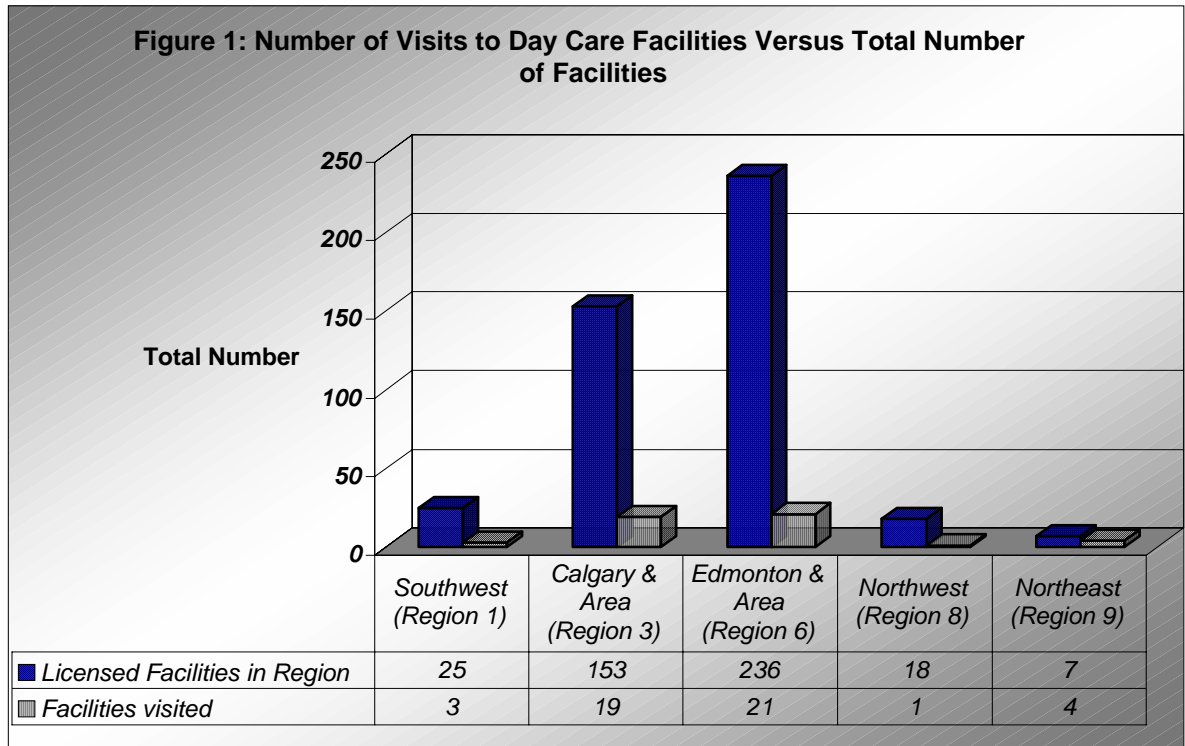
- 130 foster care homes;
- 48 day care facilities;
- 27 out-of-school care facilities;
- 24 child and youth facilities; and
- eight women's emergency shelters.

Committee members spoke with a total of 645 service recipients and 373 service providers. An additional 829 service recipients and 448 staff members completed surveys.

### **DAY CARE FACILITIES**

Day care facilities provide care, developmental programs and supervision to seven or more children, for more than three, but less than 24 consecutive hours in a day. Children enrolled in day care are under seven years of age and do not attend school, although some may attend early childhood services programs for part of the day. These facilities are licensed under the *Social Care Facilities Licensing Act* and are obligated to meet the requirements of the *Child Care Regulation*.

As previously noted, the Committee visited 48 day care facilities during the April 2006 to March 2007 review. Figure 1, on the next page, shows the number of day cares visited compared to the total number of facilities in the region at the end of the review period.



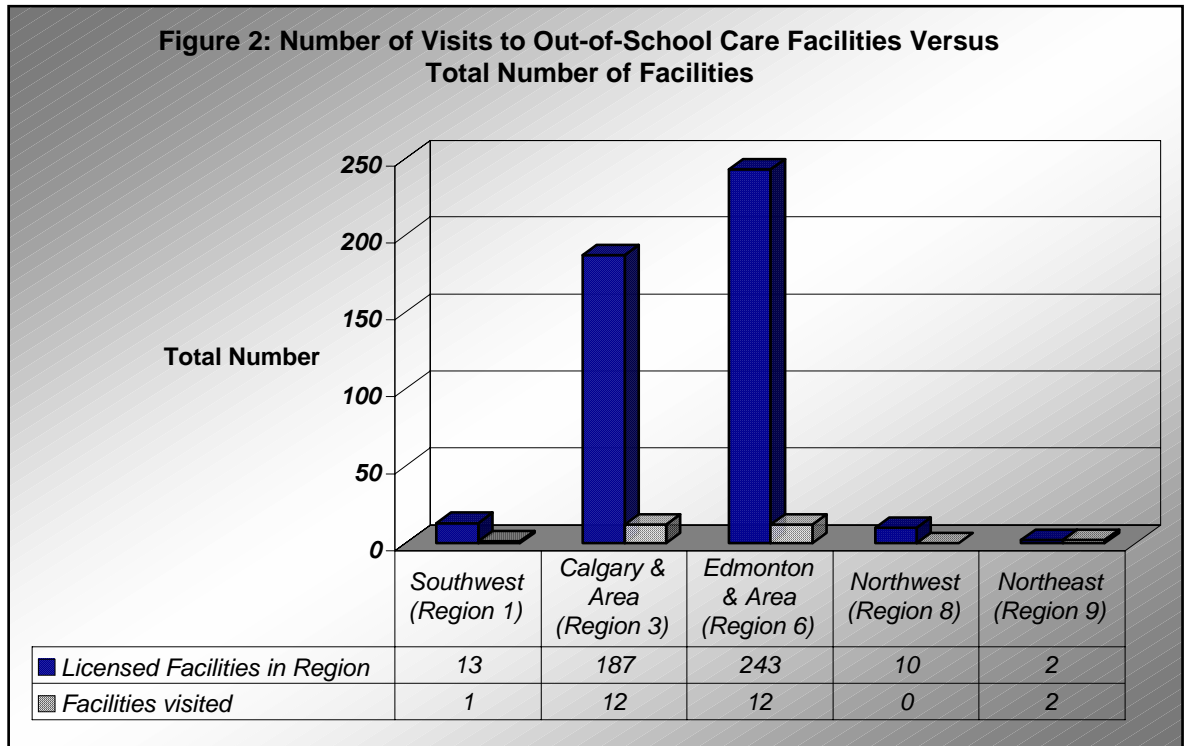
The Métis Settlements Child and Family Services Authority was not included in the figure on the previous page because it did not have any day care facilities in the region at the time of the review.

## ***OUT-OF-SCHOOL CARE FACILITIES***

Out-of-school care facilities provide care, developmental programs and supervision for seven or more school-aged children. They operate before and after school, during lunch hour or when schools are closed. Out-of-school care facilities are intended to be operated for at least 12 consecutive weeks per year.

Some out-of-school care facilities are co-located with day cares. The majority of out-of-school care facilities visited by the Committee were co-located with a day care facility.

Figure 2, on the next page, shows the number of out-of-school care facilities visited, compared to the total number of facilities in the region at the end of the review period.



The Métis Settlements Child and Family Services Authority was not included in the figure above because it did not have any out-of-school care facilities in the region at the time of the review.

## **FOSTER HOMES**

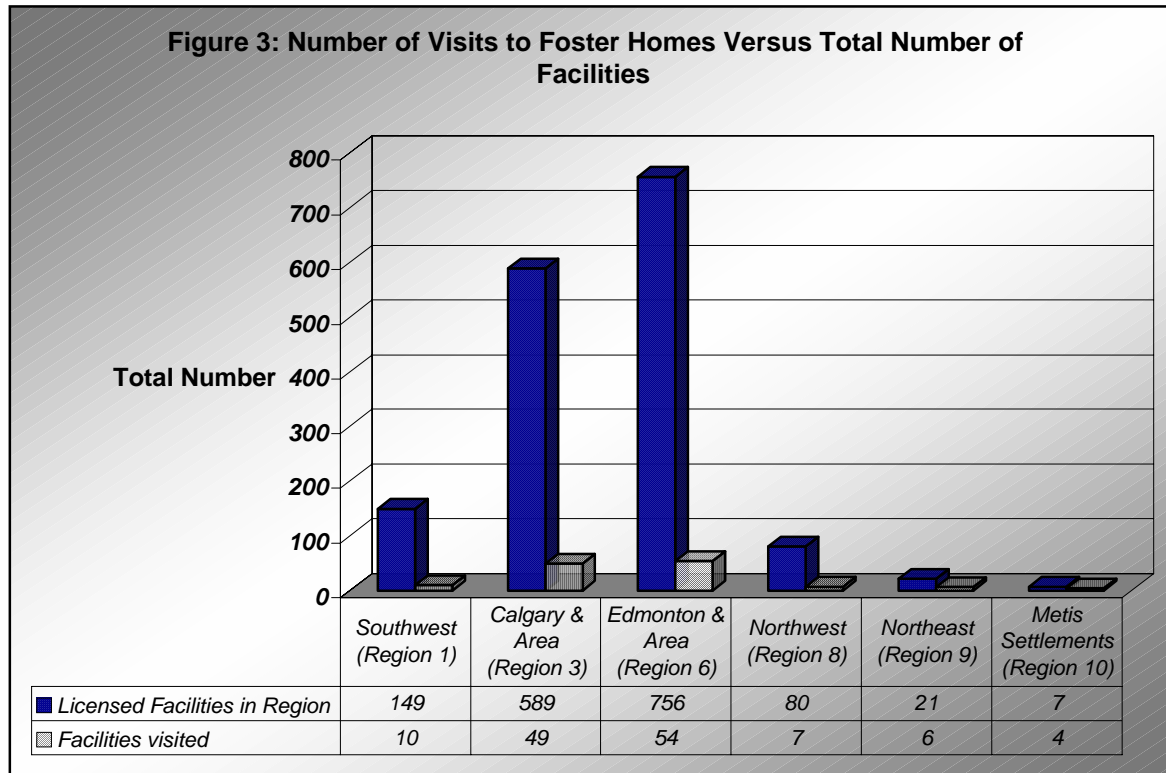
Foster homes provide temporary care to children under the care of Alberta Children's Services who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to remain in their natural family home. Children are placed with foster parents who have the expertise and training required to meet the particular needs of the children in their care.

Whenever a child comes into care, the goal is to return the child to his or her natural family as soon as possible. Foster parents are part of the team working to achieve this goal. When a return to the natural family is not feasible, an alternate permanency plan is made for the child. This may include adoption or private guardianship with a relative or other caregiver.

The *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* contains a licensing provision that ensures quality of care and accountability for children in the custody or guardianship of the director. All foster homes must be licensed, whereas before the *Enhancement Act* came into effect on November 1, 2004, a foster home with less than four children did not require a licence. All foster homes operating at the time of proclamation had up to 18 months to comply with the

new licensing requirements and as of May 2005 all foster homes had to be licensed.

The Committee visited 130 foster homes during the April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007 review period. The number of foster homes visited, as well as the total number of facilities in each region is shown in Figure 3.

