

February 22, 2013

Ms. Elsie Flette  
Chief Executive Officer  
Southern First Nations Network of Care  
2nd Floor, 630 Kernaghan Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R2C 5G1

Dear Ms. Flette:

Re: Manitoba SDM Service Decision Matrix

I am writing to bring to your attention to ANCR's concerns regarding the SDM matrix approved by Standing Committee in the fall of 2012. It is our opinion the use of the matrix in its current form has the potential to negatively impact the system's ability to provide appropriate service to children and families.

As required ANCR staff completes a "safety plan" in all situations where there is a yes to any one of the 18 safety factors outlined in the safety assessment. This results in numerous case situations where children are "conditionally safe/safe with a plan."

The matrix recommends that all cases where children are deemed "conditionally safe/safe with a plan" regardless of the PFH level are to be open for services under Part III of the Child and Family Services Act as a Protection case. Regardless of how appropriate and protective a parent may be in our follow-up with that family we are required to transfer that family for ongoing service under Part III of the Act.

This will have a significant impact on the number of transfers from intake and our abuse program where safety assessments/plans are required in several cases.

Similarly ANCR has contact with many families where youth are experiencing mental health issues and may be expressing suicidal ideation. In such circumstances safety assessments and safety planning occur with that youth and family resulting in youth being "safe with a plan". Regardless of how proactive and protective a parent may be the matrix would suggest that family must receive service under Part III.

Three elements of the exclusionary criteria have in ANCR's view the potential to limit the appropriate streaming decisions for some families. The criteria remove any capacity for professional judgement in case dispositions. There are situations where there may have been a serious non-accidental injury to a child in the family where the caregiver was not the individual who caused the injury. In such circumstances a referral to FE or community resources might be the appropriate response but this option is prohibited by the criteria. Likewise there are circumstances where a child in the family may be in care and the family is very willing to engage to resolve the issues. An alternative approach to the traditional "investigative" response may be in the family and child's best interests. Unfortunately a differential response is not an option for these families given the exclusionary criteria. There are also cases in which there is an on-going protection investigation but the primary caregiver is cooperative with the agency and acting in a protective capacity. This is particularly the case involving third party allegations. The exclusionary criteria regarding an ongoing child protection investigation could prevent families from receiving preventative or supportive services as they would be automatically streamed to the protection stream.

ANCR is requesting the Southern Authority bring our concerns to Standing Committee with a view to having the current matrix reviewed and amended to reflect the issues we have raised with its implementation.

If you would like further discussion on this matter please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Sandie Stoker  
Executive Director

Cc: Penny Smith