
Standards

for

Youth Support Services and Agreements



Ministry of Children and Family
Development

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About the Standards

Purpose

This document sets out the Ministry's standards for services to youth provided by delegated representatives of a director under Part 2.1 of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CF&CSA)*: "Youth and Transitional Support Services and Agreements". The purpose of the standards is to promote consistent high-quality service to vulnerable youth in need of assistance that includes assessment for and provision of:

- short-term and longer-term "support services for youth" under section 12.1 of the *CF&CSA*, and
- longer-term support services through "agreements with youth" under 12.2 of the *CF&CSA*.

"Youth" as defined under the *CF&CSA* means a person who is 16 years of age or over but is under 19 years of age.

Context

These standards reflect a youth-centered approach that focuses on meeting the needs of youth through maximizing their participation in the service process. This approach seeks to build resiliency and self-reliance within youth in need of assistance, while building on the strengths and resources that exist in the youth's family and community.

These revised standards replace the existing "Practice Standards for Youth Agreements". As with the *Child and Family Service (CFS) Standards*, these standards were revised to be consistent with the ministry's strategic shifts, best practice as identified through current research, and international accreditation standards. They reflect:

- changes in the Youth Agreement eligibility regulations now in effect;
- practice shifts regarding working with youth (i.e., differential response);
- recommendations from the Evaluation of the Youth Agreement Program (2002); and
- a move to less prescriptive "standards" that provide greater room for supplementary regional policy.

These standards are written in context to other Ministry standards. In particular, reference to *CFS Standards* are made at various junctures throughout the document where it enhances or supplements Youth Service practice.

Organization and Format

Standard statements describe practices required of delegated social workers. They appear in shaded boxes throughout the document. The supplementary comments that follow the standards are not required practice, but rather:

- inform best practice;
- support interpretation or operationalization of the standard; and
- make reference to supporting resources, forms, assessment and planning tools.

The standard statements use language consistent with international accreditation standards (e.g., COA). The standards describe a measurable occurrence or outcome that can be observed. It is expected that file documentation (paper and electronic) provides evidence that such an event or outcome was achieved. The establishment of procedures for how this event or outcome is attained is left for Regions to address. Tools and forms are for the most part suggested, as opposed to required.

Another feature of this format is minimal reference to decision-making authorities or approval levels (e.g., supervisor or manager). The approach taken in the standards affords greater flexibility in practice within locally/regionally-developed service delivery

models. Regions are developing their own accountability processes that include approval procedures for critical decisions.

The standards in this document are meant to be "interim" in nature pending further work being completed on "accreditation standards". It is intended that this "interim" version be piloted for approximately six months to allow time for staff feedback/input/consultation and required revisions to the standards.

Wherever possible, reference **weblinks** for recommended resources, forms and tools have been provided. Most resources cited within this document are available through the Youth Services MCFD intranet site at

icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yse/v/index.htm

About Youth Services

Overview

“Support Services for Youth” under Section 12.1 of the *CF&CSA* can provide a wide array of supports and services including contracted services for outreach and safe houses. Although delegated Ministry workers may make referrals to such contracted supports for youth in need of assistance, they also provide initial assessment and direct short-term supports to these youth under Section 12.1.

If youth are not reconnected to their family through short-term 12.1 supports, the youth are further assessed for their need for longer-term service support while they receive 12.1 supports.

If a longer-term service plan is developed to assist youth with family re-integration, they may continue to receive 12.1 supports to further the plan. These supports could involve youth-family mediation or a contracted youth support worker, possibly in conjunction with other Child and Family Services, such as a “kith and kin agreement” or a “voluntary care agreement”.

It is only when a youth cannot return to family and are assessed as eligible to enter a Youth Agreement, that a delegated representative of a director may provide direct supports under *CF&CSA* Section 12.2 through entering into a written agreement with the youth. A Youth Agreement (YA) is a longer-term service plan that comprehensively supports a youth to make a successful transition to independence without bringing them into the care of the director. Although a YA can be used to effect a return to family, the overall goal within a YA is to assist youth with a *Plan for Independence* while ensuring the safety and well being of the youth. YA's are voluntary and must be in the youth's best interests, and require the agreement of the youth and the director's representative.

A Youth-Centered Approach

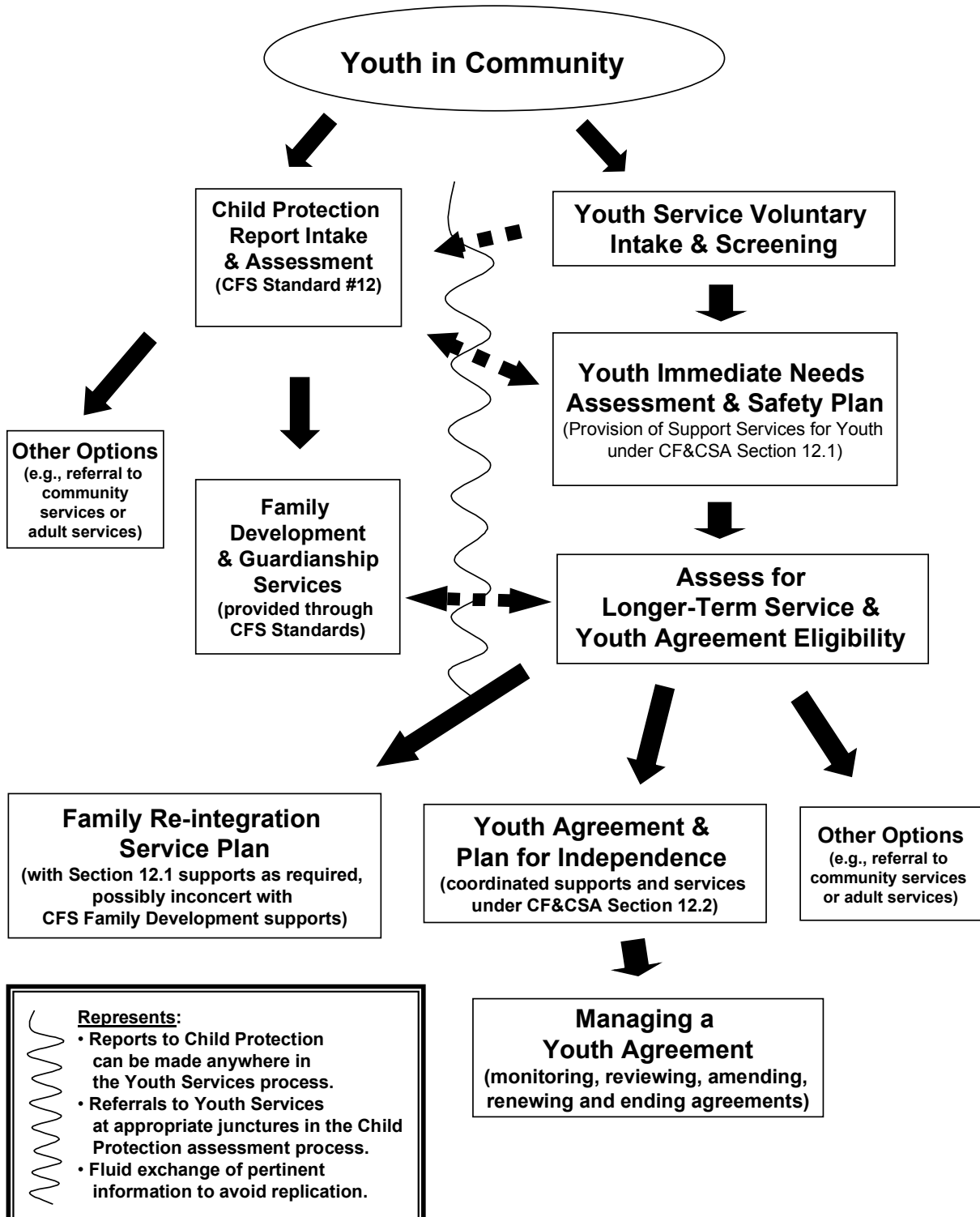
Within the context of the guiding principles, service delivery principles and best interests of youth outlined in the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, a youth-centered approach is recommended for successful working relationships with youth. Some key aspects of a youth-centered approach are as follows:

- building on existing relationships in which youth have already developed a significant level of trust;
- the development of relationships based on mutual respect, consensus and agreement;
- youth empowerment, participation, accountability, responsibility and commitment; and
- a youth-driven, transparent process that instills ownership.

For more information on strategies for working effectively with youth, refer to the *Guidelines for Provision of Youth Services*.

The Youth Service Process

The chart below illustrates the service pathway within services provided under Standards Youth Support Services and Agreements (right side) and the interface with other services provided under Child and Family Service Standards (left side).



GENERAL STANDARDS

1. Delegation of Workers for Youth Services

STANDARD 1
DELEGATION OF WORKERS FOR YOUTH SERVICES
A person with the required delegated authority provides youth support services and agreements.

Delegation Considerations

The CFCSA Delegation Matrix (Dec 2002) (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/cfdev/delegation.htm) specifies Category 3: “Resources and Voluntary Services” as the minimum delegation level for workers establishing support services for youth (under s. 12.1). Category 4: “Guardianship” is the minimum delegation level for workers screening and establishing agreements with youth (under s. 12.2). In many cases, however, screening for Youth Agreements (“YA’s”) will happen simultaneously with the screening and establishment of support services for youth. Youth will often be receiving interim support services while being screened for the need for longer-term service plans (such as a YA). Thus, Category 4 delegation better addresses the multiple needs of youth.