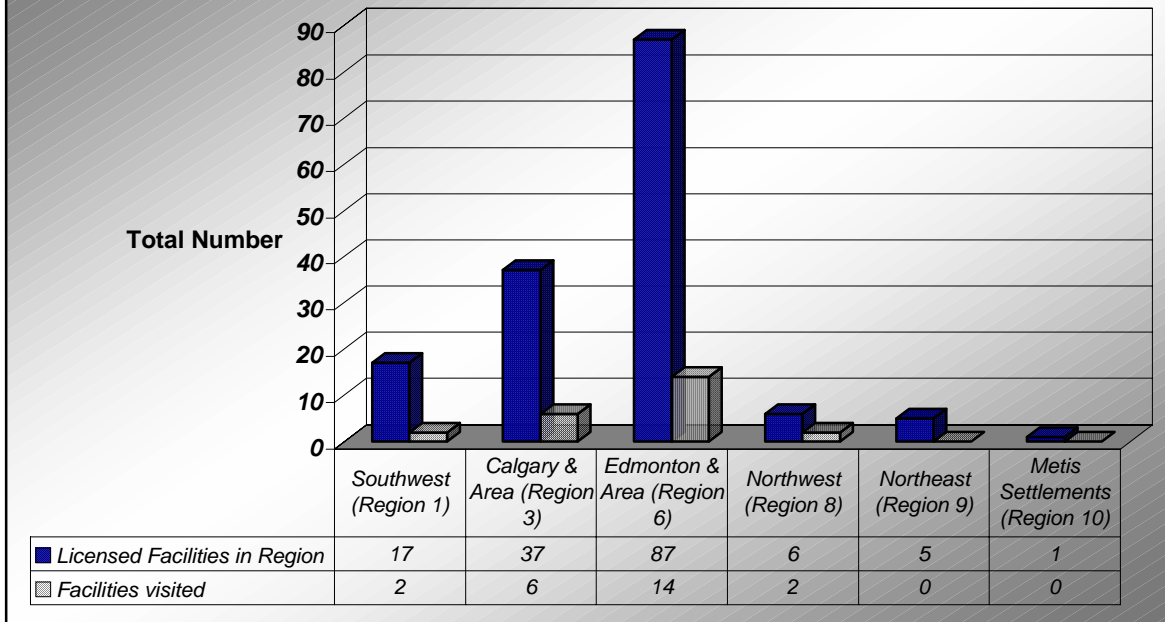


## CHILD AND YOUTH FACILITIES

Child and youth facilities provide care to children and youth, 18 years of age or younger, who are under the care or protection of the Ministry of Children's Services. A range of facilities, including receiving and assessment homes, group homes, secure services, crisis nurseries, youth shelters and emergency shelters are classified as child and youth facilities and are licensed under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*. Most of these facilities are operated by not-for-profit or profit organizations, however, some are government operated.

The Committee visited 24 child and youth facilities between April 1, 2006 and March 31, 2007. Figure 4, on the next page, shows the number of child and youth facilities visited, as well as the total number of facilities in each region.

**Figure 4: Number of Visits to Child and Youth Facilities Versus Total Number of Facilities**

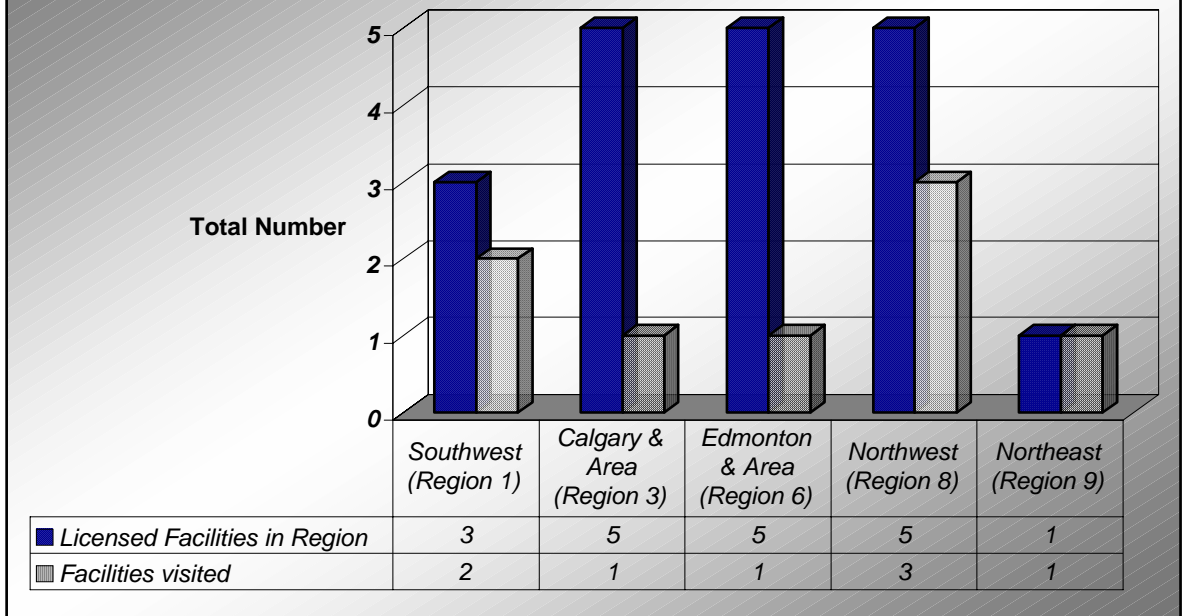


## **WOMEN'S EMERGENCY SHELTERS**

The goal of the women's shelter program is to support positive, stable, long-term outcomes for victims of family violence. Children's Services funds basic emergency services for abused women with and without children in 31 women's shelters across the province. Shelters provide safe short-term accommodation for up to 21 days. Basic emergency services include crisis intervention, emotional support, information, referral and advocacy. Shelters also provide child support services for the children who accompany their mothers.

The Committee visited eight women's emergency shelters during the April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007 review period. Figure 5, on the next page, shows the number of shelters visited in comparison to the total number of funded facilities per region. The Métis Settlements Child and Family Services Authority was not included in the figure, on the next page, because it did not have any women's emergency shelters in the region at the time of the review.

**Figure 5: Number of Visits to Women's Shelters Versus Total Number of Facilities**



## Highlights of the Review

### VISITS TO DAY CARE FACILITIES

To coincide with times that parents were at the facilities to drop-off and pick-up their children, Committee members scheduled visits to day care facilities in the morning and late afternoon. A total of 248 parents were interviewed and 622 parents completed surveys. Occasionally, some parents who completed surveys also participated in interviews. Children did not participate in the reviews.

Comments made by parents are presented in eight categories: daily activities, staff-child relationships, communication with staff, parent or guardian involvement, meals and/or snacks, physical environment, rules and regulations, and overall feedback. Service providers' comments are discussed separately.

#### Day Care Themes

Committee members reported 2,533 observations from parents about the care their children receive at day care. Most of the parents' comments expressed satisfaction with services provided; 2,112 comments (83%) were positive, 350 comments (14%) were neutral and 71 comments (3%) were negative. The breakdown of parents' comments, relating to day care themes, is shown in Figure 6, on the next page.

**Figure 6: Responses - Themes at Day Care Facilities**

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Daily Activities</i>	184 (84%)	34 (15%)	2 (1%)	220
<i>Staff-Child Relationships</i>	185 (84%)	30 (14%)	4 (2%)	219
<i>Communication with Staff</i>	194 (80%)	39 (16%)	9 (4%)	242
<i>Parent or Guardian Involvement</i>	198 (91%)	19 (9%)	1 (<1%)	218
<i>Meals and/or Snacks</i>	549 (80%)	124 (18%)	15 (2%)	688
<i>Physical Environment</i>	312 (80%)	51 (13%)	28 (7%)	391
<i>Rules and Regulations</i>	297 (89%)	25 (8%)	10 (3%)	332
<i>Overall Feedback</i>	193 (86%)	28 (13%)	2 (1%)	223
<b>TOTAL:</b>	2112 (83%)	350 (14%)	71 (3%)	2533

### *Choice of Day Care*

Parents discussed the rationale behind their choice of day care. While this information is useful in obtaining a broader perspective on factors parents consider when looking for child care, these choices cannot be considered positive or negative and therefore are not included in the above graph. In total, 423 comments were made regarding the choice of day care. Reasons most commonly mentioned were location (39%), reputation (28%), hours of operation (11%) and programs offered (9%). The remaining 13% of comments referred to factors such as cost, lack of available day care options and lack of supports for children with special needs.

### *Daily Activities*

Eighty-four percent of comments made by parents expressed satisfaction with the daily activities provided for their children in day care. Parents indicated that they were satisfied with and/or felt their children enjoy the activities offered. Fifteen percent of comments were neutral and related to situations where parents rated activities offered as adequate and/or said they were unsure of their children's feelings about the daily activities provided. One percent of parents expressed dissatisfaction with the activities offered and/or reported that their children do not enjoy the daily activities provided.

### *Staff-Child Relationships*

Many parents made positive comments about the staff-child relationships at the day cares their children attend (84%). Parents commented that the manner in which staff interact with their children are good and they believe their children feel comfortable with staff. Fourteen percent of the comments

shared were neutral, indicating parents felt staff interactions were adequate and/or their children did not have strong positive or negative feelings about the day care staff. In 2% of the comments made, parents indicated staff interactions with children in the day care could be improved.

### *Communication with Staff*

When asked about communication with staff, the majority of feedback collected was positive (80%). Parents conveyed that there was good communication between themselves and staff, where staff members are kept informed of the child's needs and parents were notified of incidents and/or concerns occurring in the day care setting. Of the neutral (16%) and negative comments (4%) reported, parents indicated that general communication between themselves and staff was either adequate or poor.

### *Parent or Guardian Involvement*

The majority of parents expressed satisfaction with their involvement at day care. In 91 percent of the positive comments made, parents reported the presence of ethnic and culturally sensitive practices and opportunities for them to participate with their children in the day care setting. In neutral comments (9%), a few parents indicated that parental involvement was adequate and fewer than one percent of comments were negative where parents stated that involvement was poor.

### *Meals and/or Snacks*

In Alberta, day cares must either provide or require parents to provide meals and snacks for children attending the facility. Some of the parents whose children attended day cares that did not provide meals and snacks expressed a wish for a hot meal service. Eighty percent of parents expressed approval of the food quality, quantity and variety of meals and snacks. A few parents commented that their day cares accommodate children's allergies. Eighteen percent of parent comments were neutral, indicating the food quality and portion sizes were adequate and/or they were unsure of their children's satisfaction with the food. The few negative comments (2%) reported parents' dissatisfaction with the food quality, quantity, variety and the posting of menus.

### *Physical Environment*

Overall, parents described the day care environments positively. Eighty percent of parents expressed approval of the overall environments, play spaces, equipment, toys and the maintenance of the day cares. Thirteen percent of the comments were neutral, indicating the physical environment of the day cares was adequate, while the remaining 7% of comments suggested some improvements could be made to the general physical environment (e.g. furnishings, toys, bathrooms, outdoor equipment).

