

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE IN A CHANGING WORLD

**GENERAL CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
AUTHORITY
ANNUAL REPORT
2019/20**



2019/20

WELCOME TO OUR 17TH ANNUAL REPORT!



generalauthority.ca



OUR AGENCIES



The General Child and Family Services Authority, along with the other three Manitoba child and family services (CFS) authorities – the Metis Child and Family Services Authority, the First Nations of Northern Manitoba Child and Family Services Authority and the Southern First Nations Network of Care – are responsible for mandating, funding and overseeing the services provided by CFS agencies throughout the province of Manitoba. At the General Authority, these services are provided by the following agencies:

- Jewish Child and Family Service (JCFS)
- Child and Family Services of Central Manitoba (CFS of Central)
- Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba (CFS of Western)
- Winnipeg, Rural and Northern Child and Family Services (WCFS branch and RNS branch)



The General Child and Family Services Authority would like to thank all of our agencies for their hard work in support of children and families over the 2019/20 year, despite some of the unique challenges they faced.

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**'THE BIGGER THE
CHALLENGE, THE BIGGER
THE OPPORTUNITY.'**



**Left the employment of the General Authority in 2019/20*

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

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It is my honour, on behalf of the board of directors of the General Child and Family Services Authority (General Authority), to present the annual report for 2019/20. It has been a year of challenge and change. I would like to thank all board members for their participation in the governance of the General Authority during 2019/20. Special thanks to former CEO Debbie Besant, who retired this year, for her tireless and commendable service.

I also want to express on behalf of the board our profound appreciation to Jay, his executive, the General Authority staff and agency directors for the way they managed the unique circumstances emerging from the onset of the virus pandemic that changed our world. The professionalism, proactive planning and consistent messaging and communication went far in establishing a foundation ensuring organizational competence and confidence in a very difficult time.

The General Authority remains committed to support quality child and family services delivered in ethical and transparent ways, ensuring involvement of children, youth, families, and communities in all decisionmaking and planning where possible.

We are committed to increasing our capacity to research leading practice, enhancing our ability to collect and analyze relevant data and ensuring robust outcome measurement. These goals are intrinsic to our core business.

Our overarching priority always remains that the best interest of children and youth must be seen in a context of family continuity, cultural safety and a lifelong commitment. We will work with our agencies and community alliances to develop service relationships that ensure safety and wellness for children and families and not isolation for those affected.

We look forward to a challenging and exciting 2020/21. We know that increasing community partnerships will assist our organization and talented staff to maximize our capacity to help and support.

I would like to sincerely thank our primary funder: the Manitoba government through the Department of Families as well as our other funders whose support allows us to provide supportive programming for children and youth: the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, the Scotia Capital Fund, the Ted and Loretta Rogers Foster Care Transition Program, and the CIBC Miracle Fund.

Sincerely,

Philip Goodman,
Board Chair

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Hello and welcome to the 17th annual report from the General Authority. I have been the CEO here since mid-January 2020. Previously, I was in this role from 2007 until 2014. I am humbled to again have the opportunity to lead this service system. During the time that I was the CEO of Marymount Inc. and then deputy minister of families (both jobs which I thoroughly enjoyed), a part of me missed being the leader of this organization. It feels great to be back and part of the General Authority family of service providers.

I would first like to acknowledge and commend my predecessor, Debbie Besant, for her strong leadership over the last six years. I am very impressed with the innovations and progress made over this time. I would also like to welcome Christy Holnbeck back as associate CEO. Christy previously served in a senior role at the General Authority from 2008 to 2014. She rejoined the General Authority team in February 2020 and I really look forward to working with her again as our service system continues to evolve.

The theme for this year's annual report is "Rising to the Challenge in a Changing World." I had only been back as CEO for a little over two months when our world changed in an unprecedented way when the Manitoba government declared a state of emergency. While I had been CEO during the H1N1 pandemic many years ago, I have not experienced anything like the COVID-19 pandemic. Never before has there been the potential for such a dramatic impact on our capacity to continue to deliver services and support families. I simply cannot express strongly enough my appreciation for the leadership of our agencies and their staff during this extremely challenging time. The General Authority's response to the pandemic was immediate and effective as we mobilized our agencies to plan and support each other. I was most impressed by the innovative thinking and actions taken by staff to ensure that children were able to safely stay connected with their families. For the future, there are many lessons to be learned here based on how our practice had to shift during this time.

Speaking of our world changing, just weeks before I started (or restarted) in my role as CEO, for the first time in our country's history, the federal government enacted national legislation for the delivery of child and family services for Indigenous children and families regardless of where they reside. The future impacts could be hugely significant as Indigenous Governing Bodies create their own child welfare legislation. This report describes the immediate impacts we experienced, the General Authority's response to date and what the future may hold. Additionally, there is child welfare transformation, announced by the premier in 2017. The General Authority has embraced transformation and, as described later in this report, has demonstrated great progress in advancing the four pillars of reform.

I am excited about what we can do in 2020/21. While we entered the new fiscal year at a time of great uncertainty, our board has set out clear priorities for moving forward. These include: continuing to expand our engagement with community to prevent children from coming into care, creating new opportunities to support permanence for children in our care, becoming an outcome and data-driven organization and listening to the children, youth and families about their experiences with our service system. I look forward to reporting on these priorities in next year's annual report.

In closing, I would like to thank our board of directors for their vision and ongoing support. I would also like to thank our funders and acknowledge the collaborative and strong leadership shown by our agency directors. In 2020/21, the General Authority will continue "rising to the challenge" as our world changes.

Sincerely,

Jay Rodgers, CEO, General Child and Family Services Authority



OUR CHANGING WORLD

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



In March 2020, the Manitoba government declared a state of emergency due to the presence of a novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Shortly after the state of emergency was declared, child welfare was identified as an essential service. Not since the 2009 H1N1 pandemic has the child and family services (CFS) system encountered a challenge with such potential to seriously affect our capacity to deliver services. This emergency required an immediate and co-ordinated response from the General Authority and our agencies.

Rising to the Challenge

(a) Collective Leadership

Immediately after the announcement of the state of emergency, the Directors' Leadership Table (DLT) mobilized to co-ordinate planning and provide consistent messaging across our service system. For the first few weeks of the pandemic, the DLT met via teleconference almost every day. The cohesive, collaborative and mutually supportive relationship between the Authority and our agencies was critical to ensure an effective response to this emergency.

(b) Emergency Pandemic Response Planning

With the support of the DLT, the General Authority immediately provided guidelines to assist each agency to prepare a contingency plan in response to the potential impacts of the pandemic. The General Authority Emergency Pandemic Response Plan guidelines included a template for agencies to prepare and update their plans. The Authority assigned a specific program specialist to work with each agency to support the development and monitoring of their detailed plan. The Authority also developed a definition of essential case management activity and set out the criteria and steps to be followed to determine when an agency may not be able to sustain essential functions. With the support of General Authority staff, each agency quickly completed a pandemic response plan utilizing the template and related materials. To support agencies, the General Authority assumed responsibility for co-ordinating the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) to agencies as supplies became available.

The CEO and associate CEO are members of the Emergency Management Team (EMT) comprised of representatives from the four authorities and the Child and Youth Services (CYS) Division. The EMT ensures that consistent communication and direction is provided across the CFS system. In March 2020, the EMT was meeting via teleconference three times a week.

(c) Contingency Plans in the Event of an Emergency Situation

The General Authority developed a three-level contingency plan should an agency be unable to ensure that essential services can continue. Based on a skills inventory prepared by the Authority, the Level I response is to deploy General Authority staff to support the delivery of essential services at the agency level. Level II would involve a reallocation of resources from one or more General Authority agencies to support their colleague agency in an emergency. Level III is to seek support from other authorities and the Department of Families.