However, if a worker with Category 4 delegation is working with **self-referring and community-referred youth**, they may often require consultation with Category 5 or 6 workers who have at least “Partial Child Protection” in situations where:

- self-referring youth disclose risks that need assessment under s. 16 of the Act,
- a youth requires a protective intervention order under s.28 of the Act, or
- it is assessed that a kith or kin agreement may be the preferred longer-term service plan.

Consequently, if regional offices wish to have the fewest number of social workers involved with screening self-referring and community-referred youth and developing service plans, a minimum delegation of Category 5 is advisable. Once a YA has been determined as the preferred service plan, the case could be referred to a Category 4 worker.

For **youth who have been the subject of a child protection report**, they will have already been assessed and screened by a Category 5 or 6 worker, and a “youth service response” will have been determined as the most appropriate response. In these circumstances, Category 4 delegation would likely be sufficient to move forward with service planning. If, however, additional risk factors should surface during the case-planning/management process, consultation with another worker with Category 5 or 6 delegation may be required.

The following table provides an abbreviated listing of various CF&CSA functions by category of delegation as they are directly involved or peripherally associated with youth support services and agreements. Other required functions related to Part 3 and 4 of the Act would be directed to workers providing Child Protection or Guardianship Services.

CFCSA SECTION	DESCRIPTION OF AUTHORITY	C3	C4	C5	C6
YOUTH SERVICE REFERRALS, INTAKE, SCREENING, ASSESSMENTS & SHORT-TERM SAFETY PLAN					
12.1	Establish support services for youth	✓	✓	✓	✓
16 (1)	Receive and assess reports under s. 14, 15 and 27			✓	✓
16 (2) (a)	Offer supports to a child and family			✓	✓
16 (2) (b)	Refer to community agency			✓	✓
16 (2) (c)	Investigate a child's need for protection				✓
28	Protective intervention orders			✓	✓
LONGER-TERM SERVICE PLANNING OPTIONS					
12.1	Establish support services for youth	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Establishing family support service agreements	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Voluntary care agreements	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Special needs agreements	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Agreements with child's kin and others				✓
YOUTH AGREEMENTS					
12.2	Agreements with youth		✓	✓	✓
98	Restraining orders		✓	✓	✓

2. If a Youth is Aboriginal

STANDARD 2

ABORIGINAL YOUTH

If a youth is aboriginal, the youth's cultural identity is preserved and promoted through the involvement of the Aboriginal community and agencies in the assessment, planning and delivery of services.

Youth Services and Aboriginal Communities

When determining whether Youth Services are in the best interests of an Aboriginal youth:

- Consider available aboriginal services/community resources available within the youth's home/community.
- If the youth has access to services from an aboriginal child welfare agency, consider what Youth Service type supports (e.g., Youth Agreements) can be provided by that agency.

Specific requirements and practical considerations in working with an aboriginal youth are provided in Standard 11: "Developing a *Plan for Independence*" and Standard 12: "Developing a Schedule A (and other Financial Aspects)".

Refer to *CFS Standard 2: "Children and Families from Aboriginal Communities"* (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/manuals/cfd_policy/cfd_service_standards.pdf) for other detailed considerations on involving Aboriginal community and delegated agencies in the assessment, planning and delivery of services.

3. Case File Management

STANDARD 3
CASE FILE MANAGEMENT
All major activities and decisions that transpire within the youth support service and agreement process are adequately documented on file.

Major Activities

Depending on the individualized response to a given youth's circumstances, major activities and decisions within the youth service and agreement process include:

- referrals received, intake and screening;
- assessments;
- short and longer-term service planning;
- supports provided and referrals made;
- consultations with family, practitioners and others involved with a youth; and
- service plan monitoring and management.

Adequate Documentation

Adequate documentation implies that the youth's record contains information necessary to provide appropriate services, address the organization's accountability requirement and comply with legal requirements.

Open and Integrated Case Management

In most cases, a youth has the right to access their file information at any given time, with adequate notice to the delegated worker. It is only in cases where file information may cause harm to the youth or another individual when a worker might consider protecting that information.

Providing copies of important pieces of documentation to youth within the youth support service or agreement process (beyond what is required in these standards) can support an open and transparent contracting practice with youth. This is particularly important when documentation describes mutually agreed expectations and commitments (e.g., short and longer-term service plans and written agreements).

For information on the use of integrated case management and information sharing among community partners, refer to the Ministry's *Integrated Case Management User's Guide* (www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/icm/users_guide_1.htm) and the *A Guide to the Privacy Charter* (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/manuals/privacy_charter/pc_final_guide.pdf)

Case File Organization

Refer to Youth Services intranet site to view Ministry filing guidelines/format for "Youth Service Case Files" at icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/docs/filing_guidelines.pdf.

Systems Information

Within the SWS/MIS (*Social Worker Systems within the Ministry Management Information System*), all youth involved with intake, screening, assessment and support activities in Youth Services, short of entering a YA, are assigned a legal authority code of "SSY" (Support Services for Youth under CF&CSA section 12.1). Once a YA has been signed under section 12.2 of the Act, the system legal authority code for a given youth is changed to "YAG". For more detailed information on Youth Service electronic file information, refer to the *Systems User Guide* (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mgmtserv/docs/24Youth.pdf).

SCREENING, ASSESSMENT AND SHORT-TERM SUPPORTS

4. Youth Service Referrals, Intake and Screening

STANDARD 4
YOUTH SERVICE REFERRALS, INTAKE & SCREENING
<p>For each presenting young person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the age, needs and current circumstances are initially assessed by personnel with required delegated authority to determine their need of assistance, and the most appropriate initial course of action is taken, including referrals as required.• basic personal information is obtained and confirmation of youth identity placed on file with pertinent referral documentation.• a Prior Contact Check is completed and consultation is conducted as required with Child Protection/Family Development services, Ministry of Human Resources (MHR), community service providers and others who have had involvement with the youth and/or the youth's family. <p>Personnel with delegated Child Protection authority are involved when young persons in need of assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• are under 16 years of age and there is an absence of parents/family to appropriately care for the young person,• are the subject of a Child Protection report, or• require a higher level of protection than can be provided through youth support services or agreements.

Referrals

Youth participation in youth support services and agreements is voluntary, and access is intended to be "open". Referrals to Youth Services may be received from the community, MCFD staff, contracted agencies, and youth themselves and may involve multi-disciplinary assessments (e.g., youth addictions, mental health and/or probation).

There are two Ministry access points to Youth Services that provide screening and assessment to ensure the safety of a given youth in need of assistance: 1) Youth Services Intake (if developed in your community), and/or 2) Child Protection Intake. In most circumstances, regardless of where intake occurs, it is intended that Youth Services and Child Protection personnel (if not the same person) along with other relevant practitioners work closely together to determine the services appropriate for a presenting youth. Refer to Standard #1 of this document for more information on delegation requirements.

Four *Child and Family Service (CFS) Standards*

(icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/manuals/cfd_policy/cfd_service_standards.pdf) may bring a worker to this standard on Youth Service Referrals, Intake and Screening:

self-referring and community-referred youth

- *CFS Standard 1: "Screening and Best Approach to Service Delivery"*
- *CFS Standard 7: "Support Services to Strengthen Capacity"*

youth who are the subject of a child protection report

- *CFS Standard 12: “Assessing a Child Protection Report and Determining the Most Appropriate Response”*
- *CFS Standard 15: “Youth Service Response”*

Basic Personal Information

For the purposes of Youth Service intake, “basic personal information” is considered those data fields contained within the *Youth Services Intake* form (CF0705). This information is essential to conducting an initial screening for service.

Youth Identification

Many youth in high-risk situations may no longer have identification (“ID”) on their person. It is extremely difficult to support youth without proper ID. In addition to being unable to determine the most appropriate way to support the presenting person (i.e., through Youth Services or Child Protection services), a youth cannot enter into a Youth Agreement, nor can they open a bank account to receive money without proper ID. The *Identification Information Package* has been designed to assist youth with obtaining various forms of primary and secondary ID (e.g., birth certificate, Social Insurance, Medical Services CareCard, BC ID, driver’s license). This package is available at icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/youth_id.htm.

Prior Contact Check

A Prior Contact Check is meant to determine whether:

- Child Protection is involved (including an active protection investigation underway) focusing on the safety and well-being of any of the following:
 - the youth themselves;
 - the youth’s siblings; or
 - the youth’s child.
- the presenting youth is receiving services through Ministry of Human Resources (MHR).
- community service providers and others involved with the youth may have key information to assist with initial screening for service.

If a Prior Contact Check indicates an active Protection investigation is underway, consultation with the investigating Child Protection worker is necessary prior to contacting the youth’s family and community members, so that:

- an ongoing investigation is not jeopardized,
- necessary information can be exchanged, and
- an appropriate plan of action can be determined.

If the youth is receiving services through MHR, consultation with a MHR worker would provide the status and details of such services and benefits, so that services provided might be complementary.

Courses of Action Based on Initial Screening

Options following initial screening include:

1. Proceed with Youth Services with or without involvement of other practitioners.
2. Refer to/initiate Child Protection/Family Development services.
3. Refer to community services (including adult services, income assistance, addiction services, mental health services, medical services).
4. No further action (youth’s needs can be met by family/extended family).

Documentation would include supporting rationale for screening decisions and immediate actions taken.