### *Rules and Regulations*

The majority of comments (89%) regarding rules, child guidance, responsiveness to concerns and security measures within the day cares were

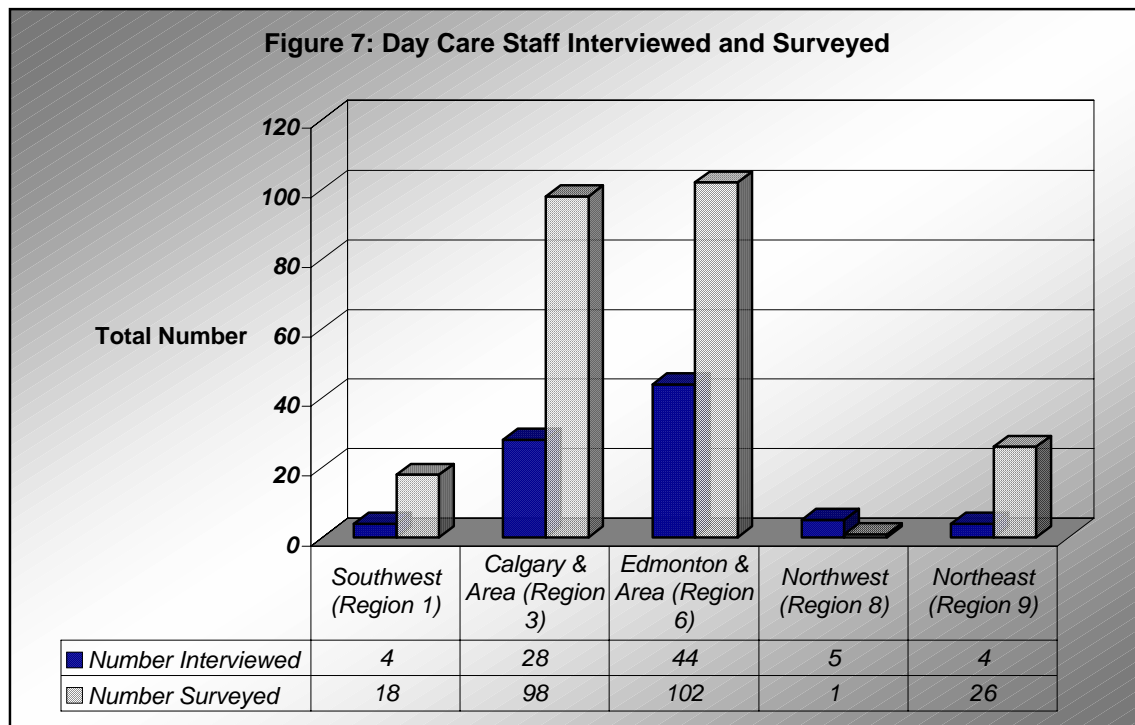
positive. Eight percent of comments were neutral where parents described the rules, child guidance and security measures as adequate. A few negative comments (3%) described a need for more consistent application of rules, poor rules and/or child guidance and security measures.

### Overall Feedback

As part of the interview process, parents were given the opportunity to comment on the overall quality of care their children receive at day care. Most parents stated the overall quality of care their children received at day care was good (86%). Thirteen percent of parents rated the overall care as adequate and one percent suggested some improvements were required (e.g. hygiene practices, access to centres, security of children’s personal property).

### Service Providers’ Comments

Committee members gave day care staff the opportunity to comment on the services they provide. Overall, the Committee spoke with 85 staff members in 48 day cares. In addition, 245 staff members completed surveys. (Day care owner/operators and managers also participated in interviews; their feedback is separate from the staff comments.) The number of day care staff members who were interviewed or completed surveys in each Child and Family Services Authority is illustrated in Figure 7.



A high percentage of the comments made by service providers reflected satisfaction with the services they provide. Of the 1,306 comments reported, 1,015 comments (78%) were positive, 234 comments (18%) were neutral and

the remaining 57 comments (4%) were negative. The main topics of discussion follow.

### *Physical Environment*

Day care staff were given an opportunity to comment on the physical environment of the day care facilities including how the environment accommodates both children and adults. The majority of comments were positive, indicating that the physical environment was good. A few staff described the physical space as adequate. For the most part, staff described their day cares as well laid out with play areas for children and separate areas for staff to do paperwork or take breaks. Of the few negative comments made, most referred to a need for adult space in which to take a break or conduct paperwork while a few staff members commented on a need for new toys, outside playground improvements and outside stairs being unsafe.

### *Meals and/or Snacks*

When discussing meals and snacks, staff made positive comments regarding the food provided at their facilities. Almost all of the staff stated the quality, quantity and variety of the food provided was good or adequate. A few negative comments were reported regarding the quality and quantity of the food and/or the variety of food provided.

### *Daily Activities*

The vast majority of staff expressed high satisfaction with the daily activities provided to children at their day cares. Activities were described as age-appropriate and based on the children's interests. A few neutral comments were reported, indicating that daily activities were adequate. No negative comments were heard.

### *Staff-Child Relationships*

All staff comments relating to staff-child relationships were either good or adequate. Day care staff reported their day care centres as safe, secure and positive. They also said they are able to respond to children's needs (e.g. verbal and non-verbal requests).

### *Overall Feedback from Staff*

Like parents, day care staff were given the opportunity to comment on the overall service and care they provide at their centres. Of the many positive comments made, staff reported that they ensure medications are safely stored and secured, job responsibilities are clear, they are aware of appropriate staff-child ratios, the centres are safe, parents are encouraged to spend time with their children and diversities are respected. Of the negative comments heard, staff voiced dissatisfaction with wages as their top concern.

### *Overall Feedback from Managers*

Many day care managers provided positive comments about their facilities. Statements were heard about safety, appropriate staff-child ratios and clear job responsibilities. Additionally, managers said they have respect for diversity

and encourage parents to spend time with their children. Areas of challenges reported by managers included high staff turnover and recruitment of employees.

#### *Overall Feedback from Owner/Operators*

Owner/operators were positive in their comments, referring to their centres' participation in the Pre-Accreditation program and staff's awareness of the program, providing written materials and performance feedback for staff, and processes for addressing parents' concerns. Of the negative comments provided, most referred to the challenges in retaining and recruiting staff and the need for higher staff wages. A few owners indicated that their facilities do not accept children with special needs.

## **VISITS TO OUT-OF-SCHOOL CARE FACILITIES**

Committee members scheduled visits to out-of-school care facilities to coincide with times that parents were at the facilities to pick-up their children. A total of 83 parents were interviewed and 207 parents completed surveys.

Occasionally, some parents who completed surveys also participated in interviews. Children attending out-of-school care facilities were invited to take part in the interviews, when their parent or guardian was present. Fifteen children participated in interviews.

Parents' comments are presented in eight categories: daily activities, staff-child relationships, communication with staff, parent or guardian involvement, meals and/or snacks, physical environment, rules and regulations, and overall feedback. Children's comments have been included with the parent comments in the following five categories: daily activities, staff-child relationships, meals and/or snacks, rules and regulations, and overall feedback. Service providers' comments are discussed separately.

### **Out-of School Care Themes**

Committee members reported a total of 3,557 observations from parents and children about the care children receive at out-of-school care facilities.

Overall, parents' and children's comments expressed satisfaction with services provided; 2,926 comments (82%) were positive, 475 comments (14%) were neutral and 156 comments (4%) were negative. The breakdown of parents' and children's comments, relating to out-of-school care themes, is shown in Figure 8, on the next page.

**Figure 8: Responses – Themes at Out-of-School Care Facilities**

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Daily Activities</i>	303 (72%)	97 (23%)	21 (5%)	421
<i>Staff-Child Relationships</i>	438 (81%)	46 (9%)	56 (10%)	540
<i>Communication with Staff</i>	401 (89%)	42 (9%)	9 (2%)	452
<i>Parent or Guardian Involvement</i>	238 (89%)	21 (8%)	7 (3%)	266
<i>Meals and/or Snacks</i>	625 (82%)	100 (13%)	36 (5%)	761
<i>Physical Environment</i>	331 (79%)	76 (18%)	13 (3%)	420
<i>Rules and Regulations</i>	353 (86%)	52 (13%)	5 (1%)	410
<i>Overall Feedback</i>	237 (83%)	41 (14%)	9 (3%)	287
<b>TOTAL:</b>	2926 (82%)	475 (14%)	156 (4%)	3557

### *Choice of Out-of-School Care Facility*

Parents shared the reason(s) why they selected their children’s out-of-school care program, which provides valuable insight into the factors parents consider when choosing an out-of-school care. As this feedback cannot be considered positive or negative, it is not included in the above chart. In total, 570 comments were made by parents regarding the choice of out-of-school care. The most frequently mentioned reasons included location (35%), reputation (20%), hours of operation (16%) and programs offered (12%). The remaining 17% of comments referred to subsidy, a need for more local out-of-school care options and a need for more supports for children with special needs.

### *Daily Activities*

Satisfaction with the daily activities offered in out-of-school care comprised over two-thirds of the comments (72%). Parents and children also commented on their satisfaction that staff actively include the children in planning and provide opportunities for children to choose activities. Twenty-three percent of comments were neutral where parents rated activities or the planning of activities as adequate. In some cases, a neutral response referred to a parent being unsure of their children’s participation in planning activities. Five percent of comments expressed dissatisfaction with activities, planning of activities and/or the children being unable to choose activities.

### *Staff-Child Relationships*

Comments regarding the relationships between staff and children in out-of-school care were positive. Eighty-one percent of parent and children responses indicated that staff interactions with the children are good, children feel safe and comfortable, children like attending the program, parents have

not observed bullying, and children report they have not experienced bullying. Nine percent of comments were neutral where parents indicated staff interactions with children were adequate. In the remaining 10% of comments, parents said they had observed bullying and/or felt staff-child relationships could be improved. A few children reported having experienced bullying and three children reported they disliked attending the out-of-school care centre. (As previously noted, all significant concerns were followed-up immediately.)

### *Communication with Staff*

Feedback from parents regarding communication was positive. Eighty-nine percent of comments indicated staff members maintain good communication with parents, respond well to concerns or requests and are quick to notify parents of incidents. Some parents also reported staff were aware of their children's needs. The neutral comments (9%) described communication as adequate. Of the nine negative comments (2%), eight described communication as poor and one stated the reporting of incidents and/or concerns could be improved.

### *Parent or Guardian Involvement*

A high percentage of parents made positive comments (89%) about their involvement in the out-of-school care centres. Parents described feeling welcome at the facilities and having opportunities to participate with their children. Eight percent of comments were neutral, reporting involvement as adequate. Three percent of comments indicated a lack of opportunities for parental involvement and/or a few parents did not feel welcome in the program.

### *Meals and/or Snacks*

Meals and snacks are required for children attending an out-of-school care centre. These meals and snacks can be provided by the out-of-school facility or the facility may require the parents to provide food for their children. When asked about meals and snacks, the majority of parents and children expressed satisfaction. Eighty-two percent of parents stated they are pleased with the quality, quantity and variety of meals and/or snacks provided. A few parents commented that the facilities accommodate children's allergies. Children also stated they like the food provided and receive enough to eat. Thirteen percent of parents' and children's comments were neutral, indicating food quality, variety and portion sizes were adequate. In the negative comments (5%), a few parents and children reported dissatisfaction with the quantity, quality, variety and/or nutritional value of meals and/or snacks provided.

### *Physical Environment*

Seventy-nine percent of parents' comments about the physical environment of the out-of-school centres were positive. Parents described the overall environment as good and reported satisfaction with the play space, equipment and toys. Eighteen percent of the comments were neutral and described the physical environment of the out-of-school care facility as adequate. The remaining 3% of comments were negative and related to a few concerns

parents expressed about the general physical environment (e.g. furnishings, toys, play structures, bathrooms, cleanliness).