OUR CHANGING WORLD

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



d) General Authority Internal Organizational Response

To limit potential exposure to the coronavirus, the General Authority followed Manitoba Public Health advice and implemented a number of internal organizational changes. A rotational in-office work schedule was established and the Authority took steps to support staff working at home. Visits to the office were restricted and in-office all-staff meetings were suspended. All in-person training was put on hold and the Authority enhanced its capacity to conduct business and training virtually.

e) Communication and Transparency

If the CFS system is to respond effectively to this unprecedented situation, clear, regular and consistent communication is essential. This requires a co-ordinated approach involving agencies, authorities, the CYS Division and Public Health. In March 2020, on the advice of Manitoba Public Health, the CYS Division began developing circulars to guide practice and support the safety of staff, children and families. The DLT reviewed each circular before distribution to ensure consistent interpretation and implementation across our service system. Occasionally, the General Authority provided additional written clarification with a circular and prior to distribution, the DLT often prepared a common response to questions that were anticipated from staff and/or caregivers.

Early on during the state of emergency, the CEO of the General Authority committed to provide regular updates via a system-wide email. All circulars, practice guidelines and a version of the CEO message are posted on the General Authority website. As of the end of March 2020, the DLT was meeting twice a week and the EMT was planning a series of town hall meetings with the chief provincial public health officer.

(f) Lessons Learned

It is clear that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will continue well into 2020/21. It is important that as a service system, we critically examine how effective our responses have been. It is also important to consider how practice may be different in the future as a result. For example, one of the biggest challenges during the pandemic has been ensuring that visits continued. Our agencies responded to this challenge by finding innovative and safe ways for children and families to stay connected. This is an example of one of the most significant changes that occurred because of the pandemic: the increased use of technology to do our work (e.g. - virtual meetings, virtual contact with children and youth and web-based training). Further, the General Authority is working with our agencies to reduce administrative burden by streamlining administrative processes and delegating increased authority to the agency level.

As we emerge from the state of emergency, it is vital that we learn from this experience. The General Authority will lead this process in 2020/21 and consult with our agencies to learn about the positive and negative experiences associated with having to work differently during the pandemic. Look for more in next year's annual report.

OUR CHANGING WORLD

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ENACTS CHILD WELFARE LEGISLATION



In January 2020, An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families (often referred to as Bill C-92) came into force. Because it is legislation enacted by the federal government, the federal legislation takes precedence over provincial laws. If there is an area of conflict or inconsistency between federal and provincial laws, the federal act will prevail. The federal legislation applies to child welfare services provided to Indigenous children and families, regardless of where they reside.

One of the primary purposes of this new federal legislation is to affirm the inherent right of self-government by enabling an Indigenous group, community or people to pass their own legislation for the delivery of child and family services to their community members. Sections 20 through 24 set out the process for this to occur. The legislation requires that an Indigenous Governing Body (IGB) provide notice of the Indigenous group, community or people's intent to exercise this legislative authority. Any law of an Indigenous group, community or people that comes into force will have the force of federal law. This means that the federal legislation will prevail over provincial laws. The law of an Indigenous group, community or people can only come into force if an IGB has entered into a tripartite co-ordination agreement with both the federal and provincial governments or has not entered into such an agreement after making reasonable efforts to do so over a 12-month period.

A second overarching goal is to establish national principles and standards to guide the provision of child and family services for Indigenous children and families. These are set out in Sections 8 through 17 of the legislation. The new legislation covers national principles for the best interest of an Indigenous child, cultural continuity, substantive equality and for the placement of Indigenous children. It also puts an emphasis on prevention and the importance of prenatal care for expectant parents. While the current structure for the delivery of child and family services in Manitoba is not immediately affected by the federal legislation, all existing mandated agencies must now provide services for Indigenous children in accordance with the national principles. It also does not change in any way the jurisdiction of the courts in Manitoba or the legal procedures set out in Manitoba's Child and Family Services Act. Agencies and the courts must now ensure that the national principles have been considered when making any decision that affects an Indigenous child.

Section 12 has had a particular impact on day-to-day practice in Manitoba's CFS system. This section requires agencies to serve notice before taking any significant measure in relation to an Indigenous child. This is a new expectation for agencies to follow.

Rising to the Challenge

This is historically precedent setting. Never before has there been national legislation for the delivery of child and family services across Canada. While the full impact may not be fully known for years as Indigenous laws come into force, there are immediate implications for Manitoba's CFS system. As approximately 30 per cent of children in the care of General Authority agencies are of Indigenous descent, our agencies are directly affected.



OUR CHANGING WORLD

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ENACTS CHILD WELFARE LEGISLATION

An immediate priority is for the General Authority to help our agencies understand the immediate and potential impacts of the new legislation and support them to comply with the national principles. Education and training is vitally important. Shortly after the law came into force, the federal government released educational materials which the General Authority distributed to all our agencies and posted on our website. Going forward, the General Authority intends to host interactive webinars with our agencies to provide detailed information on the new legislation and respond to questions or concerns that may have arisen now that it has been in force since January 2020. Further training materials will be developed as more becomes known about how this precedent-setting legislation affects our service delivery system.

Given the clear expectations set out in Section 12 (requiring notice of a significant measure), in February and March of 2020, the General Authority worked closely with the DLT to develop an authority specific policy statement. From a quality assurance perspective, this is to ensure that all General Authority agencies have a consistent understanding of when a notice should be sent and that there is a standardized process in place for doing so.

The General Authority will continue to monitor the emerging implications of the federal legislation and will respond with new policies, information sharing and training as we learn more. Watch for an update in next year's annual report.



'THIS LEGISLATION WILL RECOGNIZE FIRST NATIONS JURISDICTION SO THEY CAN BUILD THEIR OWN SYSTEMS BASED ON THEIR OWN GOVERNANCE, LAWS AND POLICIES. OUR FOCUS HAS TO BE ON PREVENTION OVER APPREHENSION, AND KEEPING CHILDREN CLOSE TO THEIR CULTURES AND FAMILIES... THE TIME IS LONG OVERDUE FOR FIRST NATIONS TO FINALLY REGAIN RESPONSIBILITY OVER OUR CHILDREN.' — PERRY BELLEGARDE, NATIONAL CHIEF, ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

OUR CHANGING WORLD

CFS TRANSFORMATION



In October 2017, Premier Brian Pallister announced a plan to transform the CFS system in Manitoba. The “Transforming Child Welfare in Manitoba” document cites four essential pillars of reform. These are:

1. Enhanced prevention through greater mobilization and engagement with communities.
2. Lifelong connections through reunification and permanence.
3. Funding for results.
4. Legislative reform.

In December 2019, the Families Minister released the “12-Month Action Plan for Manitoba Families.” The document describes the CFS transformation:

“The goals of this transformation are to strengthen and preserve families in their community, reduce the number of children in care and shorten the amount of time that children spend in care.”

The 12-Month Action Plan states further:

“While these goals are simple to state, implementing the systemic transformation necessary to make a real difference is one of the most challenging policy problems facing our department.”

Rising to the Challenge

The announcement of the transformation strategy is clearly setting out a renewed path for child and family services in Manitoba. So what has the General Authority done since the announcement, and more specifically in 2019/20, to “implement the systemic transformation necessary” to achieve the strategy’s fundamental goals of preserving communities, supporting families and reducing the number of children in care? Further, how successful have we been in achieving those goals? Here are the 2019/20 highlights organized by each pillar of transformation.

Pillar 1 – Engaging Community and Strengthening the General Authority Practice Model

(a) Mobilizing Community Through Safety Networks

For the last several years, the General Authority has been implementing a new child welfare Practice Model that incorporates decision-guiding assessments with an approach to working with families that emphasizes community engagement and collaborative decisionmaking.