Proceeding with Youth Services

Depending on the circumstances and needs of a given youth, proceeding with Youth Services could involve parallel involvement of other Ministry personnel (e.g., Child

Protection/Family Development, Youth Justice, Child & Youth Mental Health) and/or other relevant community service practitioners (e.g., youth addictions, school personnel).

General guidelines for youth being considered for Youth Services (including a Youth Agreement), are that the youth:

- are not currently living with family or extended family;
- are not married or living in a marriage-like relationship; and
- are 16 years of age or over, but less than 19 years of age.

The exceptions for considering youth under 16 years of age for a Youth Agreement, are that the youth is pregnant, a parent and/or married (but not living with spouse). Refer to Standard #7 for more detailed eligibility information.

Utilizing Child Protection Services

Where services such as outreach or safehousing services have already been provided to **youth under 16 years of age**, it is important to involve parents and/or a worker with appropriate child protection delegation as soon as possible. Delegated Child Protection personnel are involved as necessary through compliance with Sections 14 of the *CF&CSA*, "Duty to Report".

Upon assessment and recommendation by Child Protection services, a youth under 16 years of age may be referred for Youth Service planning or consideration for a Youth Agreement if the youth is married (but not living with spouse), a parent and/or an expectant parent. (Refer to Standard #7 in this document for detailed eligibility information.)

In most circumstances, **youth aged 16 to 18** will be appropriately served through youth support services and agreements. For self-referring or community referred youth of this age, consider the following when determining whether to utilize a Youth Service or a Child Protection response:

- the youth's developmental level and capacity;
- the youth's strengths and needs; and
- whether services that fit the needs of the youth are available in the youth's community.

Situations that may require a higher level of protection through Child Protection services than can be provided through youth support services or agreements are as follows:

- The youth does not appear to have the capacity to take responsibility to keep themselves safe;
- Out-of-care youth support services in the community are not adequate to meet the youth's identified needs;
- The severity of the reported circumstances suggest this is necessary; or
- The worker decides that a full investigation is needed.

Youth Approaching or Past 19 Years of Age

Young people 19 years of age or older in need of assistance are adults in BC and are usually referred to adult services.

In addition to referrals to adult services for young adults in need of assistance, for those who have been in comprehensive service plans (i.e., "in care" or in a Youth Agreement) up until their 19th birthday, letters of introduction to MHR and copies of ID can be provided to them. Where appropriate, those young adults who were in permanent care of the director prior to their 19th birthday are provided with the most current information on supports available to them (e.g., Youth Educational Assistance Fund).

Youth who are close to turning 19 years of age (i.e., 18 years, 9 months or older) are also usually referred to adult services. Although short-term supports may be provided to these youth, it is usually not possible to enter into a meaningful comprehensive service plan in such a short timeframe.

Youth Living in Marriage-like Relationships

Youth who are living with their married spouse or in a marriage-like relationship are considered to be emancipated to adult status and thus not supported as a child or a youth under the CF&CSA. Youth in need of assistance who are living with their married spouse or in a marriage-like relationship can be referred to pertinent adult services. Refer to Standard 7 in this document for more information on “marriage-like relationships”.

Note that although self-referring young persons may present themselves as living in a marriage-like relationship, this does not preclude other considerations, such as protection concerns, discussed within the above standard.

Sharing File Information

The exchange of pertinent information with other service practitioners promotes effectiveness and efficiency by avoiding duplication of efforts. For more information on case file management, electronic file information and the appropriateness of sharing client information, refer to Standard 3 in this document.

5. Assessing for and Providing Short-Term Supports

STANDARD 5

YOUTH IMMEDIATE NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND SAFETY PLAN

If proceeding with Youth Services following initial intake screening:

- each presenting youth receives an immediate basic needs assessment for health and safety; and
- a short-term safety plan based on the assessment is promptly developed and implemented with the youth and other involved practitioners to address their identified needs.

Whenever repatriation is part of a youth's safety plan, youth are repatriated to their family or home community:

- with the youth's consent, and
- where it has been assessed that such repatriation does not jeopardize the youth's safety and/or well-being and is adequately supported in their home community.

If a youth indicates that they are at risk of going missing, a plan of action is developed within safety plan with the youth to help guide worker response should the youth go missing.

If a youth has indicated that they are being or have been sexually exploited:

- a more detailed assessment is undertaken immediately including the need for protective intervention orders; and
- the youth's safety plan, when required, utilizes an integrated, collaborative and coordinated response involving police, Crown counsel, and other pertinent professionals.

Youth Safety Plan

Assessments and provision of short-term supports through youth safety plans are done so under *CF&CSA* section 12.1: "Support Services for Youth" ("SSY").

The short-term safety plan is intended to bridge an interim period by meeting a youth's basic needs while further assessment, service planning, and/or return/repatriation to family or home community may be undertaken. Basic needs assessments and short-term safety plans are intended to provide "same day" support to youth unknown to the Ministry or where there has been a break in Ministry involvement. However, a multi-disciplinary approach involving a youth's probation officer, mental health worker, outreach worker or school counsellor/teacher (among others) can greatly enhance the effectiveness of safety plans through accelerating knowledge about a given youth.

When working with youth through Youth Services (instead of Child Protection Services), youth are primarily responsible for ensuring their own safety within a short-term safety plan. Representatives of the Ministry endeavour to assist youth in keeping themselves safe by addressing identified risks in the youth's environment. Thus it is important from the very outset that the youth's strengths be assessed and utilized with their safety plan that builds a foundation for further planning.

The following are important components of an immediate basic assessment:

- the youth's self-assessment of the current circumstances with their family, which may trigger the need for repatriation/reconnection with family.
- basic needs including food, clothing and shelter.
- needs for safety and security, including the need for protective intervention orders, relocation to another community, safe housing and police involvement against pimps, sexual predators/perpetrators and others who would inveigle, coerce or threaten the youth into sexual exploitation.
- assistance with addictions, mental health or medical issues including necessary clinical assessment and/or treatment.
- parenting needs if a parent or expecting to be a parent.
- attachment to school, training, work and/or rehabilitation.
- attachment to other service practitioners, including safe house, outreach and contracted one-to-one support workers.
- essential transport to reinforce connection to healthy supports.

The form *Youth Immediate Needs Assessment and Safety Plan* (CF0706) is available to assist with documentation of the responsibilities outlined in the above standard (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/intake_assess.htm).

Immediate Interim Supports

To determine the most appropriate regional financial payment mechanisms to fulfill outcomes of an immediate needs assessment and safety plan, consult with your regional finance office. Interim supports may involve purchase mechanisms (p-doc's) for supports such as food, clothing, accommodation, medication or ID fees, bus tickets/pass.

It is highly recommended that:

- if the youth is already well connected to an outreach or Reconnect worker, actively involve them in the youth's short-term safety plan.
- If the youth is **not** already well connected to an outreach or Reconnect worker, refer the youth to a contracted youth support worker to assist the youth with their safety plan.

For supporting details on obtaining identification, refer to Standard #4.

With youth consent and readiness, a referral may be required for clinical service assessment and/or treatment, not limited to addictions services, mental health services and medical services (See additional supporting information below).

Medical Treatment and Service Plan Coverage

Where a youth requires medical treatment, the attending health care provider determines the youth's capacity to consent to such treatment under Section 16 of the Infant's Act.

In most cases, a presenting BC youth will have BC Medical Services Plan (MSP) coverage through their guardian. In exceptional circumstances when a youth does **not** have MSP coverage, requires urgent medical attention and meets YA eligibility criteria, a short-term Youth Agreement (e.g., one month to cover an interim assessment period) may be an option to specifically address the youth's medical needs and other aspects of their short-term safety plan. Refer to Standard #7 for details on YA eligibility and to the Youth Services intranet site (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/medical_coverage.htm) for details on initiating MSP coverage.

Specialized Support for Sexually Exploited Youth

In meeting the needs of a youth with issues of sexual exploitation, specialized support services that may be effective include safe housing, outreach/support workers, medical health, mental health, youth addictions, and victims of violence services, as well as initiatives specializing in support to youth exiting commercial sexual exploitation (e.g., peer support groups, PEERS, PACE). Integrated case management involving police, Crown counsel and other pertinent professionals can assist in maximizing the youth's chances of exiting sexual exploitation. For more information working with sexually exploited youth, refer to the Youth Services intranet site at http://icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/sex_exploit.htm.

Protective Intervention Orders

If a protective intervention order is required under Section 28 of the *CF&CS Act* as part of the youth's safety plan, an order can be obtained through a worker with Category 5 or 6 delegation in that they determine if a youth is in "need of protection". Procedures for obtaining a protective intervention order are outlined in *Court Procedures for Child Protection* (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/manuals/cfd_policy/refguide_adminprocedures.pdf).

Repatriating Youth

When repatriating youth, it is important to give special consideration to the youth's best interests and safety by assessing the circumstances awaiting youth in returning to their home communities. It is intended that such a decision for repatriation be made in partnership with the youth, and that the social worker consults with and interviews the youth to ascertain:

- where the youth considers their "home community(s)" to be;
- their current issues as they relate to the "home community" in question; and
- the array and level of supports potentially available to them in their "home community".

The cooperation of a social worker at the receiving-end community/province will likely be needed to adequately support a repatriation service plan. Where available, contracted youth workers (e.g., Outreach/Reconnect workers) might be involved to assist with youth repatriation plans.

When repatriating youth from out of province, consult with the *Provincial/Territorial Protocol on Children and Families Moving Between Provinces and Territories (March 2001)* (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/manuals/cfd_policy/provincial_territorial_protocol.pdf) for arrangements with the youth's home province or territory.