### *Rules and Regulations*

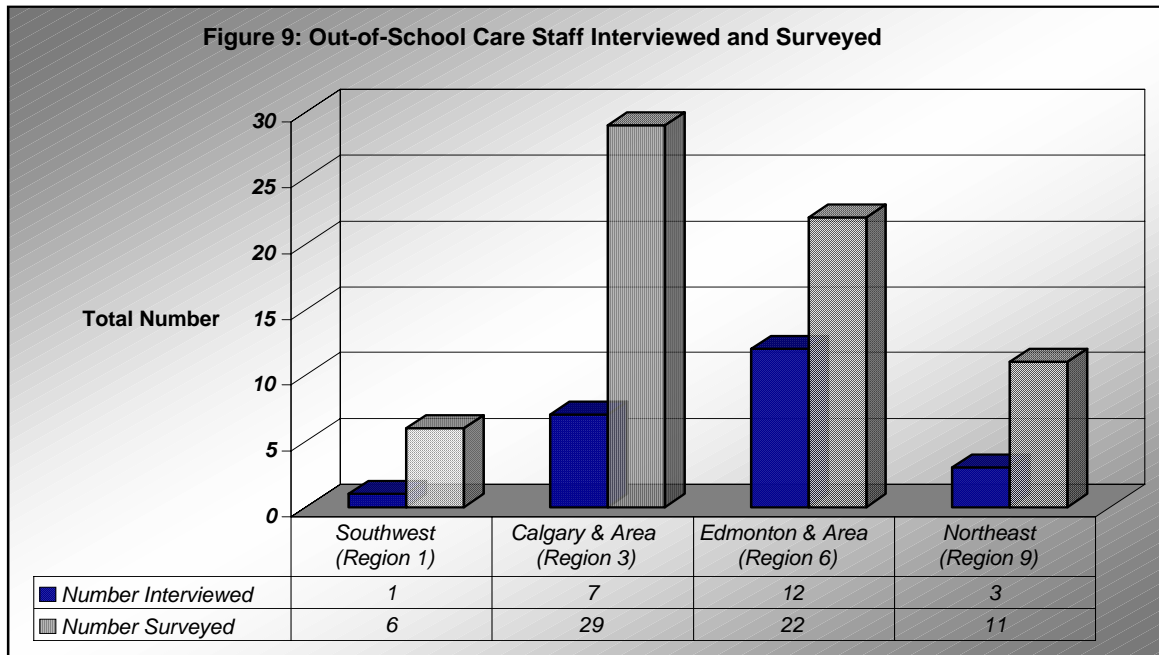
The majority of parents' and children's comments (86%) reported high satisfaction with the rules, child guidance policies and security measures. Parents also said they felt the rules and discipline measures were consistently applied. Children stated that they were aware of the rules and considered the rules fair. Some comments (13%) were neutral and related to situations where parents described the rules, child guidance, application of rules and security measures as adequate. In the remaining 1% of comments, a few parents indicated they were not satisfied with the rules, child guidance and one parent reported that the rules were not consistently applied. Children had no negative comments regarding the rules at their out-of-school care programs.

### *Overall Feedback*

Parents and children were invited to comment on the overall quality of care received at out-of-school care centres. Eighty-three percent of parents said they were satisfied with the care their children receive at out-of-school care facilities. Children reported liking the facilities and they stated they didn't want anything to change. In neutral comments (14%), parents said the overall quality of care was adequate. The remaining 3% of comments were negative and included a few parents who felt the overall quality of care was poor and children who reported wanting changes made in their facilities (e.g. more time spent playing in the gym, playing video games every day).

### **Service Provider Comments**

Committee members gave out-of-school care staff the opportunity to comment on the services they provide. Overall, the Committee spoke with 23 staff members in 27 out-of-school care programs. In addition, 68 staff members completed surveys. (Out-of-school care owner/operators and managers also participated in interviews; their feedback is separate from the staff comments.) The number of out-of-school care staff who were interviewed or completed surveys in each Child and Family Services Authority is illustrated in Figure 9, on the next page.



Service providers' comments expressed satisfaction with the services they provide; 1,251 comments (76%) were positive, 290 comments (17%) were neutral and the remaining 109 comments (7%) were negative. The main topics of discussion are presented below.

### *Physical Environment*

Staff were invited to comment on the physical environment within the out-of-school care facilities. The majority of staff were highly satisfied with the layout of their out-of-school care centres stating the physical environment allowed for individual, small and large group activities. Some neutral statements were reported indicating the physical space was adequate. One negative comment was made that the layout of a facility was poor and a few staff members expressed a desire for new equipment for both inside and outside.

### *Meals and/or Snacks*

More than three-quarters of the staff spoke highly about the food provided to children in the out-of-school care centres. Staff reported the food quality, quantity and/or variety was good or adequate. Only a few negative comments were heard from staff regarding the quality, quantity or variety of food.

### *Daily Activities*

Comments about the daily activities provided at out-of-school care facilities were positive. Staff stated children have opportunities to participate in the planning, development and implementation of activities and that activities are based on the children's interests. A few negative comments were heard stating a need for improved activities (e.g. more structure).

### *Staff-Child Relationships*

All of the staff comments referring to staff-child relationships were either positive or neutral. Staff also talked about methods of encouraging positive relationships between children including redirecting behaviour and modelling respectful relationships with others. No negative comments were heard.

### *Rules and Regulations*

Positive comments about the rules and regulations at out-of-school care centres were made by almost all of the staff. Staff indicated they help children to solve their own conflicts, when appropriate, and ensure rules are consistently applied. One neutral comment was heard from a staff member who stated the application of the rules was adequate. One negative comment was made indicating staff did not assist children in working out solutions to concerns.

### *Overall Feedback from Staff*

When staff were invited to comment on the general services and care they provided to children attending out-of-school care facilities, the vast majority made positive comments. Staff indicated they were aware of children who carried emergency medication, knew when children self-medicated, kept medications securely stored and were knowledgeable of the staff-child ratios. Additionally, staff reported that, within their programs, diversities are respected, job responsibilities are clear and training is adequate. Of the negative comments heard, staff's top concern was dissatisfaction with wages.

### *Overall Feedback from Managers*

Out-of-school care managers echoed many of the same comments as the staff. Many out-of-school care managers reported that medications are kept in secure locations, staff are made aware of the appropriate staff-child ratios, job responsibilities are clear, diversities are respected, staff are aware of children who carry emergency medication and know when a child self-medicates. One neutral comment was made indicating recruitment of staff was adequate. Of the negative comments received, managers highlighted a need for higher staff wages and challenges with staff turnover and recruitment of new staff.

### *Overall Feedback from Owner/Operators*

Owner/operators were given the opportunity to comment on the services they provide. In positive comments, many owner/operators stated they provide before school services, rules and consequences are reviewed with staff, children have opportunities for input into the activities and menu, and parental consents for children to leave the facility independently are obtained. Further comments indicated the centres provide written materials, performance feedback and processes for addressing parents' concerns. Negative comments included owner/operators who reported that children do not assist with planning the menus, a need for higher staff wages and challenges in recruiting and retaining staff.

## VISITS TO FOSTER HOMES

To ensure as many foster children as possible were available for interviews, Committee members scheduled visits to foster homes around the families' schedules. Of the 327 children residing in the 130 foster homes visited, 212 children and youth (65%) participated in interviews. Additionally, Committee members observed 74 children (23%) who were pre-verbal and/or non-verbal.

Foster children's comments are organized into three main categories: care, treatment and accommodation. Foster parents' comments are discussed separately.

### Care

Committee members reported 2,968 comments from foster children regarding the care they receive in their foster homes. Overall, children and youth's comments expressed satisfaction with the care provided; 2,604 comments (88%) were positive, 328 comments (11%) were neutral and 36 comments (1%) were negative. The breakdown of foster children's comments, relating to care themes, is shown in Figure 10.

**Figure 10: Responses - Care Themes at Foster Homes**

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Education</i>	406 (97%)	10 (2%)	5 (1%)	421
<i>Vacation</i>	236 (92%)	16 (6%)	4 (2%)	256
<i>Social Activities</i>	603 (99%)	0 (0%)	4 (1%)	607
<i>Foster Parent-Child Relationships</i>	656 (95%)	11 (2%)	19 (3%)	686
<i>Rules</i>	327 (56%)	256 (44%)	2 (<1%)	585
<i>Overall Care and Comfort Level</i>	376 (91%)	35 (8%)	2 (1%)	413
<b>TOTAL:</b>	2604 (88%)	328 (11%)	36 (1%)	2968

### Education

Ninety-seven percent of the children's comments about education were positive. Foster children spoke about the types of schools they attend (e.g. public, private, special needs programs and early childhood services) and how much they like school. Additional positive comments included children who expressed plans for the future. For instance, 21 percent of the comments indicated foster children had plans to graduate from high school while 9% reported plans for post-secondary education. Neutral comments referred to youth who are employed part-time (2%), while negative comments (1%) referred to children who said they dislike school.

### *Vacation*

Children spoke positively about vacations (92%) describing holidays and day trips they have taken and/or are planning to take with their foster or natural families. Some children spoke about attending summer camps. Neutral comments referred to foster children who have not lived at their current home long enough to go on vacation (6%). Four negative comments (2%) came from children who said they have not yet had a vacation (e.g. one youth had recently had a baby and was unable to travel, one youth had chosen to work during the summer months).

### *Social Activities*

Foster children expressed high satisfaction with their involvement in social activities (99%). Those interviewed reported having friends and participating in a wide range of leisure activities. Unstructured entertainment, activities with the foster family, sports, and community groups topped the list of fun things foster children and youth talked about. There were no neutral comments. In negative comments (1%), four children said they wished to attend cultural events, lessons and/or reported not having any friends.

### *Foster Parent-Child Relationships*

Almost all of the foster children (95%) conveyed contentment with the relationships they share with their foster parents. The majority reported feeling comfortable with their foster parents and some of the children reported they receive an allowance. A few foster children discussed how their foster parents keep them connected to their culture. As well, when children have concerns or problems they reported having specific people in their lives with whom they would confide in (e.g. foster parent, sibling, friend). Neutral comments (2%) described foster parent-child relationships as adequate. Negative comments (3%) related to children who said they do not receive an allowance or they experience difficulties in their relationships with foster parents.

### *Rules*

Many of the foster children made positive comments about the rules in the foster homes. Fifty-six percent of the positive remarks made referred to knowing the rules and viewing the rules as fair. Neutral comments (44%) outlined the consequences of breaking rules, such as having privileges revoked, time-out or grounding. Negative comments (<1%) related to children who said the rules were unfair.

### *Overall Care and Comfort Level*

Ninety-one percent of foster children made positive comments about their overall care and comfort level. Children reported that their level of comfort was good, they were treated fairly and felt safe in their foster homes. Eight percent of comments were neutral responses in which children described previous placements and/or rated their comfort level as adequate. Negative comments (1%) were heard from foster children who said they had a poor level of comfort or believed they were treated unfairly.

## Treatment

Committee members reported 1,441 observations from foster children about the treatment they receive in foster homes. Children made 913 (63%) positive comments, 313 (22%) neutral comments and 215 (15%) negative comments. The breakdown of foster children's comments, relating to treatment themes, is shown in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Responses - Treatment Themes at Foster Homes**

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Transition</i>	130 (50%)	42 (16%)	89 (34%)	261
<i>Medical/Dental Needs</i>	495 (70%)	201 (29%)	10 (1%)	706
<i>Contact with Natural Family</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Case Plans</i>	136 (46%)	70 (23%)	91 (31%)	297
<i>Memory Books</i>	152 (86%)	0 (0%)	25 (14%)	177
<b>TOTAL:</b>	913 (63%)	313 (22%)	215 (15%)	1441

### *Transition*

Foster children recounted their feelings about moving into their foster homes and shared what their experience was like. They also commented on their present feelings toward their placements. Fifty percent of the comments relating to transition were positive. Children who were satisfied with their transition experience indicated that they had been advised in advance of the move and/or were given a pre-placement visit. Sixteen percent of the comments about transition were neutral. The majority of neutral comments referred to having no memory of or being unable to recall the transition.

The remaining 34% of comments about transition were negative. Children who expressed dissatisfaction said they felt scared at the time of the move, were not given a pre-placement visit, or felt sad at the prospect of moving. (It is not always possible to provide advance notice or a pre-placement visit in circumstances where children are apprehended from their home.) Although only a few children said they were happy at the time of their move, many more declared they are happy now.