A key component of the Practice Model is the use of standardized assessments. The General Authority uses four of the Structured Decision-Making® (SDM) assessments designed in collaboration with experts from the U.S.-based Children’s Research Center. Assessments guide decisionmaking and the choice of certain actions based on the impact observable behaviours have on the safety of children. Gathering and communicating this information helps families to understand the behavioural changes that are expected and increases the likelihood that they collaborate in the development and implementation of the case plan. This collaborative approach is a key element of developing service plans that result in children remaining safe at home or being successfully reunified with their parents/guardian.

OUR CHANGING WORLD CFS TRANSFORMATION



An example of the positive results of Safe Decision Making (SDM) tools

'I believe because the mother was so heavily involved in the case plan, she had been properly set up for success. If I was not able to rely on the SDM tools, I may not have felt good about the direction it was going. Now, the mother and I have a great working relationship where she often calls me for support and to check in, without me scheduling a meeting.'

— Rural and Northern CFS worker

While gathering consistent and objective information is vitally important, working with families is more complicated and nuanced than an assessment can capture (no matter how well-designed). As the quality of the relationship between worker and caregiver is the most important factor affecting the likelihood of a successful child welfare intervention (preserving the family by preventing the need for more intrusive involvement or achieving a timely reunification), the General Authority recognized the need for an underlying practice philosophy and approach to assist workers to collaborate with families. Building on the seminal work of Australian child protection consultants Andrew Turnell and Steve Edwards, the General Authority developed a practice framework to complement the use of the standardized assessments. Every General Authority agency offers practice training that incorporates solution-focused principles, a strengths-based focus and family engagement.

'Winnipeg CFS continues to promote and strengthen the understanding and use of SDM and the Practice Model through ongoing training and practice reviews. Leading practice specialists deliver an orientation for all new case-carrying staff and students on a yearly basis. The orientation consists of case management standards, SDM, Practice Model training and an introduction to Safe and Together.'

As the Practice Model has evolved, a foundational element is now broader community engagement to mobilize natural support networks that come together to ensure that children remain safe at home with their parents or guardian. Networks also play a critical role in supporting the reunification process.

'I found this experience to be very strengths-based and positive. A good step toward reunification.' — family member being served by WCFS

Safety planning for children is most effective when the process involves more than just the people whose behaviour we are most worried about (those that may have caused harm to the child). Through training and mentoring, staff gain the skills to co-create case plans that involve all members of the family and other community members who are important and care about the child. The family's network of informal and formal community supports come together to ensure a plan is in place that can preserve families and keep children safe over the long term. Families and their community networks are the best and most natural way for children to experience safety and nurturing.

OUR CHANGING WORLD

CFS TRANSFORMATION



Building a safety network begins at the first point of contact with families. Staff ask about about supportive relationships with family, service providers and other community members who may be willing to participate in safety planning. As the relationship with the family builds, workers continue to explore specific actions that extended family, friends or others from the community can take to ensure the immediate and ongoing safety of children. Using a strengths-based perspective, network members help co-create and monitor the safety plan, mobilize a network response as issues arise and contact the agency if the worries become too great for the network to handle on its own.

'Thank you for taking the time - I felt heard and included in the process, which was difficult.' — family being served by JCFS

'A little bit of relief, knowing that CFS knew how much support I had and realized that.... I may be a single parent but not really a single parent because I have supports that are there to help me.' —family being served by WCFS

Over the last two years, General Authority agencies have been expanding their capacity to engage community members in safety planning for children. Agencies have created new positions to focus on assisting front-line workers to co-create safety networks with families (e.g. - family engagement facilitators, safety network facilitators and/or family finders). The role of the network facilitator is to identify, with the family, who should be part of the safety network. Ultimately, safety network members are the people who will take action to ensure the child's ongoing safety, and who the child recognizes as a safe and supportive person. While meeting regularly is critical while a CFS agency is involved with the family, the most effective safety networks continue to support the family after the CFS file has been closed.

'The family engagement process puts families more in control of decisionmaking that affects them. Our trained family engagement facilitators have a role in working toward our agency's goal of improved family partnerships to support the safety and well-being of their children. Families are far more likely to follow plans that they have had a key role in developing.' — CFS of Western

(b) Community Based Prevention

The General Authority would like to recognize the Department of Families for supporting the development of two community based prevention initiatives in 2019/20. For both, Families staff worked in partnership with community organizations to seek their wisdom, expertise and innovative thinking. These are exciting examples of how the community can be supported and effectively engaged in prevention work.



OUR CHANGING WORLD

CFS TRANSFORMATION

Granny's House is a pilot project that provides 24/7 access to out-of-home temporary respite care for children, so parents can deal with the challenges and stresses they may be facing in their daily lives. Granny's House recognizes the practical need for parents to have a break to do normal everyday activities while their children are cared for in the community, by the community. Staff hired from the community include a full-time granny (housemother) and several aunties (support workers) to help the housemother in providing care for the children. A case manager works with community partners to connect families with other needed resources. Granny's House was developed by Gwekaanimad, a partnership of five community organizations in the north end of Winnipeg.

The second example is the **Community Helper initiative** which will provide 24/7, culturally relevant services for families and caregivers residing in Winnipeg's inner city who are experiencing challenges that could result in a child coming into care or leaving their current placement. Through facilitated family-led planning, in-home crisis counselling and skill-building exercises, community helpers support the stability and wellness of families by establishing trusting relationships outside the formal system. Through these relationships, families and caregivers will feel supported, valued and empowered to access additional services when needed.

In her former role as senior project lead within the Department of Families, the General Authority's current associate CEO, Christy Holnbeck, worked with community organizations to help bring these initiatives to life. Since her return to the General Authority in February 2020, she has continued to support the implementation and evaluation of these two initiatives.

An example of prevention from CFS of Western
'Our community liaison social worker is embedded in our Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre and offers prevention and early intervention for vulnerable community families. This position delivers our TLC (Talking, Learning, Caring) program, open to families from all authorities. This is an open group for families who are in crisis and/or have recently become involved with the CFS system. This also serves as an introduction to parenting courses available at the family resource centre.'



(c) Strengthening the Practice Model - Safe and Together™ Training

A recent addition to the Practice Model framework has been the Safe and Together approach for working with families affected by domestic violence. Many families who become involved with the child welfare system also experience domestic violence. Children are especially vulnerable to domestic violence and can experience trauma, even if they do not directly witness it. Historically, child welfare has struggled to intervene with families experiencing domestic violence without bringing children into care.



OUR CHANGING WORLD

CFS TRANSFORMATION

With the Safe and Together approach, workers partner with the survivor of domestic violence and hold the perpetrator accountable for the harm children may have experienced. Staff are trained to map patterns of coercive control behaviour and survivors' acts of protection. Workers clearly communicate their worries, and how the perpetrators' patterns are negatively affecting the family and the children. Informing the safety network about these patterns and acts of protection can help members to intervene early to support the family and prevent the need for children to come into care.

In 2017, a cohort of 40 mentors completed a ten-day training hosted by General Authority and facilitated by the Safe and Together Institute. This included staff from the General Authority and our agencies, staff from the All Nations Coordinated Response Network (ANCR) and staff from a domestic violence shelter. The General Authority mentored, then developed and delivered training to staff based on the principles and components of the Safe and Together approach.

Over the course of 2019/20, the General Authority continued to expand its ability to further implement the Safe and Together approach. In May of 2019, four staff within the General Authority system (two at the Authority and two agency staff) became certified trainers with Safe and Together. In 2019 and early 2020, the four-day core training was offered to staff from Winnipeg CFS, CFS of Western Manitoba and CFS of Central Manitoba. With the four certified trainers now in place, this course will be offered throughout 2020/21 as the General Authority continues to enhance our response to families affected by domestic violence.