Precautions for Missing Youth

A missing youth action plan as part of the youth's safety plan is more likely to be effective if it:

- is developed collaboratively, as required, with the youth themselves and with other involved youth service providers (e.g., safe house, outreach workers)
- considers the youth's specific safety needs and risk circumstances that would trigger a worker to believe that the youth may be missing and possibly in danger; and
- identifies who might be contacted and when (e.g. friends, parents, social/outreach workers, police).

In a Youth Service situation (i.e., legal code SSY or YAG), the case-managing social worker has not entered into a guardianship relationship with a given youth. However, if there are concerns about a youth's vulnerability, also refer to *CIC Standard #14: "When a Child is Missing or has Run Away"* for additional ideas on dealing with the issue of a missing youth

(icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/manuals/cfd_policy/cfd_service_standards.pdf).

6. Assessing for Longer-Term Service

STANDARD 6

ASSESSMENT FOR LONGER-TERM SERVICE

Following completion of a *Youth Immediate Needs Assessment and Safety Plan*, further assessment is conducted to more comprehensively determine the youth's strengths, needs and risks in relation to the need to develop a longer-term service plan.

If a youth has indicated issues of sexual exploitation, the nature of their exploitation is further assessed in order to adequately identify their safety needs within the context of a longer-term service plan.

In consultation with the youth, collateral information is gathered from pertinent family members, service practitioners and others involved with the youth.

Rationale

Assessment for longer-term service is intended to:

- understand the youth's condition or circumstances, and identify the youth's strengths, needs and risks;
- determine viable service plan options, including family-based alternatives;
- assess the youth's eligibility for a Youth Agreement as an option (see Standard #7 for details); and
- support case-planning, decision and actions regarding the provision of a longer-term service plan.

Information from the Youth

For any longer-term service plan option pursued, identifying the youth's strengths, needs and risks is central to service planning determinations. These strengths, needs and risks may or may not be dependent on living arrangements.

Throughout the inquiry process, it is recommended that the youth have regular opportunities to be informed, as well as discuss and "de-brief" on issues that may arise for them (which may involve support referrals as required).

Tools, such as *Youth's Self-Assessment of Family*, are available on the Youth Services intranet site (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/intake_assess.htm) to assist in assessing a youth's strengths, needs and risks. Finding out the youth's view of their current social reality involving both family, extended family and friends can be useful.

As well, the following information may be helpful in assessing the level of certain presenting risks as a "**significant adverse condition**" (Also see Criterion #2 in Standard #6: YA Eligibility):

Homelessness

Absolute homelessness pertains to a youth living with no physical shelter.

Relative homelessness pertains to a youth living in a place that does not meet minimum health and safety standards, including protection from the elements, security of tenure, personal safety and affordability, and includes youth who rely on emergency shelters and hostels for accommodation.

Significant Behavioural or Mental Disorder

If assessing for a significant behavioural or mental/emotional disorder, such a condition will usually have resulted in functional impairment that substantially interferes with or limits the youth's role or functioning in family, school, or community activities. A significant mental, behavioural, or emotional disorder may be substantiated by a clinical diagnosis under DSM-IV. A referral for mental health assessment might be considered if confirmation is deemed necessary.

Severe Substance Abuse

Youth, whose behaviour may be considered high risk from an alcohol or drug perspective, exhibit one or more of the following behaviours:

- severe and/or chronic alcohol and/or other drug use;
- drinking or using drugs daily or 3 to 4 days per week;
- bingeing (using continuously for several days in a row);
- multiple substance misuse;
- using drugs by injection;
- extreme or acute use of alcohol or other drugs to deal with the impact of their current situation or past experiences; or
- unhealthy immersion in a drug or alcohol culture where associations with others (for friendship, recreation, support, etc.) are characterized by or dependent on alcohol or drug use.

Sexual Exploitation

Supporting information through self-disclosure or from contacts that the youth has volunteered may confirm a youth's sexual exploitation (as that term is used in section 13(1.1) of the Act):

"... without limiting the meaning of "sexually abused" or "sexually exploited", a [youth] has been or is likely to be sexually abused or sexually exploited if the [youth] has been, or is likely to be,

- (a) encouraged or helped to engage in prostitution, or
- (b) coerced or inveigled into engaging in prostitution."

This may involve:

- provision of sex for drugs, food, shelter, other basics of life, and/or money.
- provision of sex due to coercive acts (e.g., confinement, avoidance of violence or emotional abuse).
- child pornography and computer solicitation.
- involvement in a commercial sex trade.

.Various approaches are open to a given worker in determining whether a youth's presenting risks constitute a "significant adverse situation", including consulting with other service practitioners (See below for details), informal interviewing and the use of tools, such as *Interview Guide for Sexual Exploited Youth* (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/intake_assess.htm).

Resources are also available on the Youth Services website to assist in working with sexually exploited youth (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/sex_exploit.htm).

For youth with **issues of sexual exploitation**, determination of risk may include:

- the need to relocate youth in another community;
- the need for protective intervention orders or restraining orders against pimps, customers and others who would inveigle, coerce or threaten the youth into a sex trade; and
- the need for specialized support services and assistance in connecting with services that meet identified needs.

Aboriginal Youth

If a youth is aboriginal, revisit considerations in Standard 2 of this document.

Information from Others

Hearing from significant people in the youth's life starts by determining who those "significant others" are. It is best that the youth identify these people, but it may become apparent through information provided by the youth through interview and assessment. Whoever is contacted, it is important that the process be transparent and involve youth consent wherever possible. Note that often significant others may often include informal relationships such as the youth's peers and friends, who can be a powerful source of information.

Information from Pertinent Family Members

Talking with family, extended family and close friends of the youth or family may be key in determining need for a service plan and service plan options. Viable family-based options may involve informal and formal kith or kin living arrangements with or without formal supports in place. Family-based alternatives are viable when the youth considers the living arrangements safe and supportive of their basic needs and preferably developmental needs as well. These alternatives might include:

- Reconnection/re-integration with family of origin (i.e., mother and/or father);
- Living arrangements with extended family (e.g., aunts, uncles, grandparents);
- Living arrangements with older siblings (including step-siblings); and/or
- Living arrangements with friends of family or family of friends.

Also, even if a youth cannot live with various family members, it is important to be open to considering other forms of contribution/support that those family and extended family members might provide, such as social/emotional, physical (e.g., in-kind contributions) and financial supports.

Information from Service Practitioners

Collateral checks are often the best way to verify and address a youth's need for assistance in relation to the presenting situation and risk factors. Depending on involvement indicated by the youth, a number of service practitioners might be contacted for collateral information, including, but not limited to:

- depending on delegation of the Youth Service worker, a Child Protection worker as required;
- social workers, youth support or outreach workers;
- safe house or shelter personnel;
- addictions, mental health or medical practitioners;
- school or other education/vocational personnel;
- police, Crown council or youth justice personnel; and
- recreational and church personnel.

Referral for a **clinical assessment** can be done for the purposes of identifying the unique needs of a youth, and is completed by a clinician who has expert knowledge or skills in a specialized area of service, such as alcohol and drug, mental health or physical health issues. The role of the Youth Service worker is:

- identification and brief intervention to ensure safety and to motivate youth and their families to access appropriate services from alcohol and drug counselors, mental health clinicians, and medical physicians.
- to provide input into case planning and to support the youth to do their part as prescribed in treatment.

Based on the information and needs presented by the youth in the immediate needs assessment, the informed case-specific referrals can be made as required. By doing so, the delegated worker ensures that limited services and resources are appropriately utilized and a discipline-specific focus is maintained, especially with those resources targeted to youth who have multiple factors that place them at high risk.

If clinical assessment is related to YA eligibility, the onus of responsibility to make such an eligibility determination lies with the delegated worker, not supporting professionals (e.g., Alcohol and Drug counselors or Mental Health clinicians) who only provide assessment information essential to the case workers determination of eligibility.

Integrated Case Management and Information Sharing

For ease of access to information about a youth through collateral checks, other professionals most often will want either to consult with the youth first themselves, or to see a written release of information from the youth. The form, *Consent for Disclosure of Information* (CF0609) is available for such purposes (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/intake_assess.htm).

For more information on the use of integrated case management practice and information sharing among community partners, refer to the for Ministry's *Integrated Case Management User's Guide* and *Privacy Charter*.

Assessing Service Plan Options

In most circumstances, service plan options become more evident through the process of working with the youth, gathering information from others, and screening for YA eligibility (See standard that follows on YA eligibility). A Youth Agreement is one service option that falls within one of the following three categories based on living arrangements:

- Youth living in a family-based alternative;
- Youth in supported independent living (e.g., Youth Agreements, as well as Independent Living for Youth in Care through Guardianship services, and Income Assistance through MHR); and
- Youth living in care (refer to Standard 4 in this document for making referrals to Child Protection/Family Development services).

It may be effective to utilize a decision matrix (such as the fictitious example case scenario below) or another tool for analyzing and assessing options against identified key factors regarding needs, risks and significant adverse conditions.

Key Factors/ Identified Options	Living with Older Sister	Living with Grandparents	Income Assistance	Youth Agreement	Living in Care
Addictions issues support	Probably best support	GP's struggle with drug issues	Not enough support	OK with contracted support	Level 3 specialized resource
School attendance	yes	yes	Likely to drift	yes	yes
Sexual exploitation	OK with contracted support	Difficulty discussing issues	Not enough support	OK with contracted support	OK with contracted support
Mental health issues	Probably best on-site support	Generally supportive	Attendance unlikely	OK with contracted support	On-site support

7. Assessing for Youth Agreement Eligibility

STANDARD 7
YOUTH AGREEMENT ELIGIBILITY
As part of the assessment for longer-term service, it is determined whether a Youth Agreement is in the youth's best interests and the youth meets prescribed Youth Agreement eligibility criteria.