### *Medical/Dental Needs*

Children stated in 70% of the comments that their medical and dental needs were met and they have never experienced a delay in obtaining medical or dental care. They also stated that they feel well cared for when they are ill. Neutral comments (29%) described having visited a doctor, dentist or

optometrist within the past year. Negative comments (1%) referred to situations where children said they had not yet seen a doctor, dentist, or had experienced a delay in getting dental or optometry services.

### *Contact with Natural Family*

Children were asked about their contact with natural family members to note whether or not contact is occurring. Committee members do not explore the reasons for limitations on or the appropriateness of contact. For reporting purposes, family contact is not classified in the positive or negative, as family contact and/or reunification with natural family members is not always possible or desirable given individual children's circumstances.

In response to questions about contact with natural family, some of the children made comments indicating that they maintain contact with natural family members and/or mentioned they are happy with the level of contact they have with their natural family members. Many children identified specific family members they have contact with (e.g. natural parents, siblings) and/or the frequency of visits with family. The level of contact described ranged from regular to limited, but regular contact was most frequently reported. In a few cases, comments were made referring to situations where a child does not have contact with natural family or where a child expressed dissatisfaction with the level of contact they have with natural family members.

### *Case Plans*

When asked about case plans, 46 % of comments were positive. These comments indicated children are aware they have a case plan and/or have had input into the plan's development. Neutral comments (23%) regarded the frequency of updates to case plans. Additionally, children offered such information as how often they saw a caseworker and the number of caseworkers they had in the last two years. Thirty-one percent of comments were negative, the majority of which referred to children who were unaware of a case plan. (Very young children or children with comprehension difficulties may not have readily recognized conversations with caseworkers as case planning.)

### *Memory Books*

Children reported high satisfaction when referencing keepsakes. Eighty-six percent of comments were positive remarks indicating children have photographs and/or memory books. There were no neutral comments. Negative responses (14%) were made by children who indicated that they did not have a memory book or photographs.

## **Accommodation**

Committee members reported 975 foster children's comments that were related to accommodation, including meals and the physical environment of the home. Overall, foster children expressed satisfaction with their accommodation; 862 comments (88%) were positive, 84 comments (9%)

were neutral and 29 comments (3%) were negative. The breakdown of foster children's comments related to accommodation themes is shown in Figure 12.

**Figure 12: Responses - Accommodation Themes at Foster Homes**

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Meals</i>	595 (96%)	5 (1%)	22 (3%)	622
<i>Physical Environment</i>	267 (76%)	79 (22%)	7 (2%)	353
<b>TOTAL:</b>	862 (88%)	84 (9%)	29 (3%)	975

### *Meals*

Almost all of the comments made about meals were positive (96%). Children remarked that the quality and quantity of food provided was good and that they liked the food. Many children also mentioned that they help with meal preparation. A few neutral comments were made by children who said the food was adequate in quality (1%). In the negative comments (3%), most referred to children who reported that they do not help prepare meals. (Participation in meal preparation is considered an opportunity to develop life-skills; as a result, a lack of participation is classified as negative.)

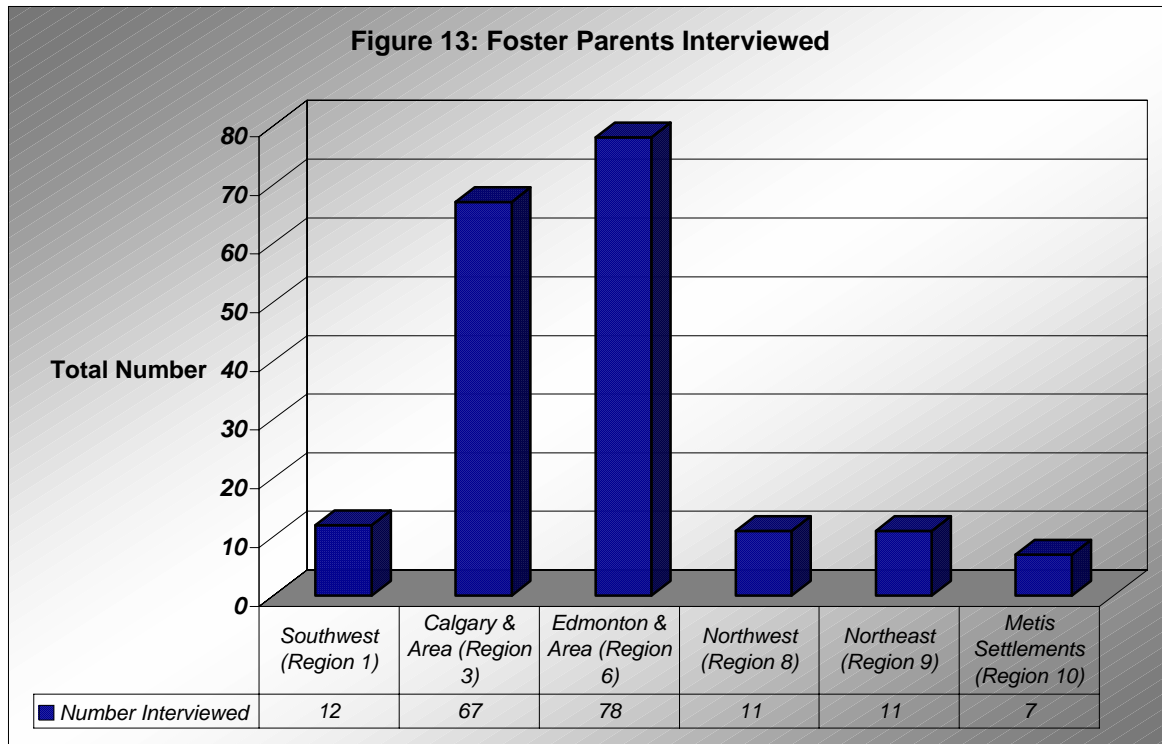
### *Physical Environment*

Children and youth described what they liked and disliked about their foster homes, the chores they were responsible for and what changes they would like to make. The majority of comments were positive (76%), where children commented that they liked their home and they participated in chores.

Twenty-two percent of comments were neutral and related to foster children who said they wouldn't change anything in their current foster home, and children who mentioned they lived in foster homes that had pets. Negative comments (2%) referred to children who said they did not like their sleeping accommodations (e.g. sharing a room) or did not participate in chores. (Participation in chores is considered an opportunity to develop life-skills; as a result, a lack of participation is classified as negative.)

## **Foster Parents' Comments**

Committee members gave foster parents an opportunity to comment on the services they provide and to raise concerns of their own. Members spoke with 186 foster parents in 130 foster homes. Foster parents expressed different views depending on their experiences, perceptions and geographic location. The number of foster parents who participated in interviews, broken down by Child and Family Services Authority, is shown in Figure 13, on the next page.



Overall, foster parents' comments expressed moderate satisfaction; 62% of the total comments were positive, 12% of comments were neutral and 26% of the total comments were negative.

### *Services*

Many foster parents expressed satisfaction with the access to services for the children in their care. Most foster parents spoke about having good communication and assistance from health, educational and dental professionals. Some of the foster parents commented that they were pleased with the children's recreation funds.

While many foster parents expressed satisfaction regarding services, some of the foster parents expressed dissatisfaction. Difficulty in accessing health care, mental health, special needs, educational and dental services for the children in their care was reported by some of those interviewed. A few foster parents remarked that the children's recreation funds do not cover the actual cost of some recreational activities.

### *Agency Support*

In regards to general support and services received from foster care agencies, the majority of foster parents' comments were positive. Foster parents highlighted their satisfaction with agencies' services, support workers, training and respite. Of the few negative comments made, foster parents identified a need for increased respite resources and changes to their training (e.g. courses provided on-line, more advanced courses for experienced foster parents).

### *Support from the Ministry and Child and Family Services Authority*

Comments from foster parents were almost evenly divided between the positive and negative. In positive comments, foster parents said they receive good support from regional staff (e.g. caseworkers, foster care support workers) and the Ministry. They further indicated that they received good foster parent training. Of the negative comments heard, a few foster parents spoke of high staff turnover (e.g. caseworkers). Additionally, a few foster parents commented on a need for improved policies (e.g. foster children are not allowed to jump on trampolines, obtaining criminal record checks for a foster child to attend a sleepover), more input in the decision making process, more advanced foster parent training, and improved communication with regional staff.

## **VISITS TO CHILD AND YOUTH FACILITIES**

Visits to child and youth facilities were scheduled late in the afternoon, after school hours or early in the evening to ensure as many children and youth as possible were available for interviews. A total of 64 children and youth from 24 facilities participated in the interviews.

Children and youths' comments are organized in three main categories: care, treatment and accommodation. Service provider's comments are discussed separately.

### **Care**

Committee members reported 796 comments from children and youth about the care they receive at their facilities. Overall, children and youth expressed satisfaction with the services provided; 549 comments (69%) were positive, 208 comments (26%) were neutral and 39 comments (5%) were negative. The breakdown of children's comments, relating to care themes, is shown in Figure 14, on the next page.

**Figure 14: Responses – Care Themes at Child and Youth Facilities**

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Education</i>	79 (84%)	2 (2%)	13 (14%)	94
<i>Vacation</i>	38 (65%)	15 (26%)	5 (9%)	58
<i>Social Activities</i>	162 (99%)	0	2 (1%)	164
<i>Staff-Child/Youth Relationships</i>	93 (55%)	64 (38%)	12 (7%)	169
<i>Rules</i>	89 (47%)	98 (51%)	4 (2%)	191
<i>Overall Care and Comfort Level</i>	88 (73%)	29 (24%)	3 (3%)	120
<b>TOTAL:</b>	549 (69%)	208 (26%)	39 (5%)	796

### *Education*

The majority of comments about education were positive (84%), with children and youth indicating they attend public school, facility programs or a special needs program. Some of the children indicated they liked school (34%), planned to graduate (16%) and a few said they intended to pursue post-secondary education (8%). In neutral comments (2%), youth mentioned having part-time jobs. The negative comments (14%) included children who said they disliked school or were not attending, as well as two youth who reported they were expelled.

### *Vacation*

Sixty-five percent of children and youth's responses about vacation were positive, describing holidays with facility staff and/or natural family members, summer camp and day trips. When children live in placements not conducive to vacations (e.g. short-term, emergency shelter placements), their comments were classified as neutral (26%). Negative comments (9%) referred to situations where children and youth reported not yet having had a vacation.

### *Social Activities*

Almost all of the children and youth expressed satisfaction with their social activities (99%). The most popular comments made included having friends, and enjoying unstructured activities, facility recreation programs and activities with facility staff. Two negative comments (1%) were heard from one youth who indicated he/she had limited activities (e.g. youth preferred to spend time alone in his/her room) and another youth who said he/she participated in no activities.

### *Staff-Child/Youth Relationships*

When discussing their relationships with staff, children and youth made a variety of statements. Most of the positive comments (55%) referred to

having good relationships with staff. Many children and youth commented that they receive an allowance. A few reported that staff helped them keep connected to their families and culture. Thirty-eight percent of comments were neutral. Children and youth described who they talk to when they have a concern (e.g. staff, caseworker, teacher) and/or indicated staff-child relationships as adequate. In a few negative comments (7%), children expressed dissatisfaction with the staff-child relationships and/or reported they are not receiving an allowance.

### Rules

Children and youth were asked whether they knew the rules and consequences at their facility, and whether the rules were fair. Forty-seven percent of the children and youth stated they knew the rules and felt the rules were fair. Fifty-one percent of the comments referred to the types of consequences used in their facilities such as having privileges revoked or grounding. Two percent of the comments were negative, in which three children reported the rules to be unfair (e.g. curfew too early) and one child reported not knowing the rules.