(d) Strengthening the Practice Model - Coaching Institute

To further build on the Practice Model framework, in 2019/20, the General Authority hosted two sessions with the Children's Research Center focused on the development of coaching skills. Effective coaching can deepen practice by bringing out the best of people's skills and abilities. One session was offered in September 2019 and the second in January 2020. These sessions involved a three-day intensive workshop for supervisors, managers and others currently in coaching roles. There was also a one-day overview offered to front line staff so they had a sense of the types of coaching conversations they could expect to have with their supervisors. These sessions were specifically designed to develop coaching skills that directly reflect the key elements of the Practice Model. Feedback from participants was very positive.



The value of coaching from CFS of Central Manitoba

'This past year, we continued to work towards further embedding the Practice Model. We recognized that in order to support staff in making this shift, they needed the ability to reflect on their practice. We hired a coach to work with our staff. Each individual staff determines what practice skills he/she would like to develop further. Feedback from staff is that the coach helped increase their confidence and allowed them time to reflect and be intentional when meeting with families.'

OUR CHANGING WORLD

CFS TRANSFORMATION



Throughout 2020/21, the General Authority will continue to build on and enhance our coaching capacity across our service system.

Why we need to continue to strengthen our Practice Model — supervisor at JCFS:

'Despite early struggles, as a supervisor I have witnessed meaningful changes in ways my staff interact with their families and each other since the Practice Model was incorporated into day-to-day practice. Families feel more involved with charting a path of safety through case plans that are realistic and attainable. One family member said 'the system appears to be more transparent.' Families also say they understand our agency's worries because we express them in a manner that is respectful and free from jargon and assumptions. The Practice Model provides a framework to build trusting partnerships and strengthen the lives of our families.'



Pillar 2 – Lifelong Connections Through Reunification and Permanence

For lifelong connections through permanence, we would like to highlight two initiatives: one is a potential major policy shift that the General Authority began researching in 2019/20, and the second is Wendy's Wonderful Kids, which is a program unique to the General Authority.

(a) The Potential of Supported Guardianship

In March 2020, with the support of DLT, the General Authority signalled its intent to explore the possibility of creating a supported guardianship program. Similar programs are available in other provinces and in more than 40 states. Supported guardianship can be another option (in addition to adoption) for creating lifelong connections for children and youth currently in care. The evidence overwhelmingly shows that when children have a permanent connection to a family member or significant person or persons who provide a stable and continuous family environment, those children are likely to develop into healthy adults.

The General Authority staff team will update inter-jurisdictional research to document how supported guardianship programs operate across North America. This research will focus on outcome studies to assess the success of these programs and what program features enhanced the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes for children. The goal is for this research to inform the development of a "made in Manitoba" guardianship support program. Watch for an update on this initiative in next year's report.

OUR CHANGING WORLD

CFS TRANSFORMATION

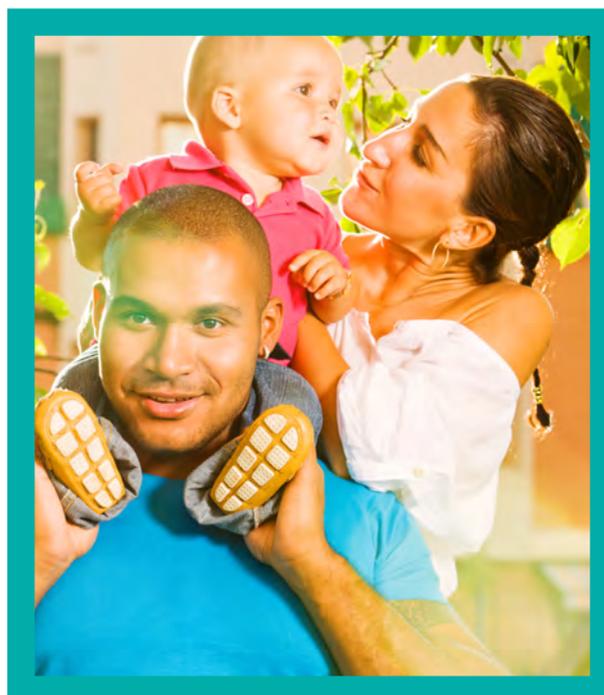
(b) Wendy's Wonderful Kids

The General Authority is in its seventh year of partnership with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (DTFA). The DTFA provides grants to public and private agencies in Canada and the United States to hire Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiters. The WWK program experienced significant change in 2019/20 with the retirement of the full-time recruiter and the program supervisor. The General Authority seconded a full-time recruiter, hired a part-time recruiter, and re-assigned the supervisory role to a program specialist.

Throughout the program, the focus has been on ensuring permanency for children in care through the Child-Focused Recruitment Model; and building partnerships with agency staff and community collaterals over the past year. The program met its adoption goal in the 2019/20 year. Additionally, three children are currently in adoption placements awaiting legalization.

An innovative approach to establishing permanency — CFS of Western

'Intensive Permanency Services (IPS) is an approach to working with youth to promote healing of relational trauma so that they are able to re-connect with family and build lifelong support. IPS is an intensive, youth-led process to achieving permanency. Under Single Envelope Funding, we have been able to hire two IPS workers who work with up to eight youth at a time. It's up to a two-year process with structured phases at the youth's pace. This approach has elements of permanency and family finding.'



Pillar 3 – Funding for Results: Single Envelope Funding

General Authority agencies first had experience with Single Envelope Funding (SEF) in 2017/18 when it was introduced as a block funding pilot. For the first time in 2019/20, all General Authority agencies were part of the SEF funding approach.

Single Envelope Funding (SEF) represents a hugely significant policy shift in how authorities and mandated agencies are funded in Manitoba. Under SEF, each authority now has more discretion to determine the distribution of funding to each of the agencies under its jurisdiction. Received as a “block” SEF allows agencies to have stable, predictable and most importantly, flexible funding over the lifetime of the contribution agreement. Agencies will have increased autonomy to utilize funding in new and creative ways to meet the needs of our children, youth and families. Agencies will be able to redirect and reinvest resources (within their budget and based on actual expenditures year over year) to support the development of innovative programs and supports to achieve key strategic objectives.

Creative use of SEF — An example from CFS of Central

'Last winter, we began working towards making stronger connections for our children in care by creating a position to help build those connections. Our building connections worker has been working with 14 permanent wards. This work involves searching for family and significant others to create a network around our children who will continue to support them beyond their time in our agency's care. One of our children said that all children should get this type of support. We are very excited about the potential for expanding this type of program as we move forward with SEF.'

In 2019/20, the four authorities engaged in discussions with the Child and Youth Services (CYS) Division regarding a contribution agreement to support the full implementation of SEF. Additionally, the General Authority began the extensive policy and procedure development to create the financial framework needed to further support these positive changes in 2019/20. This important work continues into 2020/21 for full implementation of SEF. The other key development in 2019/20 occurred late in the fiscal year when the General Authority developed a proposed set of indicators intended to measure the success of SEF. With SEF, it is critical that the Authority assess whether this major policy shift has achieved the desired results. As of March 31, 2020, the General Authority was in the process of finalizing the SEF indicators document in consultation with the DLT and the CYS Division.