Eligibility Prescribed by CF&CS Act and Regulations

Combining both *CF&CS Act* section 12.2 and Regulations section 8.1, eligibility for a Youth Agreement requires that a representative of the director is satisfied that a Youth Agreement is in the youth's best interests and that each of the following six criteria apply in respect to the youth:

- 1) The youth is 16 years of age or over, but under 19 years of age,
or
if the youth is younger than 16 years of age, then the youth is married, a parent or expecting to be a parent.
- 2) The youth:
 - is affected by a significant adverse condition, such as severe substance abuse, a significant behavioural or mental disorder, or sexual exploitation as defined by section 13(1.1) of the Act (Also see Standard 6);
or
 - is in the care of the director under an order or agreement that is about to expire and it would be in the best interests of the youth if an YA were in place following expiry of the order or agreement;
or
 - is or likely to be in need of protection as described in section 13 of the Act and a Youth Agreement would be a safe and effective alternative to action under Part 3 of the Act;
- 3) The youth cannot be re-established in the youth's family or has no parent or other person willing or able to assist them, and reasonable efforts to support the youth in the home of the youth's parent or other adult person have been unsuccessful;
- 4) The youth requires the additional residential, education, financial assistance and other support services available in a Youth Agreement beyond that which is available through other sources and government programs;
- 5) The youth understands the responsibilities and implications of entering into the agreement;
- 6) The youth demonstrates ability and readiness to:
 - engage in supported independent living;
 - implement a Plan for Independence (See Standard 11); and
 - address and manage risks that may affect the youth's safety and well-being.

Establishing Best Interest and Eligibility

When considering a youth's best interests, the safety and well being of youth is paramount (Section 2 of *CF&CSA*). Within this context, factors such as the youth's views, their physical and emotional needs, their level of development, and the quality of relationship with parents, family and community are considered. Refer to section 4 of the *CF&CSA* and the *Guidelines for Provision of Youth Services* for a more complete list of examples

(http://icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yse/vbest_practice.htm).

Screening for the six eligibility criteria listed above assists in determining whether a YA as a service plan is in the best interests of a youth. Some aspects of eligibility for any presenting youth (e.g., age and status) will likely have been established at initial intake, screening and assessment of youth. Other aspects may take longer to establish (e.g., demonstrated ability and readiness might involve collateral checks and several meetings with the youth).

Criteria #1: Age and Status

Identity and Age Considerations

Verification of the youth's identity and age can be achieved by placing copies of the youth's identification (i.e., Birth Certificate, and/or BC Identification Card) on file. Note that picture identification (i.e., BC ID or driver's licence) is also critical in order to set up a bank account for financial transactions. Refer to Standard #1 for more details on obtaining identification.

Marital Status, Marriage-Like Relationships and Emancipated Youth

For **youth** who are **under 16 years** of age and present themselves as **legally married** (and not living with spouse), marital status could be verified through obtaining a copy of the Certificate of Marriage or other documentation provided by a publicly authorized official.

Youth Agreements are not intended to support emancipation into marriage-like relationships. Youth who cohabit within a marriage or a declared marriage-like relationship are regarded as emancipated from child status to adult status as long as they remain living in that relationship. Thus, they are not subject to support through the *CF&CSA* and can be referred to adult services. However, if youth leave a legal marriage or a marriage-like relationship, services through a Youth Agreement might be considered, should youth meet other eligibility requirements.

A marriage-like relationship may include, but is not limited to, the following indicators: two people living together, physical/sexual intimacy, sleeping together, shared/unified responsibilities, unified financial activities, shared child-rearing, interdependency and a shared life vision. Marriage-like relationships would, of course, include relationships enforceable through common law.

When discerning between sharing accommodation and cohabiting in a marriage-like relationship, it is important to assess each situation based upon individual circumstances presented, and focus on the obvious presentation of the relationship. When the status of the relationship is not obvious, the best interests of the youth should be considered in determining whether the situation is a safe and healthy one for the youth. There are exploitive situations where youth may in fact be cohabiting with their pimp.

If these emancipated youth have dependent children and require social intervention with their children, they would receive such assistance through community agencies or Family Development Services.

Parental Status

For young persons who are under 16 years of age and present themselves as a parent or expectant parent:

- the young person's parental status could be verified by obtaining a copy of their child's Birth Certificate.

- the young person's expectant parental status could be confirmed through contact with the youth's doctor.

Criteria #2: Establishing Need for Out-of-Home Service Plan

Three situations are described where youth cannot live with family and thus require an out-of-home service plan. All situations surrounding a presenting youth are assessed on an individual basis. Only one of these situations would need to be established:

- **Youth Risk Behaviour:** The first situation prescribes the youth being affected by a significant adverse condition. Examples specifically mentioned are severe substance abuse, a significant behavioural or mental disorder, or sexual exploitation, but are not limited and could also include other adverse conditions such as street entrenchment, homelessness or criminal behaviour. It is intended to encompass behaviour/ conditions associated with youth that are unmanageable within the context of the family home, and thus by extension precipitate the need for an out-of-home service plan.
- **Youth Already in Temporary Ministry Care:** The second situation describes a youth already in temporary Ministry care where at the expiry of a court order or care agreement would require further Ministry care without the use of a Youth Agreement. In practical terms, this could include youth in care through temporary care orders (TCO's), voluntary care agreements (VCA's) or special needs agreements (SNA's). In determining whether a YA is the service plan in the youth's best interests, the usual Youth Service assessment process can be used as a framework to review the youth's situation, and their strengths, needs and risks as they relate to a YA. If there is a referring social worker that is aware of YA eligibility, he or she may have already determined that a YA service plan is in the youth's best interests. If not, he or she may be able to provide much of the supporting information in determining YA eligibility and the most appropriate service plan.
- **Youth in Need of Protection:** The third situation describes youth in need of assistance that come to the director's attention through their need for protection under section 13 of the *Act* where the parents behaviour/condition in relation to their child precipitates the need for an out-of-home service plan. This is provided that when assessing a report under section 16 of the *Act*, the use of a YA would be a safe and effective alternative to dealing with the youth under Part 3 of the *Act* through Child Protection services.

Criteria #3: No Adult Willing to Assist

The circumstance of no parent or other adult willing to assist would normally have been determined and established during YS intake, screening and assessment prior to considering a YA. This determination is made on an individual basis to screen out youth that could be returned to family or extended family with or without support services and screen in at-risk and high-risk youth who require an out-of-home living arrangement.

Because a family-based service plan is always preferable where viable, "reasonable efforts" implies that all potential contacts have been checked within the youth's family, extended family, and community to establish the presence of an adult who may be able to assist the youth. Refer to Standard 6 for more information on "Assessment for Longer-Term Service".

In circumstances where youth have no guardian due to death or abandonment, the youth's needs may be adequately met through private options and/or out-of-care supports rather than having the Ministry assume guardianship. Additional supports may be or could be in place through the Public Trustee regarding a youth's estate. The premise for offering a YA is that youth are becoming semi-autonomous young adults capable of making more decisions about their lives.

Criteria #4: Supports from Other Sources

Making this determination assists workers to screen in youth who require the additional emotional/social supports provided through supported independent living in a Youth Agreement, and screen out those youth who are emancipated or who can live independently without such YA supports and thus more suitable for full independence or MHR Income Assistance for Minors.

The older, more mature and the more independent a youth in need of assistance is, the more of a case there is for referring youth to programs/services that would support them to live independently with or without income assistance support through MHR. Conversely, the higher the number and magnitude of a youth's risk factors and the level of trauma associated with risk factors, the more the youth will need the "wrap-around" supports in a YA or an in-care option. Although this may be fairly obvious with some youth, it may not with others. When it is not clear, additional information can be obtained through collateral checks, having the youth complete a life skills assessment (e.g., Casey-Ansell) and/or through referral for a MH or addictions assessment.

For **youth older than 18 years of age**, it may be more in the youth's best interests to apply for adult supports (e.g., BC Benefits), particularly when they are very close to adult status at consideration for an initial agreement, (e.g., 18 years, 9 months, or older). The youth's best interests, however, may be dependent on current policy of other agencies (e.g., MHR) and regional application of that policy. Thus, it is essential to be aware of current application of MHR policy within a given community and consult with MHR staff when necessary to ascertain the best interests for any given youth. For these older youth who have multiple high-risk needs, it may, in fact, be in their better interests to enter into a Youth Agreement even for the short-term.

In accordance with interministry protocols, **youth already receiving underage income assistance** through Ministry of Human Resources can enter into a Youth Agreement. However, if such an arrangement is proposed, it is important to consult a MHR worker when providing additional supports to youth. MHR policy may restrict the types of supports (e.g., direct payments to youth) that may be available to youth in a Youth Agreement. This might affect youth through "clawback" of existing income assistance benefits if the MHR worker deems MCFD benefits as "declarable income."

Emancipated youth living within a marriage or marriage-like relationship can be referred to adult services. If these emancipated youth have dependent children and require social intervention with their children, they would receive such assistance through community agencies or MCFD Family Development services. For more information on "marriage-like relationships", refer to Criterion #1 of this standard.