### Overall Care and Comfort Level

Children and youth's overall care and comfort in their facilities was reported to be positive in most of the comments (73%). These children and youth stated that their level of comfort was good, they felt safe and were treated fairly. Twenty-four percent of the comments were neutral and referred to the type of placement the children and youth resided in prior to entering their current facility (e.g. natural home, foster home). The remaining 3% of comments were negative. Two youth expressed a poor level of comfort and one youth indicated being treated unfairly (e.g. youth wanted to stay home alone, but wasn't allowed due to his/her medical needs and maturity level.)

### Treatment

Committee members reported 407 comments from children and youth about the treatment they receive at child and youth facilities. Of those comments, 262 (64%) were positive, 90 (22%) were neutral and the remaining 55 (14%) were negative. The breakdown of children and youth's comments, relating to treatment themes, is shown in Figure 15.

**Figure 15: Responses - Treatment Themes at Child and Youth Facilities**

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Transition</i>	61 (65%)	1 (1%)	32 (34%)	94
<i>Case Plans</i>	48 (49%)	30 (30%)	21 (21%)	99
<i>Contact with Natural Family</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Medical/Dental Needs</i>	153 (71%)	59 (28%)	2 (1%)	214
<b>TOTAL:</b>	262 (64%)	90 (22%)	55 (14%)	407

### *Transition*

Children and youth were asked what their experiences were like when they moved into their current placement. Sixty-five percent of comments were positive, and referred to situations where children and youth were informed of the move in advance, were able to bring their personal belongings and/or had a pre-placement visit. A few children reported being happy at the time of the move, and several more reported they are currently happy with their placement. In the one neutral comment (1%), a youth indicated he/she had no specific feelings about the transition.

Children who expressed dissatisfaction (34%) with the transition experience recalled they felt scared and/or sad at the time of the move. A few indicated they were not provided with a pre-placement visit and/or did not receive prior notification about the move. (As previously noted, in specific instances where children have been apprehended from their homes, it is not always possible to provide advance notice or a pre-placement visit.)

### *Case Plans*

The positive comments (49%) made regarding case plans refer to children and youth who said they are aware they have a case plan and/or have input into the development of their plans. Thirty percent of comments were neutral and referred to the frequency of updates to case plans and those who contribute to the plans (e.g. facility staff, caseworker). Children and youth also offered information on how often they see their caseworker and how long they have had their current caseworker. Most of the negative comments (21%) refer to children and youth who said they are not aware of their case plans. (Very young children or children with comprehension difficulties may not have readily recognized conversations with caseworkers as case planning.) One youth expressed a desire for involvement in case planning.

### *Contact with Natural Family*

As previously noted, questions regarding children and youth's contact with natural family members were designed to note whether or not contact exists. These questions do not explore the reasons for, limitations on, or appropriateness of contact. For reporting purposes, family contact is not classified in the positive or negative as family contact and/or reunification with natural family is not always possible or desirable given individual children's circumstances.

The majority of comments made by children and youth indicated they have contact with natural family and have memorabilia and keepsakes such as photographs or memory books. Many children talked about who they have contact with (e.g. natural parents, siblings) and how often they have contact (e.g. regular, occasional). A few children and youth stated they were dissatisfied with their level of contact, do not have contact with natural family members and/or do not have keepsakes.

### *Medical/Dental Needs*

Almost all of the children/youth reported positive or neutral comments about their health care. The majority of children and youth (71%) stated that their optical, medical and dental needs are met and that they feel they are well cared for in the facility when they are ill. They also indicated they have never experienced a delay in obtaining medical or dental care. In the neutral comments (28%), children and youth reported whether or not they had seen a doctor, dentist or optometrist in the last year. The two negative comments (1%) were heard from one youth who indicated he/she did not have his/her medical and dental needs met (e.g. dissatisfied with booking own appointments).

### **Accommodation**

Committee members reported 275 comments from children and youth on issues relating to accommodation at child and youth facilities. Residents expressed satisfaction with the services provided; 263 comments (96%) were positive, 4 comments (1%) were neutral and 8 comments (3%) were negative. The breakdown of residents' responses, relating to accommodation themes, is shown in Figure 16.

**Figure 16: Responses - Accommodation Themes at Child and Youth Facilities**

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Meals</i>	180 (95%)	3 (1%)	7 (4%)	190
<i>Physical Environment</i>	83 (98%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	92
<b>TOTAL:</b>	263 (96%)	4 (1%)	8 (3%)	275

### *Meals*

Children and youth expressed high satisfaction with the meals served in their facilities. Ninety-five percent of comments were positive, and indicated children were pleased with the quality and quantity of food. They also reported that they help with meal preparation. In neutral comments (1%), children and youth reported that the quality of meals was adequate. The remaining 4% of comments were negative and referred to seven children who reported they did not help prepare meals. (As previously mentioned, participation in meal preparation is considered an opportunity to develop life-skills, and as a result, a lack of participation is classified as negative.)

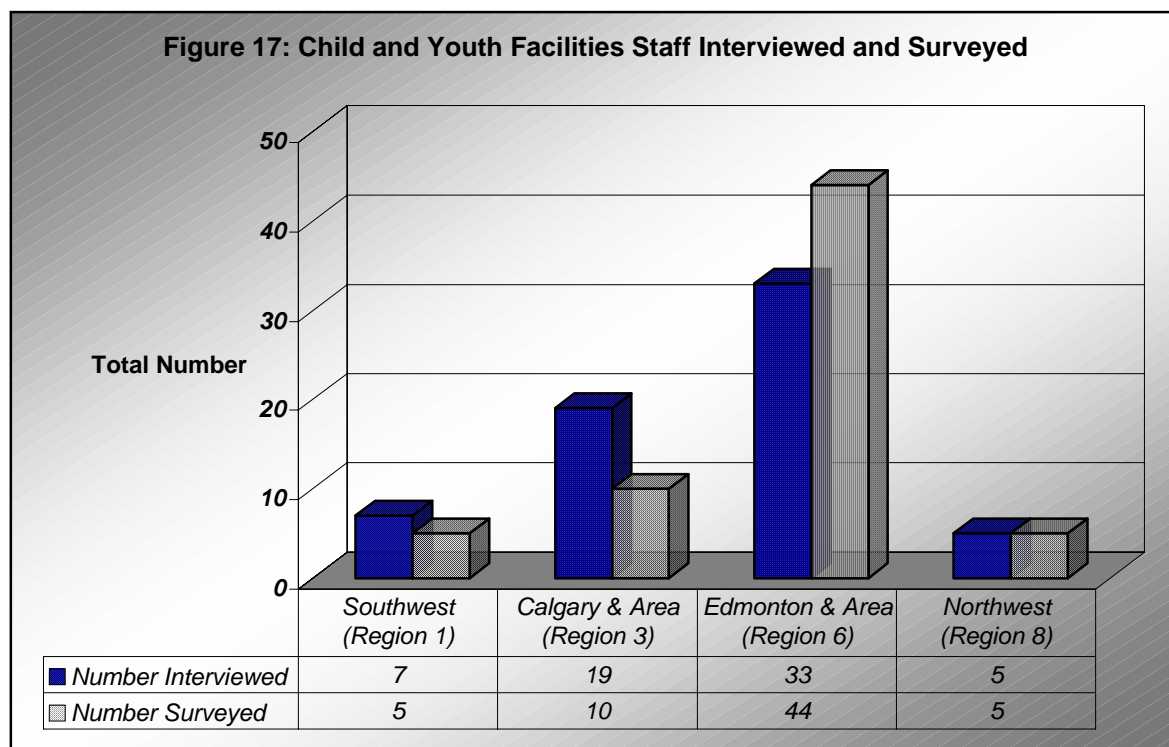
### *Physical Environment*

Almost all of the children and youth (98%) stated they liked their facilities. Many children also indicated they participated in daily or weekly chores. Neutral comments (1%) referenced aspects of the facilities that children and youth would like to see changed (e.g. one youth said he/she would like to see his/her curfew extended). The one negative comment (1%) heard was from a

child who stated he/she did not like the facility (e.g. would prefer a more structured group home).

### Staff Member Comments

Committee members talked to 64 staff members at 24 child and youth facilities to give them an opportunity to comment on the services they provide and to raise any concerns. An additional 64 staff members completed surveys. Those interviewed expressed differing views depending on their experiences, perceptions and location (e.g. travel time, access to resources and services). More than half of the comments made in the interviews and surveys expressed satisfaction; 62% of comments were positive, 15% were neutral and the remaining 23% were negative. Figure 17 shows a breakdown of staff members who participated in interviews or completed surveys.



### Education and Training

Child and youth facility staff reported a high level of satisfaction when asked whether they felt they had sufficient training to deal with the situations they encounter. Some staff also commented on how their facilities provide opportunities to access additional training. A few comments expressed dissatisfaction with current staff training (e.g. a desire for more specialized training) and the lack of additional training.

### Staffing/Facility Programs

When asked about the programs provided to the children in their care, staff members spoke positively about their facilities. They highlighted areas of satisfaction including clearly defined roles and responsibilities, good

relationships with other staff members, a sense of teamwork and a strong program. A few staff members indicated staff turnover had been less of a challenge in their facilities within the last year. Many staff members reported a need for higher staff wages. Some staff indicated a desire for higher staffing levels to better meet the needs of the children in care and highlighted the ongoing challenges of trying to retain and recruit staff.

### *Supports from the Ministry, Agencies and Community*

More than half of the comments made by staff regarding the support from education professionals, communities (e.g. police) and Ministry staff (e.g. caseworkers) for the children in their care were positive. Of the negative comments heard, most staff expressed dissatisfaction with the availability of background information regarding children. A few staff members mentioned a need to review and revise some regional policies (e.g. restraint policy limiting the number of restraints per child).

### *Director's Comments*

Directors were given the opportunity to comment on the services their facilities provide to the children in their care. Good program supports for residents topped the list of positive comments made by directors. As well, directors spoke of their staff members as being the strength of their programs. Many directors indicated their dissatisfaction with the wages paid to facility staff and discussed the challenges of staff turnover.

## ***VISITS TO WOMEN'S EMERGENCY SHELTERS***

Committee members make every effort to schedule visits to women's emergency shelters at times of the day when it is most convenient for residents and staff members to be interviewed. A total of 23 residents and 15 staff members participated in interviews while 71 staff members completed surveys.

The total interview response rate of the 108 residents living in the eight facilities visited was 21%. The low participation rate is likely related to the unique situation of these residents who typically spend time away from the facility to search for jobs or permanent accommodations or to attend counselling appointments. Children residing at women's emergency shelters did not participate in interviews.

Residents' comments are organized into two main categories: care/treatment and accommodation. Staff members' comments are discussed separately.

### **Care and Treatment**

Committee members reported 99 comments from residents about the care and treatment they receive at women's emergency shelters. Seventy-nine comments (80%) were positive, 1 comment (1%) was neutral and the

remaining 19 comments (19%) were negative. The breakdown of residents' comments, relating to care/treatment themes, is shown in Figure 18.

**Figure 18: Responses - Care and Treatment Themes at Women's Emergency Shelters**

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
<i>Program Awareness</i>	26 (62%)	0 (0%)	16 (38%)	42
<i>Staff-Resident Relationships</i>	38 (93%)	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	41
<i>Quality of Services Received</i>	15 (94%)	0 (0%)	1 (6%)	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	79 (80%)	1 (1%)	19 (19%)	99

### *Program Awareness*

Sixty-two percent of comments indicated residents are aware of the types of programs offered by their shelters. Women mentioned receiving referrals, information, services (e.g. locating community resources) and stated they were aware of resources available (e.g. in-house, community) for themselves and their children. Among the negative comments (38%), residents described having difficulty accessing community resources due to the location of the shelter(s). A few residents further expressed a need for specific supports that were not provided during their stay (e.g. one-on-one counselling, spousal/partner support) and spoke of the difficulties accessing affordable housing after they leave.