Pillar 4 – Legislative Reform

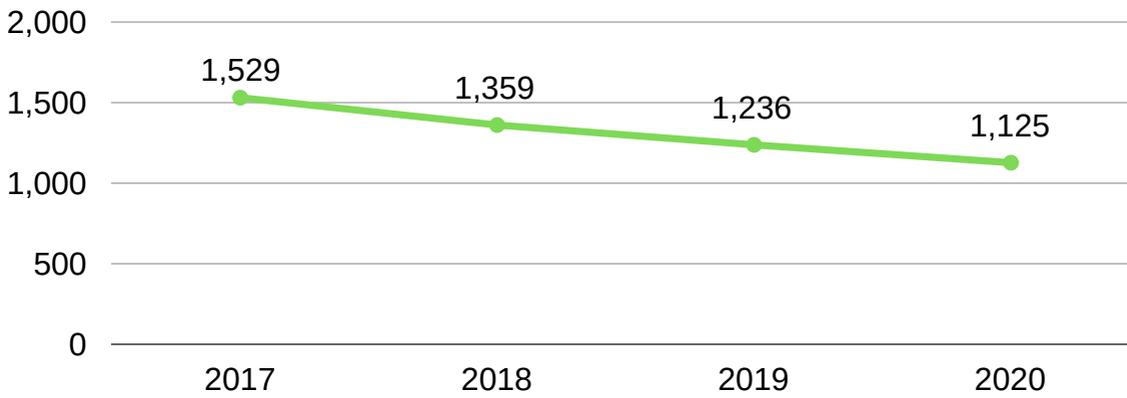
In December 2017, the Minister of Families appointed a seven-person committee to conduct a comprehensive review of Manitoba's legislation for child and family services. Over the course of four months, the Legislative Review Committee consulted with over 1,500 individuals, authorities, agencies and other stakeholders. The committee released its report with recommendations in September 2018. During 2019/20, work began on drafting new legislation based on the committee's 63 recommendations. This was led by the CYS Division with regular updates provided to the authorities through the CFS Standing Committee.

2019/20 SERVICE TRENDS



One of the fundamental goals of child welfare transformation is to reduce the number of children in care. Using 2017 as the base year, the following chart shows that the number of children in care with a General Authority agency has reduced in each of the last three years. On March 31, 2020, there were 404 fewer children in care than on March 31, 2017. This is a 27 per cent reduction achieved in three years (average annual decrease of 9.7 per cent). It should be noted that, with one exception¹, every General Authority agency had fewer children in care in 2020 compared with 2017.

***Number of children in care as of March 31**

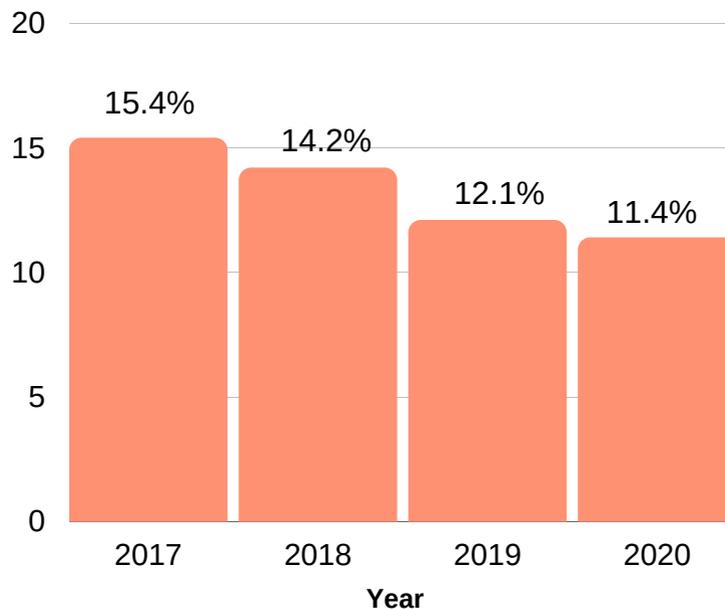


*Source: Department of Families Annual Reports

¹Exception: Jewish Child and Family Service (four more children in care in 2020 than 2017).

Another measure for tracking child in care trends is to look at the percentage of all children in care who are with a General Authority agency. As the following table shows, this percentage has also been decreasing in each of the last three years. In 2017, over 15 per cent of all children in care in Manitoba were with a General Authority agency. As of March 31, 2020, just over 11 per cent of children in care were with a General Authority agency.

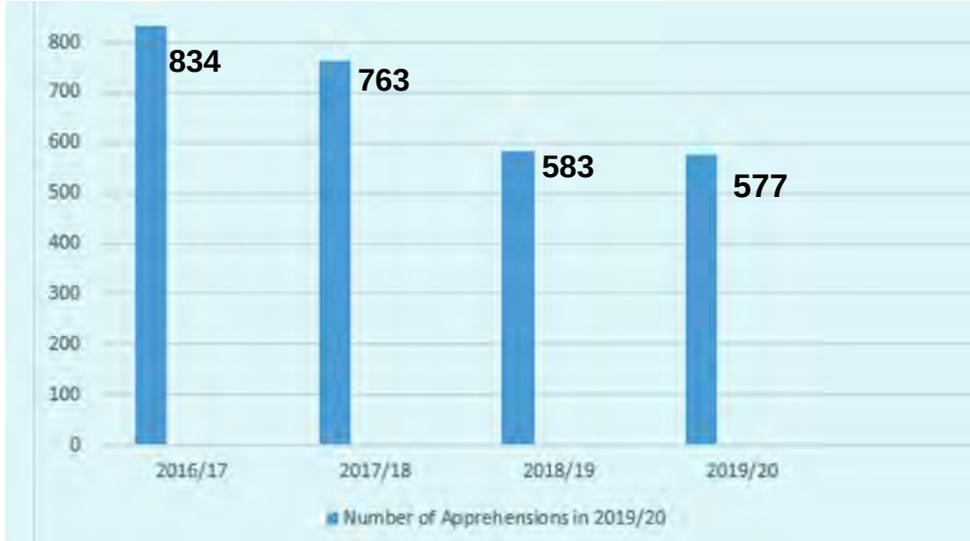
Percentage of all children in care with General Authority Agencies



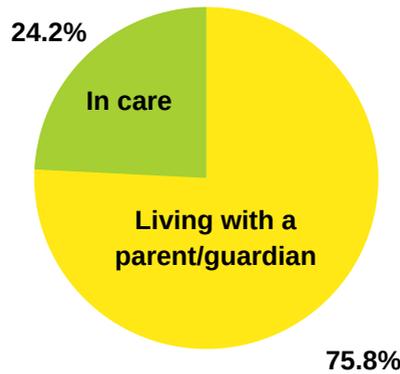


2019/20 SERVICE TRENDS

The General Authority has also tracked the number of children coming into care in each of the last four fiscal years. As the table below shows, there has been a steady decline in the number of children being apprehended in the last three years. In 2019/20, General Authority agencies apprehended 257 fewer children when compared with 2016/17. This represents an overall 31 per cent reduction in the number of apprehensions when comparing 2019/20 with 2016/17.



The General Authority is showing positive results related to early intervention with families. In early intervention, a General Authority agency is working with a parent or guardian to prevent children from coming into care. As the chart below shows, as of March 31, 2020, more than 75 per cent of children being served by a General Authority agency are living with their parent or guardian. Only 24 per cent of children receiving service are in care.



Further, our analysis shows that, in those situations where a General Authority agency is working with a family and all of the children are living at home, 92 per cent of families still had all of their children at home 12 months later. This shows how engaging early intervention supports can help prevent the need for children to come into care.

Another positive trend that emerged in 2019/20 is the length of time it takes for an agency to reunify a child with his or her family after coming into care. Using the median, in 2019/20, on average the length of time from a child coming into care to being reunified with family was 159 days. This compares with an average of 204 days in 2018/19 (22 per cent reduction in length of time to reunification).



I am pleased to present the 2019/20 finance report and audited financial statements. The General Authority continues to be a financially stable organization. Our auditors, Magnus LLP, have once again provided an unqualified opinion that the financial statements "*present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Authority as at March 31, 2020 and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards.*"

In 2019/20, the General Authority began reporting under full Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) and no longer reports using fund accounting. This policy change was initiated by the Provincial Comptroller's Office in their assessment of the General Authority's organizational structure that determined the General Authority is a controlled entity of the province under PSAS by virtue of the families minister's role in appointing board members. This change created an opportunity to provide clear and concise reporting that more effectively demonstrates the financial position of a public service entity.