Criteria #5: Demonstrated Understanding

Making this determination assists workers to screen in those youth who have the current mental capacity to enter and function successfully in a YA, and screen out those who do not due to developmental maturity, mental disability or impairment (e.g., drug/alcohol induced). Youth who have a basic understanding (not necessarily perfect or detailed) of the responsibilities and implications involved with an agreement are more likely to function successfully in an agreement.

This discernment can be accomplished by explaining the important aspects of a YA, and then follow-up with a series of questions. The youth's answers demonstrate understanding or not. A tool, *Assessment of a Youth's Ability to Enter a Youth Agreement*, icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/intake_assess.htm is available on the Youth Service intranet site can be used to assist in this process. If in doubt, collateral information from others can also support this determination.

Criteria #6: Ability and Readiness

This criterion assists workers to screen in those youth who have the ability and motivation to function successfully in a YA, and screen out those who do not due to developmental maturity, and physical, emotional, or mental disability or impairment (e.g., drug/alcohol induced). When youth are being considered for a YA during an interim assessment period, youth are assessed for their ability to enter into a YA in that they:

- demonstrate a willingness to actively participate in planning, act responsibly and work cooperatively;
- demonstrate readiness to take action to manage risks and make changes in their life/environment, to live independently, and to participate in a realistic plan for independence; and
- demonstrate the ability to follow through on tasks, plans, commitments (e.g., attending appointments) and harm reduction measures.

This criterion does not imply perfect ability and readiness, nor should it be interpreted as a zero tolerance for risk. Youth in need of assistance will have varying degrees of risk and varying degrees of functional ability associated with them. If youth can understand what is expected of them in their contract, and are ready and willing to do what is expected of them (with adequate supports), this criterion would likely be met.

The development of a youth's *Plan for Independence* (see Standards #8 and #11) can also assist in setting up realistic expectations and accountabilities in addressing issues and needs. However, it may become clear through completing a *Plan for Independence* with a youth who appears to be eligible to enter a YA that an appropriate level of expectation cannot be agreed upon with the youth. In order to proceed with a YA, the case worker needs to be satisfied that youth are ready and willing to actively participate in keeping themselves safe and work towards positive outcomes.

Summarizing Eligibility and Ability

In reviewing and summarizing the supporting documentation and case notes to confirm the eligibility criteria outlined in this standard for a given youth, the tool *Summary of Youth Agreement Eligibility* is available to assist in this process through the Youth Services intranet site at icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/intake_assess.htm.

Youth is in Need of Assistance, But Does Not Have Ability to Enter an Agreement or Live Independently

Youth, whose circumstances match the first four criteria, but not the last two in (5) and (6), still have a demonstrated need for assistance and should be considered for other service plan options again under Standard 6 in this document. If their circumstances for not meeting criteria (5) and/or (6) are temporary in nature (e.g., developmental maturity or drug-induced impairment), a YA may be considered at a later date.

SERVICE PLANNING

8. Longer-Term Service Determinations & Planning

STANDARD 8
LONGER-TERM SERVICE DETERMINATIONS AND PLANNING
Based on the “Assessment for Longer-Term Service” (Standard #6) and “Assessment for YA Eligibility” (Standard #7), actions are taken that most appropriately and comprehensively address the needs of the youth. Regardless of the longer-term service plan initiated: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In consultation with the youth, and where existing protection issues within the youth’s family can be safely addressed, the youth’s family is involved and family/extended family supports are utilized as much as possible and appropriate.• Referrals and supports are provided to meet the identified needs and risks of the youth. If proceeding with a plan through Youth Services, all pertinent information regarding the youth is reviewed through working collaboratively with the youth and other pertinent individuals and practitioners to support the development of the service plan.

Service Plan Decisions

Based on longer-term and YA eligibility assessments, the following actions might be taken:

<i>Indicated service plan:</i>	<i>Next step:</i>
Family-based service plan	Refer to Standard 9 in this document, and pertinent <i>CFS Standards</i> to effect the service plan.
In-care service plan	Referral to Child Protection/Family Development services.
Independent living with youth on their own	Referrals to community resources as required.
Independent living with income assistance	Referral to MHR (and community resources as required).
Youth Agreement	Refer to Standard 10 to 13 in this document for “developing a Youth Agreement”.

Delegation and Service Plans

If a YA is the chosen service plan, the worker delegation of Category 4 is sufficient. If pursuing other family re-integration service plans, a worker with Category 5 or 6 delegation may need to be consulted in determining the appropriateness a youth’s service plan (see Standard 1 for details).

Pertinent Information to Review

Examples of pertinent information to review in preparing for a longer-term service plan (including a Plan for Independence) include, but are not limited to, the following:

- the information provided through planning materials used to engage youth in planning process (see “Engaging Youth... “ below);
- relevant prior contact check (PCC) information that may affect service decisions;
- the Youth Immediate Needs Assessment and Safety Plan;
- all other Youth Service assessment information gathered to this point;
- results of alcohol & drug and/or mental health referrals, assessments and/or ongoing counseling;
- relevant education, psychological and medical reports; and
- collaborative information provided through networking with practitioners involved with youth (see “Collaborative Consultation” below).

Engaging Youth in the Planning Process

A number of planning work booklets and guides might be used to engage a youth in the planning process, such as the *Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment* and/or the *Youth Independence Planner* (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/intake_assess.htm). These tools can be helpful in capturing an inventory of needs and strengths for both short and long-term planning, more so than what is captured within a single *Plan for Independence* (which is time-limited). The strengths and needs captured in these planning tools can be used on an ongoing basis with the youth through subsequent service plans (including YA’s). Note that the *Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment* is primarily focussed on life skills development, whereas the *Youth Independence Planner* provides more comprehensive information (including life skills) for service plan development.

In using these planning tools, it is important to keep in mind that the most engaging part of the process is the dialogue with the youth during and after the completion of planning tools. This dialogue is the foundation of the contracting process in determining collaboratively what ought to be in the Plan for Independence. Furthermore, it can be used to draw on the youth’s strengths to address their identified risks, needs and goals.

Depending on a number of factors (e.g., literacy level, first language/culture, mental health status, intelligence), some youth may require assistance to complete the workbook planning tools (e.g., *Youth Independence Planner*). For example, it may be beneficial for a youth with low literacy levels to have a friend, family member or contracted youth worker assist them in the completion of a workbook.

Collaborative Consultation

In preparing to develop a *Plan for Independence*, it is important to consult with those professionals who have been involved with the youth or who will continue to be actively involved with the youth’s service plan. For example, this could be:

- Child Protection/Family Development services, where there is continued involvement of a MCFD worker from another team.
- an MHR worker, if the youth will continue to receive underage income assistance and the Youth Agreement is for “wrap-around” services, or if the youth will soon be transitioning to adult services and may require income assistance support.
- the youth’s outreach/support worker (e.g., Reconnect), particularly if ongoing one-to-one or group support will continue through that worker.
- the youth’s probation officer, to check for consistency with any court orders.
- an addictions or mental health therapist.

Sexually Exploited Youth

Resources are available on the Youth Services intranet site to assist in working with sexually exploited youth (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/sex_exploit.htm).

9. Developing a Family Re-integration Service Plan

STANDARD 9

A FAMILY RE-INTEGRATION SERVICE PLAN

If a family re-integration service plan is in the best interests of the youth, a written goal-oriented plan is developed and agreed upon with the youth and pertinent family/extended family.

Extended Family

The use of the term “extended family” is meant to encompass the broadest of definitions to include:

- relatives related by blood or marriage and includes second and third generations.
- persons who have a significant and/or meaningful relationship to the youth but not related by blood or marriage such as ‘god-parents’ and close friends of the family.
- Additionally from an Aboriginal perspective, a connection to the youth’s relations, elders and community.

Some practical examples of extended family are listed in Standard 6 of this document in exploring various potential family-based service plans.

A Family Re-Integration Service Plan

A family re-integration service plan that has continued involvement of a delegated worker will be comprehensive in nature. Otherwise, it will simply be a matter of referral(s) and the case file would be closed. Thus, it is advised that a comprehensive service planning tool of some sort to address comprehensively the needs and risks of the youth. A *Plan for Independence* (CF0701) may be used for such purposes to supplement planning with youth to capture/negotiate multiple aspects of direct support to the youth and create a sense of “buy-in” and commitment with the youth.

Where an adult is present and willing to assist the youth, the viability of such plan is usually thoroughly reviewed through collateral checks.

A viable plan may or may not involve a variety of informal and formal services/supports including those available through both Parts 2 and 2.1 of the Act. Where the viable plan is return to family, often youth-family mediation and support will likely be an important component of support service. Although the use of a short-term Voluntary Care Agreement (VCA) might be used as an interim service plan to further assess the viability of a range of service options (including a YA), it is usually only recommended where there is a strong likelihood of return to family and in conjunction with youth-family mediation and support. Given that youth are approaching the age of majority, anything more than 3 to 6 months for a VCA throws the viability of a return to family service plan into question. If a return to family is not viable, there is increasing need for a plan for independence as youth come closer to their 19th birthday.

Depending on the components utilized within a family re-integration service plan, refer to the appropriate [CFS Standards](#) (e.g., #5 through 9).

Service Plan Supports

Service plans could include a variety of family-focussed and/or youth-focussed supports as required in each individual case:

- **Financial supports**, which might include:
 - private financial arrangements from family and others supporting the youth.
 - referral for financial assistance through income assistance or “Child in Home of Relative”, (“CIHR”) through Ministry of Human Resources.