### *Staff-Resident Relationships*

Almost all of the residents (93%) expressed appreciation for staff members' support, understanding, resourcefulness, knowledge and assistance. One neutral comment (2%) described staff members' support and resourcefulness as adequate. Two negative comments (5%) referred to a need for staff to be more supportive, understanding and culturally aware.

### *Quality of Services Received*

When commenting on the overall quality of services received, 94% of the responses were positive. Residents expressed satisfaction with the programs, services and activities provided for both themselves and their children. There were no neutral comments. One negative comment (6%) indicated dissatisfaction with the quality of children's programs provided at the shelter.

## **Accommodation**

Committee members reported 233 comments from residents about the accommodations provided at women's emergency shelters. Overall, residents expressed satisfaction with their accommodations; 162 comments (69%) were positive, 58 comments (25%) were neutral and the remaining 13 comments (6%) were negative. The breakdown of residents' comments, relating to accommodation themes, is shown in Figure 19, on the next page.

**Figure 19: Responses - Accommodation Themes at Women's Emergency Shelters**

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
<i>Physical Environment</i>	65 (89%)	3 (4%)	5 (7%)	73
<i>Meals</i>	32 (51%)	30 (48%)	1 (1%)	63
<i>Rules and Regulations</i>	36 (69%)	14 (27%)	2 (4%)	52
<i>Overall Feedback</i>	29 (64%)	11 (25%)	5 (11%)	45
<b>TOTAL</b>	162 (69%)	58 (25%)	13 (6%)	233

#### *Physical Environment*

Eighty-nine percent of comments about the physical environment of the shelters were positive. Residents talked about feeling safe and secure. They also expressed satisfaction with the privacy, size, comfort and design of the facilities. Three neutral comments (4%) were made, indicating the physical size, location, and design of the facilities was adequate. A total of five negative comments (7%) were reported, stating the location, size and privacy of the facilities could be improved.

#### *Meals*

Approximately half of the comments about the quality, quantity and variety of the meals provided in the shelters were positive (51%). In neutral comments (48%), residents said they participated in preparing meals and/or described the food as adequate. One negative comment was made, stating the quantity of food prepared was insufficient.

#### *Rules and Regulations*

Satisfaction with the rules and regulations of the facilities was reported in 69% of the comments. Residents stated they were informed of the rules and felt the rules were fair, reasonable and applied. Neutral comments (27%) referred to residents who reported they were responsible for chores at the shelters. In the two negative comments (4%), residents did not feel the rules were fair and/or indicated the rules were not consistently applied.

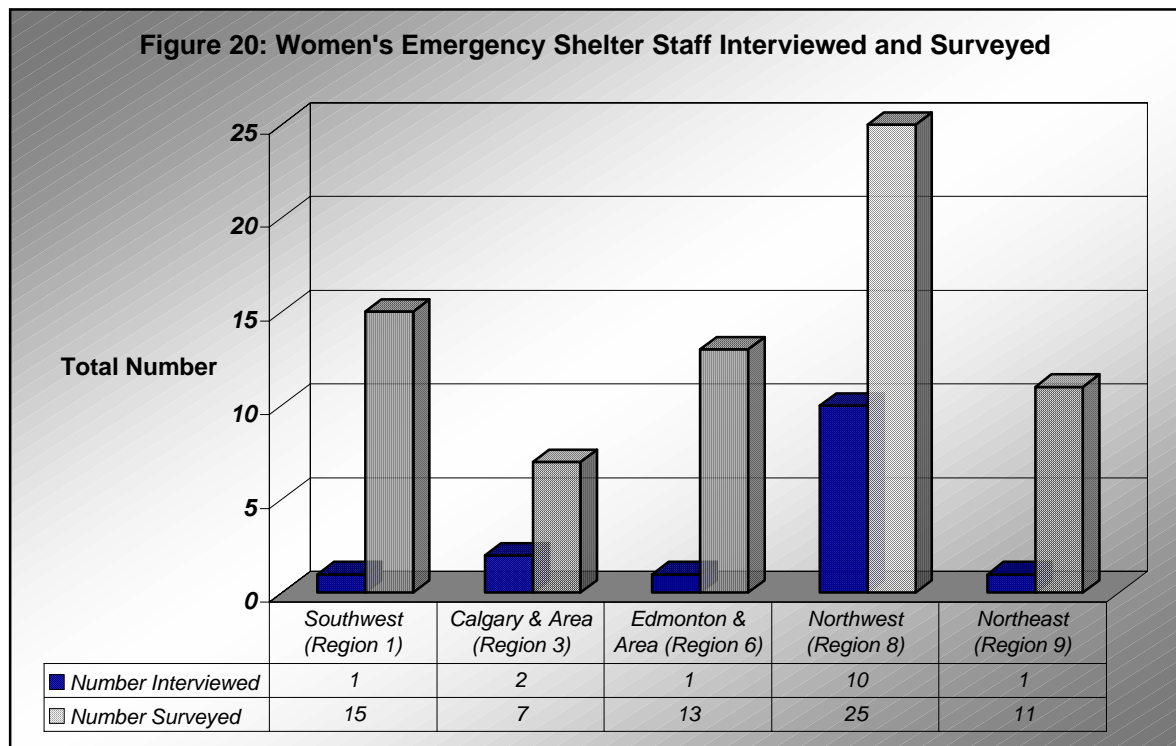
#### *Overall Feedback*

In 64% of comments, residents rated the overall services at their facilities positively. The women said they were impressed with the services received and the staff who provided them. Twenty-five percent of comments were neutral describing how residents came to know about the facilities, referring to the community and media in some instances. Of the five negative comments (11%) reported, residents highlighted the need for available second stage

housing, one resident suggested improvements to the programs available for children and another resident said she was not made aware of community support services during her stay at the shelter.

### Staff Members' Comments

Committee members talked to 15 staff members in eight women's emergency shelters to give them an opportunity to comment on the services they provide and to raise any concerns they might have. An additional 71 staff members completed surveys. A breakdown of staff members who participated in the interviews or completed surveys is shown in Figure 20.



Staff member feedback was mostly positive (61%), 24% were neutral and the remaining 15% were negative. The primary topics discussed by staff members follow.

#### *Facility - Staffing*

The majority of those interviewed and surveyed provided positive feedback about staffing. Staff felt they had sufficient training to provide services to women and children served by the shelters. They further stated that their relationships with colleagues and management were good and that staff roles and responsibilities were clearly defined by facility policies and procedures. Some staff said they were satisfied with the staffing levels at the shelter; however, others expressed dissatisfaction with staffing levels. A slightly lower number of staff expressed a desire for more training and more clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

### *Facility – Building/Services Provided*

Staff expressed satisfaction with the services provided to women and children in the shelters. They described positive relationships with residents, high quality meals and a safe, secure facility. Staff further reported having good programs for the women and children residing in the shelters. A few comments described the services provided as adequate. Areas of dissatisfaction highlighted by staff included a need for increased transitional supports (e.g. housing) and access to services (e.g. transportation) for residents.

### *Overall Feedback*

When discussing their overall satisfaction with the supports provided to residents during and after their stay at a women's emergency shelter, many staff highlighted that culture and ethnicity were well reflected in their services. Service providers further indicated that staff members were the strength behind their good programs. A need for improved wages and increased housing supports for residents leaving the shelters topped the list of negative comments made by staff members.

## ■ ***Feedback on Visits***

Service providers, including foster parents, staff members and facility directors, were invited to provide feedback on the Committee's visits. Visit feedback forms were mailed to each of the facilities with the pre-visit package. Of 237 visits, 41 individuals responded. The response rate for the visit feedback was low and, therefore, the results and opinions expressed cannot be generalized to all service providers who participated in reviews. Despite this, the information is still useful to the Committee members in assessing their preparation for interviews and visits in general, as it allows respondents to suggest areas for improvement.

The results from the feedback forms are summarized in Figure 21, on the next page. Responses were provided on a five-point scale, with one indicating not satisfied and five indicating very satisfied. When interpreting the results, responses one and two were considered negative, three was considered neutral and four and five were considered positive.

**Figure 21: Service Provider Feedback**

Question	Scale	Number of Responses	Percentage
1. How was the visit? How satisfied were you with the visit process?	1	1	2%
	2	0	0%
	3	6	15%
	4	13	32%
	5	21	51%
			<hr/> 41
2. Was the visit useful?	1	0	0%
	2	6	15%
	3	13	32%
	4	9	21%
	5	13	32%
			<hr/> 41
3. Is there anything that we could have done differently?	Yes	6	15%
	No	35	85%
		<hr/> 41	100%
4. Did you understand and receive enough information about the purpose of the visit?	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	5	12%
	4	12	29%
	5	24	59%
			<hr/> 41
5. Did you have enough time to speak to the Committee members?	1	1	2%
	2	1	3%
	3	6	15%
	4	10	24%
	5	23	56%
			<hr/> 41
6. Did you feel the Committee members were well informed about their job?	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	5	12%
	4	12	29%
	5	24	59%
			<hr/> 41

As you can see in Figure 21, on the previous page, participants were pleased with the visits and how they were conducted. Many described the visits as respectful, enjoyable, useful and informative. They also commented on the Committee's professionalism, willingness to listen and kind manner towards children. Service providers also indicated their appreciation for the opportunity to share their experiences and concerns. A few respondents noted that although expressing concerns felt good, the visits were only truly useful if participants' suggestions and recommendations have the power to influence change in government policy.

When asked whether anything could have been done differently with the Committee's visits, the majority of participants marked "no". It appears that most participants were satisfied with the visits in general. A few service providers were unable to participate in the interview process as the timing of the visits did not coordinate with their own schedules. The Committee understands that all staff may not be available to attend on the day of a review (e.g. shift work). Others expressed hope their input would be used to make changes to support service recipients and their families.

Service providers reported they had been sufficiently informed about the purpose of the visit and received enough information to understand what the Committee's visit would involve. One person suggested that a detailed questionnaire provided before the visits may assist participants in solidifying and summarizing concerns more efficiently.

Almost all participants stated they had adequate time to speak with Committee members and felt Committee members were well informed of their jobs. A few indicated they would have liked more time for the interviews for themselves or their colleagues. One individual stated that the visit was scheduled at an inconvenient time (near completion of the facility's accreditation).

**Typical Comments:**

- *I thought it was a great opportunity to for us to be heard.*
- *[Committee members] made us feel very comfortable.*
- *Committee members did an excellent job of explaining their purpose.*
- *[The visit] was informative and useful.*
- *Asking for feedback is a good idea.*
- *It was beneficial to voice my concerns.*
- *I had enough time...but some other staff members did not.*
- *The report should help us provide better service.*

## ■ ***Complaint Investigations***

The Social Care Facilities Review Committee conducts investigations into matters relating to a facility, as specified by the Minister. The Minister did not request any investigations in the April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007 review period.

During this review period, the Social Care Facilities Review Committee received one written and three verbal complaints. These complaints were regarding facilities outside the Committee's jurisdiction and were referred to the appropriate authorities. Thus, the Committee did not conduct or complete any investigations.

## ■■■ **Expenditures**

---

Total expenditures for the April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007 review period were \$258,350.90. This total includes honoraria, training, travel, accommodations, printing, courier and communication expenses for the Social Care Facilities Review Committee.

Each team of two Committee members spent between two and five hours conducting each facility visit and an additional one to two hours writing each report. The average cost per visit was \$1090.