2019/20 saw the transition from the block funding pilot project into Single Envelope Funding (SEF) of all CFS authorities, taking another step toward "Funding for Results." The General Authority's mandated agencies saw positive results during the pilot, leveraging funding flexibly to reallocate resources to new initiatives and programs.

SEF expands the block funding model beyond child maintenance to include operations and other program funding. 2019/20 is the first year that child maintenance funding flowed through the Authority to the agencies, creating alignment between the funding method and The CFS Authorities Act. The successful programs and initiatives started under the block funding pilot will continue under the new SEF method.

SEF provides flexibility in budgeting for the service areas of child welfare; expanding on the ability to reallocate monies for new and innovative programming and initiatives, and expansion of existing services demonstrated to improve outcomes for children, youth and families through prevention, reunification, and lifelong connections. Another benefit includes fixed funding over three-year agreement cycles, which enhances funding predictability, allowing agencies to plan with greater certainty over periods of three years rather than only 12 months.

These significant shifts to results-based funding require extensive policy review and development, procedure development, and reporting to successfully implement the new funding method and ensure its benefits are realized. This important work continues into 2020/21.

Ultimately, SEF is a positive move to achieve "Funding For Results," one of the four pillars of child welfare reform in Manitoba. The General Authority and its agencies are in a positive financial position to maximize the benefits of SEF by supporting service delivery to generate positive outcomes for children, youth and families.



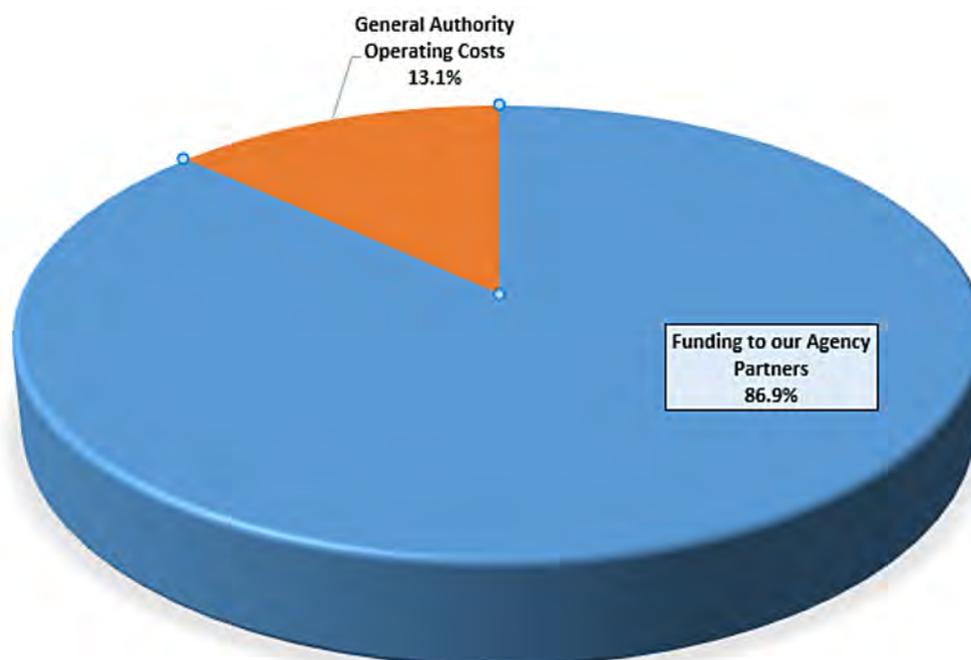
The CFS system in Manitoba relies on numerous entities to do their part in order for the system to function, which results in a need for ongoing collaboration, partnership and engagement. Finance plays a major role in supporting the ongoing success of the system. Throughout 2019/20, the General Authority participated in finance-related discussions including the following:

- Biweekly finance meetings with senior representatives from the four authorities and the Department of Families throughout 2019/20.
- Weekly meetings with the Authority Child Maintenance Advisory Committee (ACMAC) and associated working groups.
- Quarterly agency finance meetings in 2019/20 with meeting frequency increasing to monthly in 2020/21 to support SEF implementation.
- Regular finance meetings between authority CFOs.
- Participation in committees and working groups with the Child and Youth Services (CYS) Division and other authorities.

I want to thank our previous Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Andrew Lajeunesse, who is now comptroller of the CYS Division, and our equally capable CFO Louis Nault and financial analyst Lyvine Laysa. I also wish to thank our CEO Jay Rodgers and our Minister of Families Heather Stefanson, her deputy minister and assistant deputy ministers as well as our administrative partners in the Department of Families.

On behalf of the entire organization, thank you to all our funders, other partners and management and staff for their commitment to making 2019/20 a successful year.

Craig Johnson,
Treasurer & Finance Committee Chair



*For detailed financial information for 2019/20 or previous years, please visit our website at generalauthority.ca.



AGREEMENTS WITH YOUNG ADULTS

The General Authority recognizes the challenges and complexities that youth in care face as they are transitioning to adulthood and independence. Agreements with Young Adults (AYAs) are one way the General Authority assists youth as they are transitioning to adult independence. Between April 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020, there were a total of 255 AYAs supported by the General Authority. The General Authority is committed to assisting young adults who require support beyond the age of majority to attain their goals and ensure they have adequate support networks and life skills for a successful transition to young adulthood.

TUITION WAIVERS

Since the initial launch of the tuition waiver program in 2012, it has grown larger each year, with an increase of post-secondary institutions participating, along with an increase of tuition waiver spots available. The following outlines program numbers in 2019/20:

Post-Secondary Institution	Tuition Waiver Spots Offered	2019/20 Graduates
University of Manitoba	10 new spots each year	1
University of Winnipeg	Caps tuition waiver program at 30 spots	4
Red River College	10 new spots each year	3
Manitoba Institute of Trades & Technology	5 new spots each year	2
Brandon University	Caps waiver program at 10 spots	1
Assiniboine Community College	No caps to program or number of waivers offered yearly	1
University College of the North	Caps waiver program at 5 spots	1
St. Boniface University	Caps waiver program at 5 spots	1
Booth University College	Caps program to 1 spot	0

The 2019/2020 academic year featured new supports for tuition waiver students on AYAs. Manitoba Education and Training (MET) and the Department of Families partnered to broaden supports for current and former youth in care pursuing post-secondary studies in Manitoba. MET became the first funder for students supported by AYAs for living and education-related funding. CFS agencies continued to assist students on AYAs to ensure that the full range of required supports were available, including ongoing case planning, specialized rates, therapeutic services and support worker costs. From April 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020, 14 students supported by an AYA (or who had at one time been in care of a General Authority agency receiving tuition waivers) graduated from their programs.



AGREEMENTS WITH YOUNG ADULTS: TED'S STORY

Ted is a young man who came into care at a young age due to his mother's passing in 2009. He grew up cared for by his grandparents, as his father was absent from his life. Though he had the support of his grandparents, it was still up to him to achieve the goals he set out for himself.

Ted worked hard at school to achieve the highest marks possible, as well as express his natural talents in music. He attended voice lessons, multiple bands and choirs and music theory. He also worked part-time and participated in extracurricular activities. His hard work was acknowledged not only by agency supported funding and scholarships, but multiple scholarships, bursaries and cash awards from his high school.

With the help of these funds, Ted completed his first year at university in a music program, maintained his high grades while working part-time and successfully lived independently on campus.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the university's dorm shut down and Ted had to find a new place to live. This young man went to many apartment viewings on his own, while his independent living worker and permanency planning worker helped as much as they could remotely. Ted found himself a safe, comfortable apartment that is close to his support network, which was his main priority. Ted managed to save money and budget accordingly, allowing himself to maintain his basic needs without struggling, after his place of work shut down. He found another job and continues to do work he enjoys.