- a formal “kith and kin” agreement under Section 8 of the CFCSA
(Note: can only be provided by a fully delegated Category 6 worker).
- **Family developmental supports**, which might include youth-family mediation.
- **Youth developmental supports**, which might include one-to-one support workers and/or connecting youth with community group supports.
- **School-based supports**, which might include alternative programs, school-based youth groups, peer-mentoring, counselling, hot lunch programs, and youth support/care workers.
- **Labour-attachment supports**, which might include access to training consultants and job prep/training programs sponsored through the Ministry of Human Resources or Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).
- **Specialized treatment/supports**, which might include referral to medical or mental health services, addiction services, and specialized services for sexually exploited youth.

YOUTH AGREEMENTS

10. Youth Transitioning from Care to a Youth Agreement

STANDARD 10

A TRANSITION PLAN FROM CARE INTO A YOUTH AGREEMENT

If a youth is leaving care and entering into a Youth Agreement, a transition plan is developed with the youth, the youth's parent(s) (where appropriate), the referring social worker and other pertinent individuals.

Linkage with CIC Standards

Children in Care (CIC) Standard 15: "Planning for a Child Leaving Care" (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/manuals/cfd_policy/cfd_service_standards.pdf) prescribes that:

"Before a child leaves care, support him or her in preparing for the transition. During the transition, support the child in adjusting to the change in care and living arrangements."

It goes on to provide details around the information provided to support youth, parents and extended family in such a transition to an alternative out-of-care living arrangement, as well as other considerations. The information specified in CIC Standard 15 is the basis for a "transition plan".

Transition Plan Timeframe

In most cases, a reasonable period of time to develop and implement a transition plan and make arrangements for a youth moving from an "in care" service plan to a Youth Agreement is 4 to 6 weeks. Time is required to develop an agreed *upon Plan for Independence*, to support the youth in finding a place to live and to put other supports in place to make a YA work effectively.

11. Developing a Youth Agreement ~ Step #1: Plan for Independence

STANDARD 11

PLAN FOR INDEPENDENCE

In addition to *CF&CS Regulations* cited below, a ***Plan for Independence*** is developed collaboratively with the youth to adequately address the youth's presenting risks and needs, including concerns raised through the involvement of other service practitioners, including the ***youth's probation officer*** if a youth is involved with youth justice.

For youth who are 18 years old, transition activities from youth services to adults services are considered and incorporated (as needed) into their Plan for Independence.

The ***monitoring*** portion of the Plan for Independence outlines a schedule for regular monitoring meetings with a minimum number of home visits as followings:

- within the first two weeks of the youth occupying a new residence; and
- at least every three months during the term of a Youth Agreement.

Plan of Independence According to Act and Regulations

Combining CF&CS Act Section 12.2(3) and *Regulation* Section 8.2, a "Plan for Independence" must contain the following:

1. a description of support services or financial assistance, or both, that are to be provided by the director;
2. goals to be met by the youth;
3. a description of the behavioural commitments of the youth, the responsibilities and promised acts of the youth and the director under the agreement, and any relevant timelines;
4. information necessary to support and preserve the youth's cultural, racial, linguistic and religious heritage;
5. in the case of an aboriginal youth, information necessary to support and preserve the youth's aboriginal identity;
6. a description of the youth's plan to make the transition to independence, addressing education, employment, residential arrangements and interpersonal relationships; and
7. a plan outlining how the youth's performance under the agreement, including accomplishments and successes, will be monitored throughout the term of the agreement.

What is a Plan for Independence?

A *Plan for Independence (PFI)* is the core clinically focused document within a Youth Agreement that details the services and interventions that will meet the current needs and goals of a youth during the course of the Youth Agreement. It is intended that the process for completing the *PFI* is youth-centred, strength-based and maximizes youth participation. A *PFI* might also be used to support other goal-oriented service plans (e.g., "kith and kin agreements", a family re-integration service plan).

Developing Goals

In the development of a Plan for Independence, the following are usually addressed according to the youth's identified needs and goals:

- a place to live;
- family and friends;
- health: physical, mental, and alcohol & drugs issues;
- education/ meaningful work;
- social/ recreational/ cultural/ spiritual/religious/linguistic (in the case of aboriginal youth, information necessary to support and preserve the youth's aboriginal identity);
- legal;
- financial; and
- other areas, including safety issues.

Note that in addressing the current risks and needs of the youth, active goals individualized to a given youth might not exist in all of the areas listed above.

In supporting a youth to select attainable short-term goals for an upcoming *PFI*, considerations are recommended as follows:

- incorporating the youth's identified strengths to meet their identified needs.
- the most important goals to the youth (i.e., priorities, where the youth is motivated).
- goals can be staged towards a longer-term vision.
- goals that:
 - support the youth's safety, security and well-being;
 - are specific and measurable;
 - can be monitored in some tangible fashion;
 - have an attainable outcome and a reasonable likelihood of success within the period of the current YA given the youth's level of development.
- an appropriate number of goals that support a likelihood of success (e.g., sometimes fewer goals are better than too many in supporting a youth's experience of success).

Supporting Documentation

Workers may find it useful to make case notes and file recordings to capture important decisions, choices and supporting information that surface in the planning process, but do not show up in the current *PFI*. Examples are as follows:

- the youth's longer term goals for transition to independence that may not appear in current Youth Agreement plans (e.g. train to be a baker).
- the details of the services and supports the youth and the delegated worker have agreed upon to achieve the established goals.
- supporting referrals (e.g., to an addictions counsellor or to a contracted youth worker).
- details of arrangements for contact between parent and youth, when appropriate.
- details of back-up plans/supports when a youth might require crisis supports (e.g., "after hours" services).

One-to-One Contracted Support Worker

The provision of a one-to-one contracted worker is strongly recommended to support the youth on ongoing, regular basis in the implementation of their *PFI* and successful achievement of service plan outcomes. If a youth already has an outreach/support

worker attached to their short-term safety plan, continuity of service is often in the best interests of the youth.

Housing Support Options

When determining housing supports for youth within a *PFI*, the following options might be considered:

- residential treatment (e.g., Alcohol and Drug detox facilities);
- supported independent living through a contracted agency program (e.g., Alcohol and Drug Residential Support);
- semi-independent accommodation through an independent landlord, who provides limited, defined life skills and mentorship support to the youth (e.g., enhanced room and board);
- subsidized youth housing; and
- independent accommodation through an independent landlord.

Shared Accommodation

Where a youth is planning to share accommodation with other person(s), it is important to focus on the best interests of the youth in determining that the intended living arrangements are reasonably safe and healthy for the youth. For more information on cohabitation and marriage-like relationship, refer to Standard 7.

Developing Money Management Skills

For many youth, it may be important to assist them in developing skills and capacity to manage their finances independently and effectively by:

- providing or accessing ongoing one-to-one money management support/ counseling (including assistance through the Credit and Debtor Assistance Branch should a youth be experiencing significant financial difficulties),
- providing access to youth group work focussed on money management, and/or
- directing the youth to life skills program.

Also see section on “Managing Money Responsibly” in Standard #12.

Pregnant and Parenting Youth

For additional healthcare and social supports available for youth who are pregnant or young parents, and where appropriate their dependent children, refer to the Youth Services website at icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/index.htm.

Transition Activities for Older Youth

It is important to start planning with youth for transition to adulthood independence as young as possible to increase the likelihood of a successful transition. As part of a transition plan for 18 year-old youth, the youth:

- has been advised of any post-majority supports and services available to youth previously in YA's, and how to apply for such services.
- the youth has been provided with any personal and contact information that may assist them in meeting their current and continuing needs as an adult in the community (e.g., health care coverage).

Monitoring Frequency of Contact

Contact with the youth could manifest itself in many ways, such as meetings at the offices, the youth's home, and other venues that facilitate a relaxed and candid visit. More frequent contact with a youth at the beginning of a first YA is an advisable practice (e.g., at least weekly with the delegated worker, and perhaps even daily at first with by a contracted youth support worker). More frequent or regular contacts with the youth may be a proactive part of developing a initially supportive and safe *PFI*. As an agreement progresses and worker confidence in the youth's ability to manage various aspects of their lives, the time between contact with the youth might increase. Conversely, it may be wise to increase contact frequency if a youth is going through a turbulent period or experiencing a personal crisis.

Monitoring Roles and Responsibilities

It is usually most effective that monitoring roles and responsibilities within a *PFI* be defined in the spirit of professional cooperation and according to the best practices of integrated case management. An emphasis is put on having the youth take on as much responsibility and accountability within the monitoring process as they are capable of doing successfully while maintaining the duty to support the youth's safety and well-being. For more information on integrated case management practice and information sharing among community partners, refer to the Ministry *Privacy Charter* and the *Integrated Case Management User's Guide* (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/best_practice.htm).

Involving Probation Officers

If a youth is involved with youth justice, participation of the youth's probation officer is essential in the development of a *PFI*, so that the provisions of their YA are in accordance and consistent with any court orders pertaining the youth. For youth who refuse contact with their Youth Probation Officer, the process for developing a YA cannot be completed due to potential conflicts with court orders.

If the youth agrees to include their Youth Probation Officer in the assessment and development of a possible YA, then the usual process of assessing for and developing a YA proceeds, while incorporating youth justice considerations as required.