## ■■■ **What Committee Members Heard**

---

### **Lori Brooks**

In this period, the Committee visited five different types of social care facilities. We found that the service recipients (e.g. foster children, youth in group homes, children in day cares/out-of-school programs) were generally satisfied with their accommodation care and treatment. The service providers expressed concern about low wages and the difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified staff. Day care owners/operators mentioned the challenges associated with completing the Accreditation program, however, confirmed their support overall for the standards that were being established.

We heard children talk about their care and treatment and saw warm and caring environments where foster parents were committed to being advocates for these children's futures. Foster parents conveyed the message that sometimes assessments of children are not as timely as they could be, therefore necessary supports cannot be accessed. Committee members heard that high turnover of staff within group homes remains a challenge.

Our visits as Committee members across this province have assured me that there are capable, committed, and dedicated service providers who endeavor to make a difference in the lives of the people they care for. Being Committee members allows us a unique privilege to offer valuable information to the Ministry and assist with the communication link between clients and the department.

### **Diane Caleffi**

This year the Committee visited five different types of social care facilities. We found that the service recipients (e.g. foster children, youth in group homes, women in emergency shelters) were generally satisfied with their accommodation, care and treatment. The service providers had a variety of concerns depending upon the facility. Foster parents want to be regarded as part of the decision making team. The dedicated day care workers reported they were struggling with low wages and very little incentive to upgrade skills. Service providers in women's shelters were enthusiastic about the variety of counselling and outreach programs they offer, but many had concerns regarding the availability of second stage housing for their clients. It was, however, encouraging to see staff at all the facilities strive for excellence in the face of these concerns and financial constraints.

### **Wayne Doan**

Committee members continue to encounter caregivers who are committed, effective and compassionate. It is our experience that children and youth in care are generally satisfied with their caregivers and the environments in which they live. Difficulty in transitioning from foster care and group home care to adulthood has been tempered by the significant uptake of youth in the Advancing Futures Bursary program. Continuing problems exist for those youth in care who have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in their transition to adulthood. Parents of children in day cares and out-of-school care programs are also generally satisfied with the overall care that their children receive. Committee members heard that outstanding issues remain in child care with regard to low staff wages, difficulties in recruiting and retaining trained staff, and difficulties in completing accreditation requirements.

### **Dawne Fowler**

Another year of visits has once again demonstrated that there are a vast number of loving, nurturing caregivers in our communities. So many foster parents, group home staff and shelter workers go above and beyond their duties to ensure the best possible outcomes for the children and youth in their care. Methods of delivering services are constantly changing as our societies change and it continues to be a struggle to modify and adapt quickly, effectively and efficiently. Service providers said that some treatment beds for youth with addictions have been opened and more are needed. Many youth are taking advantage of the Advancing Futures Bursary program. We need a better melding of that program and the Supports For Independent Living program. Our youth must be in the best position possible to succeed in the Advancing Futures Bursary program before beginning. Additionally, foster parents said they would appreciate a more efficient process to enable the

children and youth in their care to transition smoothly to new school jurisdictions. Accreditation within the day care industry is showing positive results. It is encouraging to meet parents who are aware of the process and provide their support. Committee members heard that wages and benefits for workers in all areas of Children's Services must continue to be enhanced in order to attract and retain qualified, dedicated staff. The future looks promising as we continue to look for new and innovative ways to provide for the needs of our children and youth who are in our care.

### **Lydia Graham**

This last year the Committee members visited foster homes, day care centres, out-of-school care facilities and women's emergency shelters. Foster parents visited were committed to the well being of the children in their care. For the most part they reported things were going well. Although they were positive about the support they received from support agencies, caseworkers, health and educational professionals, they would like to be more a part of the planning process for the children in their charge. Foster parents would like more recreational funding, particularly for older children. Some of the foster parents felt the transition program could be improved so that more of the children could remain in their foster homes as they completed their education. They also were concerned about the effect of the staff turnover. Most of the children were happy and felt safe with their foster parents.

Parents interviewed were happy with day care and after school care. Most parents would like to see meals provided by the facility operators. Many of the centres are working towards accreditation and staff members said they are looking forward to the benefits of their facilities being accredited.

At the group homes staff were dedicated, knowledgeable and committed to helping the youth in their care. Like the foster parents of older children, staff were concerned about a need for more support for youth transitioning to independent living.

Women in shelters were pleased with having a safe place for themselves and their children. However, the lack of affordable housing was an on-going problem in achieving independence. One of the major challenges across the entire spectrum of facilities and homes visited was staff turnover attributed to burn out and low wages.

### **Laura Hunt**

Upon completion of my first year as a member of the Social Care Facilities Review Committee, I can say with confidence that I have visited many excellent facilities in Alberta that are caring for children with a wide range of specialized needs. Although it is sometimes overwhelming to observe the extreme nature of the challenges faced by many of these children, there are many foster parents, group home staff members and day care providers that are meeting the needs of these young people. An important component of the information gathered from the service providers seems to consistently focus on

their desire to be valued as part of the Ministry team, in planning for the care and future of the children.

Day care workers often express the importance of being seen as more than just babysitters. Women's shelters are working hard to serve their clients, sometimes with limited resources, but no shortage of dedication. The urgent need for second stage housing is a continuing concern for the women and children in shelters. From a citizen's perspective, this Committee's mandate would be impossible to fulfill without the dedicated support staff at the Social Care Facilities Review Committee office. Their measured insights and positive feedback are consistently available and always appreciated.

### **Delina James**

After visiting the numerous foster homes and day cares in our designated area, our team was impressed with the positive responses from the foster children and from the day care parents. Very few concerns were articulated necessitating follow-up. We witnessed a high quality of care from all the service providers. These providers had few concerns. Foster parents told us they must advocate strongly to obtain mental health services for their foster children. In day cares, the level of staff remuneration is very low with respect to other careers. Overall, the visits went smoothly and the children's satisfaction and sense of well being was high.

### **Kelly Sackley**

As a Committee member this year I visited several foster homes and a few group homes where I met many wonderful children, youth, foster parents and workers. Children and youth commented on being satisfied with their care, accommodations and treatment. Foster parents appeared committed and want to be respected and valued in the decision making process. Staff retention in group homes and day cares continues to be an issue along with these workers feeling under paid. Parents of children in day cares and after school care seemed satisfied with the care their children receive.

### **Tracey Smith**

Being part of this Committee is an amazing learning process. No visit is ever alike. The children we encountered in group homes and foster homes are, for the most part, an amazing group of people. The adversities that they have overcome, the place they are currently at in their lives and the direction they are going, so focused and driven, these children are a joy and inspiration to talk with. Foster parents, another unique group of people, are committed to providing a warm, positive atmosphere for the children and youth in their care to expand and grow in. Foster parent concerns included the need for more foster homes and they provided suggestions to attract more people to the system. Concerns voiced by group home workers centered around wages, staff burnout and inability to find staff. Committee members heard that recent changes by the government are welcome, but work is still required in this area. During this period, we also visited day cares. For the most part, parents interviewed were satisfied with the care their children are receiving. Concerns

voiced by parents centered around low wages and retaining staff, issues voiced by day care workers also.

### **Nicole VanKuppeveld**

Our visits to the facilities specializing in day care, youth facilities and out-of-school care reveal that the heated Alberta economy is making it difficult for operators to maintain staff at competitive wages. Committee members heard that out-of-school care is the most difficult program to staff given the limited hours of operation and some operators expressed the concern that they will be unable to find qualified staff. Service recipients said that child care workers in Alberta should be amongst the highest compensated in the workforce.

Foster parents continue to amaze this Committee member with their around the clock dedication to children in need of safe and caring home environments. Foster parents expressed concern regarding frequent changes in workers and the need for increased input into the decisions affecting the children being cared for in their homes. Some foster families with Aboriginal children and youth expressed frustration at their inability to pursue private guardianship or adoption as permanency planning for First Nations children who are in care is complex and involves several factors.

### **Jean Wilkinson**

As I reflect over the past year, I continue to be amazed by the number of caregivers that we encountered who were capable, effective and compassionate. These valuable people are to be commended for the work they do with the children, youth and women in their care.

Each foster home and group home that we visited was unique, but one consistent was that the children in these homes were being supported and well cared for by deeply committed foster parents and staff members. The majority of children in care said they were comfortable and well cared for in their placements. Some children said that initially the transition into care was scary, but reported feeling happy now.

Most families with children in day care or out-of-school care programs were confident that they were leaving their children in the hands of caring workers, who provided a safe environment where their children participated in a variety of activities. Residents of women's emergency shelters were generally satisfied with the care and support they received during their stays. However, they highlighted a need for more available second stage housing.

I want to extend our thanks to all the individuals we spoke with over the past year for their candidness and hospitality. I have enjoyed meeting with so many dedicated people and appreciate the assistance in processing our Committee's work.

## ■ ■ ■ Changes, New Initiatives and Achievements

---

A number of changes, new initiatives and achievements took place during the April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007 review period.

The Committee was pleased to welcome two new members in April 2006, Laura Hunt from Edmonton and Tracey Smith from Calgary. Jean Wilkinson, Vice-Chair, held a conference call with the Alberta Foster Parent Association President Norm Brownell and Vice-President Sylvia Thompson in early May 2006.

On September 1, 2006 three youth in care came to a Committee meeting to share their stories with the Committee. Committee members were very moved and impressed by these youth. Lora Lea Gaborieau, Senior Manager, Child Development updated the Committee on September 21, 2006 on the progress of the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act Review. The Committee had submitted recommendations to the Chair of the Licensing Act Review last year.

One of the Committee members attended a workshop in October 2006, entitled Nurturing Hidden Resilience in Troubled Youth and Families. In order to obtain an opportunity to speak with children in the out-of-school care facilities, the Committee started sending consent forms to out-of-school care parents in February 2007.

The end of this year involved bidding farewell to Committee member, Diane Caleffi from Calgary on March 31, 2007. We thank Diane for her contribution and hard work with the Committee and wish her the very best in her future endeavours.

Committee members continued to expand their knowledge and skills by attending the following training sessions and guest speaker presentations:

### *June 2006*

- Committee members participated in Personality Types training using the Keirsey Temperament Sorter.

### *September 2006*

- Marty Neighbour, IBM Consultant, provided computer training.
- The Senior Manager of Standards and Practice, Richard Ouellet, made a presentation to the Committee on "Maintaining Children's Confidentiality While Addressing Issues with Service Providers".

### *October 2006*

- Ester Hudson, from Capability Connections Consulting, led a training session with members on "Dealing with Difficult People".
- Morris Chaban, Casework Supervisor, and Linda Goody, Emotional Behavioural Specialist, provided training on "Interviewing Skills".

## Acknowledgements

---

This report would not be possible without the children, youth and adults who contributed information through interviews, surveys, visits and report feedback. The Committee would like to extend its sincere thanks to each person who took the time to meet with them, fill out a survey and/or provide the Committee with written material. Each individual who shared their experiences, insights and concerns about services has contributed to the success of this report.

The Committee would also like to thank the Chief Executive Officers and staff in the Southwest, Calgary and Area, Edmonton and Area, Northwest, Northeast and Métis Child and Family Services Authorities. Their assistance in coordinating visits within their regions is invaluable and greatly appreciated.

It would be remiss not to mention those who provided training and information to the Committee this year. By sharing their time and expertise, they have assisted the Committee members in performing their duties and enhanced their skills.

In conclusion, the Social Care Facilities Review Committee members would like to extend their gratitude to staff from the Ministry of Children's Services. Without their help and dedication to the Committee's work, these reviews would not be possible. They are a credit to the Social Care Facilities Review process.