With the help and support of his agency workers, Ted decided he wanted to find a career with many employment opportunities, post-graduation. With this in mind, he was accepted into computer science, and will be starting in his new field in September 2020.

As Ted's story shows, he exudes success in everything he does. Not only are his academic achievements impressive, his ability to maintain employment while also maintaining a regular social life with an abundance of friends and supports shows how well rounded this young man is. Ted would be an amazing mentor to other youth in care.

His independent living worker and permanency planning worker are grateful to work with and support such a wonderful young man.

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.*



'HE WOULD BE AN AMAZING MENTOR TO OTHER YOUTH IN CARE.'

SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS



The General Authority and the Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada

The General Authority has an ongoing partnership with the Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada (CAF), which provides funding for programming and awards for children and youth across Canada. This partnership assists children and youth receiving services from General Authority agencies with funds to support school-related expenses, enrichment activities and to support children in care.

Ignite the Spark — is the newest fund offered by the CAF. The General Authority began making this fund available in mid-2019. Ignite the Spark is intended to provide enrichment opportunities for vulnerable children and youth. The fund supports sports and athletics, recreation, arts and cultural programs these youth would not otherwise have the opportunity to explore. A three-year allocation will be made available for each child, if funding is available, so that children are able to develop their talents in a particular area. The philosophy of the fund supports the idea that being good at something can be the spark to build a child’s self-confidence.

2019/20 amount disbursed: \$5,746

Funding to the General Authority is generously provided by donations from CIBC, Scotiabank and the Ted and Loretta Rogers Comfort Care Transition Program.

Ted and Loretta Rogers Comfort Care Transition Program — helps children and youth coming into care by providing them with backpacks containing foundational, age-appropriate essentials. All children and youth receive a teddy bear and a blanket. Additional funding is available in order to personalize the “comfort kits” depending on need.

2019/20 amount disbursed: \$36,370

CIBC Miracle Fund — assists children and youth with exploring enrichment activities to enhance their physical, mental, social and developmental well-being. Activities include arts/cultural lessons, music lessons, summer camp, sports/recreation activities and travel costs associated with events such as band or school trips.

2019/20 amount disbursed: \$16,574

Scotia Capital Fund — this fund, made possible through Scotia Capital, helps “at-risk” and disadvantaged children and youth to access academic assistance in order to promote success in school. Students graduating from Grades 8, 9 and 12 can receive awards for their hard work. Stay in School awards are made available to elementary through high school aged students who have overcome significant challenges and are doing well in school. Scotia’s Leap to Learning fund allows children in the care of/receiving services from CFS agencies funding for tutors to help them overcome academic difficulties and meet their educational goals.

2019/20 amount disbursed: \$19,233



SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS



Vision Catcher’s Fund — this fund, from the Department of Families, helps youth in care develop their strengths, potential and pursue career goals. Funding is available through the General Authority for youths ages 16-21 who are either in care or on an Agreement with Young Adults (AYA) to enhance their skills/talents or further their career goals. Funds can be used for: accessing post-secondary education, job search assistance, taking on an apprenticeship program or other studies/training.

2019/20 amount disbursed: \$28,132

The General Authority would once again like to recognize the outstanding generosity of the CAF for making so many opportunities possible for children and youth in care.



LETTERS TO OUR FUNDERS



Thank you very much for the generous donation I received. I appreciate the time you spent on making this possible. I finally was able to go out with my dad to pick out the basketball system as unfortunately our season was cut short due to COVID. The timing was perfect and the weather has cooperated, so I'm finally able to use my net. The total cost was three hundred and twenty dollars which I will provide a receipt for. My mom and dad chipped in the difference for me. I think the Ignite the Spark Fund is really helpful to kids that are in family services just like myself.

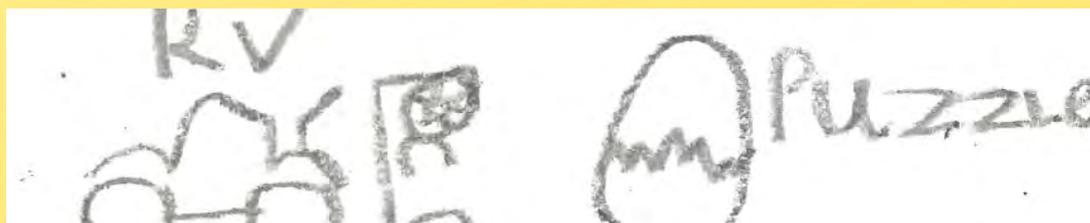
You truly made a difference for us and we are extremely grateful, thank you for making it happen.

I would like to extend my thank you to the donors and the CIBC Miracle Fund for giving me this opportunity. Your very generous donation assisted in contributing to the expenses of a new laptop for school. This laptop will help me throughout High School and my future learning as I am planning on going into secondary education.

My three siblings and I live in the same foster home. Being the older sibling, I have the responsibility of setting good examples for them. Going to classes regularly and caring about your education is very important for their futures as well as mine.

Thank you 😊

I loved the teddy bear also the backpack the toothpaste, band-aids and toothbrush I really loved it. The fake nails were great I was hoping for them. I loved the fluffy purple blanket was great. Loved the purse I have one but you can never have to much purses.

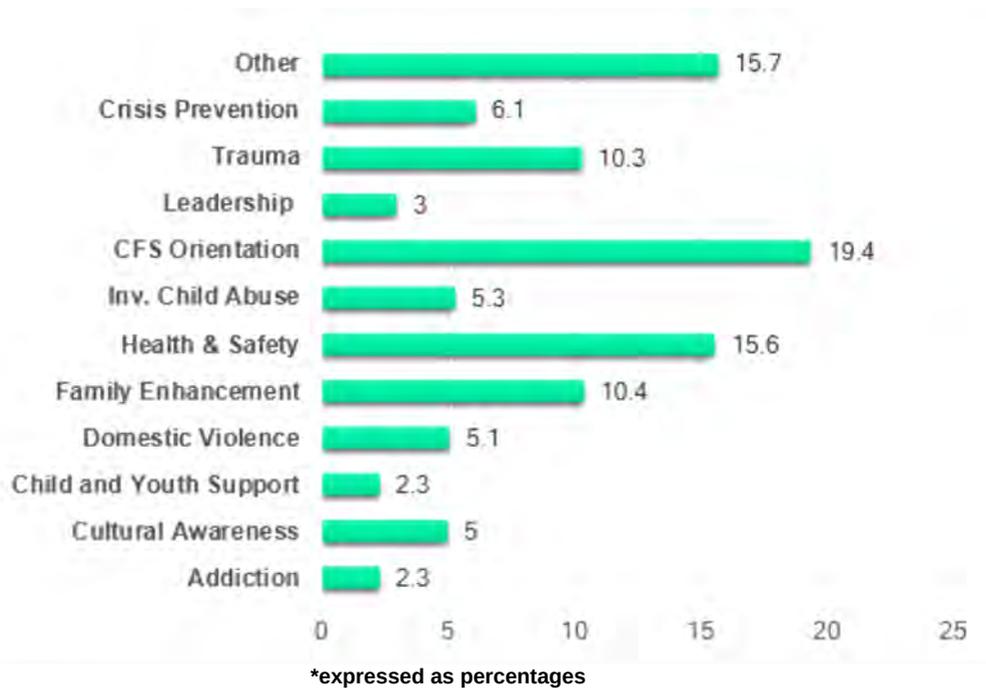




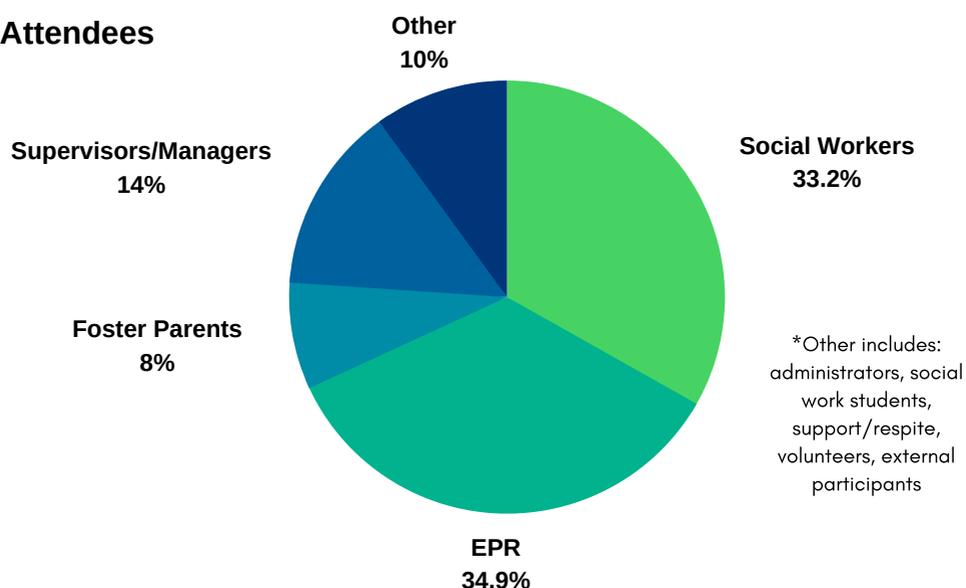
The General Authority recognizes the ongoing need to continue to develop skills and competencies through education and training. In collaboration with its agencies, the General Authority is proud to continue to offer a variety of training opportunities. Our goal continues to be the enhancement and improvement of services to the children and families that we serve. Many of the training sessions offered are considered foundational and are held on a regular basis in each fiscal year. This includes training in the areas of the Practice Model (including Structured Decision Making), standards, domestic violence, attachment, trauma, addictions and more. The sessions are attended by social work staff, managers/supervisors, foster parents, respite workers, support workers, EPR staff, administrative staff, volunteers and community collaterals.

The General Authority continues to value the partnerships with the First Nations of Northern Manitoba CFS Authority, Metis CFS Authority and the Southern First Nations Network of Care; along with the CYS Division in the ongoing work of developing and delivering joint training.

2019/20 Type of training



2019/20 Breakdown of Attendees





KIM THOMAS AWARD



Florence Okwudili, Chair of the Coalition of Manitoba Cultural Communities for Families (CMCCF)

Each year, the Kim Thomas Award is presented to one community member or CFS staff member who works diligently with newcomers and refugees in the area of community engagement and creating connections with CFS. The award recognizes a leader whose work has helped strengthen the relationship between the child welfare system and cultural communities in Manitoba.

The award is named after former General Authority practice specialist Kim Thomas, who worked on the New Canadian Awareness and Education Initiative, which was created to raise awareness and provide accurate information about Manitoba's parenting laws and the CFS system to newcomers. This year's Kim Thomas Award is presented to Florence Okwudili, Chair of the Coalition of Manitoba Cultural Communities for Families (CMCCF). Okwudili began attending meetings of the CMCCF on behalf of the Nigerian community in Manitoba. She has worked closely with African youth in Winnipeg, helping them to attain educational goals.

Okwudili was an instrumental force in building and developing the new CMCCF, becoming involved when it was still called the New Canadian Initiative. She has been board chair for two years. She is also working in the area of community mental health challenges for newcomers.

"I always had the interest in community," says Okwudili, who came to Canada with her husband and three small children in 2000. "I wanted to get involved."

Okwudili says when she came to Canada, she and her family didn't have anyone to lean on and "I didn't want others to go through that." She became involved in the immigrant refugee community and took a leadership training course through the City of Winnipeg. It was helpful, she says, for her to learn more about how things worked in government. "I became more visible and active in the community." One of her goals is to help African communities in the city "flourish."

She helped students become more involved in debating and swim clubs and Folklorama, and as she met more refugees and immigrants, "I ended up being involved in some family issues." She knew that she could be a link between what was happening in her community with what to expect when working with service providers. Okwudili got involved in the CMCCF in part because she wanted to focus on helping to strengthen newcomer families.

"When there is a breakdown in a family, it affects the community. One of her areas of focus within the CMCCF is to help communities to flourish. She is especially interested in immigrant mental health and wellbeing. "If the children are doing well, it contributes to the community."



La Régie générale a terminé la quatrième année du Plan quinquennal des services en français, qui prendra fin en 2021. Au cours de l'année 2019/20, la Régie générale a continué d'offrir au public des services dans les deux langues officielles. En collaboration avec nos agences, nous avons priorisé notamment l'offre active, qui consiste à accueillir les membres du public de façon à ce qu'ils comprennent qu'ils peuvent être servis en français, et la co-opération avec la communauté francophone. Nous continuons d'assurer la capacité d'offrir des services en français lors du recrutement et de l'embauche de nouveaux employés. Ces derniers reçoivent une orientation et ont accès à de la formation relative à l'offre active. La revue de nos publications et de nos initiatives de communication tient compte la nécessité d'une composante bilingue.

Le site Web de la Régie générale comprend un avis d'offre active qui attire l'attention du public sur la possibilité d'obtenir des services en français. Les services en français sont toujours à l'ordre du jour des réunions de la Directors' Leadership Table, un comité composé du cadre supérieur de chacun des offices désignés. Des employés de la Régie générale et de Santé en français étaient présents aux réunions semi-annuelles du comité.

Les agences de la Régie générale ont identifié les co-ordonnateurs des services en français et la Régie générale a confirmé la présence dans les bureaux d'affiches indiquant l'offre de services en français. Une partie de la formation obligatoire des nouveaux employés traite de l'offre active. Au cours de l'année 2019/20, des représentants des agences ont également participé aux réunions de la table ronde régionale ou à des comités liés à l'offre de services en français.

Une priorité essentielle pour 2020/21 sera de mettre à jour notre site Web en y ajoutant la traduction française de pages pertinentes. Reconnaissant que nous n'avons pas encore atteint tous les objectifs du plan stratégique, nous poursuivons les démarches entreprises dans le but de mieux servir en français la collectivité francophone.

The General Authority has completed year four of our five-year French Services (FLS) Plan that runs until 2021. In 2019/20, the General Authority continued to offer services to the public in both official languages. Working with our agencies, our priorities included using the Active Offer (greeting the public so they are aware they can receive services in French), and collaborating with the Francophone community. We continue to ensure that capacity for FLS is a consideration during the recruitment and hiring process. New staff receive orientation and access to training regarding the Active Offer. The review of our publications and communication initiatives includes the need for the bilingual component. The General Authority website includes an Active Offer notification that alerts the public to the capacity to offer services in French. FLS is a standing item on the agenda for our Directors' Leadership Table meetings. There was attendance at bi-annual meetings between the General Authority staff and Santé en français.

General Authority agencies have identified FLS co-ordinators and the General Authority has confirmed that offices have signage declaring the capacity for FLS. The Active Offer is part of the mandatory training for new staff. In 2019/20, agency representatives also attended the regional round table meetings or committees related to FLS.

A key priority for 2020/21 will be to update our website with relevant pages translated into French. With recognition that not all of the goals of the strategic plan regarding provision of services in French have been achieved, we will continue the endeavour to better serve the Francophone community.

For previous annual
reports, please visit
generalauthority.ca.

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**'Integrity is choosing
courage over comfort.
It's choosing what is
right over what is fun,
fast, or easy. It's
choosing to practice
your values rather
than simply
professing them.'**

—Brené Brown