Involving the Parent and Family

Where it is in the best interests of youth, they are advised of the importance of maintaining family connections, and given every opportunity to keep parents involved in and informed about significant events relating to the youth. Examples of when the youth's family might be involved include:

- continuing to explore all reasonable and available options within the family or family support system which would meet the youth's needs without the youth needing a YA;
- to support a commitment to their continuing guardianship role and/or the provision of financial and/or other supports to the youth while in a Youth Agreement (For more details on parental financial contributions, refer to Standard #12).
- informing parents or family in a timely manner of significant developments in the youth's life and decisions affecting the youth.
- where goals in the youth's *PFI* require family involvement (e.g., re-uniting or reconnecting the youth with family), which might include involving family in planning meetings (being informed about and participating in).

"Significant developments" in the youth's life may include:

- changes in the youth's out-of-home living arrangements (e.g., entering or terminating a YA).
- significant events, reportable circumstances or accidents in the youth's life, including when the youth requires necessary health care and the youth is unable to consent to such health care.

Aboriginal Youth

The following may be helpful actions to consider in assisting an aboriginal youth to preserve their aboriginal identity:

- Advise youth of services available through their aboriginal community that might support their YA.
- With the youth's consent, contact and involve the aboriginal community in planning a YA.
- If the youth does not consent to aboriginal community involvement in their YA, consider the service delivery principles of the Act and determine whether an

agreement can be made that is in the best interests of the youth without involving the aboriginal community.

Education/Training Goals

As part of the youth's *PFI*, it is important to come to an agreement with the youth about how the goals and the term of their education/training program will be monitored.

If a comprehensive education/training plan is developed with the youth, it may be useful to append it to the youth's *PFI*.

Some education/training courses may have course fees that need factoring into the *Schedule A* for a youth. For details, refer to Standard #12 and the *CF&CS Chart of Accounts and Payment Matrix* for Youth Agreements on the Youth Services intranet site (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/youth_agreements.htm).

Training Consultants

The services of training consultants, contracted agencies, and program-specific consultants could assist in developing a training program that helps address the current identified training needs and goals of the youth.

Training and job readiness programs developed by training consultants with the MHR involve the development of an approved *Employability Agreement*.

For youth exiting sexual exploitation in either Greater Victoria or Greater Vancouver, comprehensive supports may be available to them through PEERS, who provide the MHR Bridging Employment Program through contracted service.

School Contacts

For educational goals involving public school, youth (and where applicable, an accompanying contracted support worker) may need to be prepared to discuss the following items with a school principal or designate:

- assessment of the youth's readiness for available school programs;
- a review of the youth's education/training goals within the context of a Student Learning Plan and available school program placements that best meet the current needs and readiness of the youth;
- how the school will report on and address matters of attendance, student progress and discipline; and
- information that needs to be shared related to potential safety issues.

To register at a school within a school district, the youth meets residency requirements (without guardian consent) by providing school district personnel with the mailing address specified for the youth in their Youth Agreement.

The rule of thumb for sharing the personal information of a youth with school/training personnel is that it is on a "need to know" basis that balance the youth's right to privacy with the safety and well being of the youth or other students. For details on sharing the personal information of a youth, refer to the Ministry's *A Guide to the Privacy Charter* (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/manuals/privacy_charter/pc_final_guide.pdf).

12. Developing a YA ~ Step #2: Schedule A (and other Financial Aspects)

STANDARD 12
ASSISTING YOUTH IN BUDGETING AND MANAGING MONEY
<p>In the <i>Schedule A</i> of a Youth Agreement, a financial budget and payment schedule is developed and agreed upon with the youth that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• addresses the goals identified in the Plan for Independence, and• considers the youth's capacity to manage their finances and direct cash payments. <p>As part of the Schedule A process, the youth is provided an explanation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• how the mechanisms of payments will work, including one-time only expenditures and third-party direct payments (if any).• the consequences of not managing money as agreed upon within the <i>Schedule A</i> and the <i>Plan for Independence</i>. <p>Where a youth's parent can be located and the parent is capable of contributing financially, the delegated worker assesses whether a pursuing a <i>parental contribution</i> is in the youth's best interests.</p>

Identifying Costs Connected to Goals

In developing Schedule A, a budget is completed and agreed upon with the youth to support costs associated with goals within the Plan for Independence (e.g., costs of shelter, support, education, and miscellaneous including security deposit, start-up costs and other one-time expenditures).

For goals that require a great deal of extra one-time-only expenditures (e.g., training/tuition, registration/course fees and books), each worker might assess and negotiate (as required) with individual youth around their commitment and ability to follow through to completion of their goals.

Wherever possible in completing a Schedule A, actual costs for specific items are preferable when they are known ahead of time.

Spending Limits

To determine established spending limits for various types of support within Youth Agreements, refer to the *CF&CS Chart of Accounts and Payment Matrix* for YA's (http://icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/y_services/youth_agreements.htm) and consult with financial operations as required within your region.

Assisting Youth to Manage Money Responsibility

It is important that youth understand from the start that:

- within components of the agreement (the Schedule A STOB lines) that they generally expected to spend money on the things agreed upon in agreement (e.g., payments for "support" are spent on food, etc.);
- advanced notification is required if there any change to the youth's residence to ensure payments go to the correct source and no interruption occurs in rental and/or utility payments/service; and
- if they significantly mismanage their finances, this would likely trigger a full review and possible termination of their agreement.

Most youth can use support to keep them on track financially (at least at the beginning of their Plan for Independence):

- by providing for direct payments, wherever possible and appropriate, to third parties such as landlord, hydro, telephone, other utilities, tuition, etc.
- by scheduling payments daily, weekly, bi-weekly, mid-monthly or monthly according to a youth's ability to manage money effectively.

As youth progress through their Plan for Independence and possibly display increasing ability to manage their money effectively, it may be in the youth's best interests to modify their payment schedules and direct payments to reflect and reinforce their ability to manage their finances. For example, cash payments to the youth might be administered weekly, then biweekly and finally monthly as the youth demonstrates the ability to manage their money.

Youth Receiving BC Benefits

In accordance with interministry protocols, youth receiving underage income assistance through Ministry of Human Resources can enter into a Youth Agreement. However, if such an arrangement is proposed, consulting a MHR worker may facilitate the best scenario for youth. MHR policy may restrict the additional supports available to youth in a Youth Agreement (e.g., direct payments to youth). This might affect youth through "clawback" of existing income assistance benefits. Also, refer to Standard 7 of this document related to this topic.

Most often, a youth starting into their first Youth Agreement will require support with the initial costs associated with establishing basic accommodation.

One-Time-Only Expenditures

"One-time-only expenditures" among other things include both start-up costs and damage/security deposits.

Start-up Costs

Start-up costs might include a rental damage deposit, utility connection fees, basic furnishings (e.g., bed and sleeping gear, table and chairs, kitchen utensils, bathroom and cleaning gear). In purchasing basic furnishings, the youth could be given assistance (usually through a contracted youth worker) in finding items at good value for money.

Where start-up costs are provided, the importance of taking responsibility and ownership of start-up accommodation furnishings is explained to the youth. These sorts of items once purchased are usually the responsibility and property of the youth, unless they abandon them and their rental accommodation (as in any other rental situation). Unless there are exceptional circumstances and legitimate reasons, these items would not usually be re-issued or replaced.

Damage/Security Deposits

To assist a youth in securing a place of residence, it may be helpful to issue a "promise to pay" letter to the landlord/agency providing rental accommodation. Such a form letter is available on the Youth Services intranet site

http://icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/youth_agreement.htm.

In discussing with the youth responsibilities associated with a damage/security deposit, the following are important points:

- Damage/security deposits can be portable and may be applied to next rental.
- Significant property damage is reasonable grounds to trigger a formal full review (and possible termination) of their YA. Although there may not be any overt statement in the youth's PFI that the youth will keep their accommodation in good condition, in supporting a youth to independently live in rental accommodation, it is implied that the youth will minimally keep their accommodation in the condition they found it (as per the landlord/tenancy legislation). Refer to http://icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/youth_agreement.htm for more information.

- The agreed upon expectations around repayment of deposits (if any).

Difficulties can often be associated with the repayment of damage/security deposits. Often youth do not have the means to save up for the purchase of security deposits at the eventual termination of their YA, and often it just means transference from their monthly funds. Whether security/damage deposits for shelter are repayable could be differential on the basis of how many are issued and the circumstances pertaining to individual youth .

If repayment of damage/security deposits is chosen, the information leaflet, *Security Deposits are Repayable Benefits*, can be used in full or in part in explaining rental responsibilities to the youth. Establishing repayment of a damage deposit with youth usually starts by the signing of a promissory note in conjunction with the dispensing of the actual damage deposit. The form, *Promise to Pay Security Deposit* (CF0730) can be used for this purpose. All support tools and forms can be found on the Youth Services website at

icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/youth_agreement.htm .

If a promissory note is signed, it is important to discuss and agree with the youth on the way in which repayment of the damage deposit will work best for the youth in terms of when and how. Several options are possible. Repayment could happen at one time through the youth saving up money and submitting a cheque, or a schedule could be established over a period of time (e.g., 3 months, 6 months or a year) where smaller amounts are withheld from their regular YA support payments, or some other process. In developing this process, it may be helpful to consult with regional financial personnel to ensure whatever process for repayment that is being established with the youth will work administratively.

Bank Accounts

Where a youth does not have a bank account, the youth may require assistance in setting up one (e.g., through contracted youth support worker). To make payments directly to youth in most cases, youth will require a bank account. If required, the delegated worker assists the youth in setting up a bank account. This may involve supporting the youth in obtaining additional picture identification (e.g., BC ID). For further information on identification requirements for setting up either a bank or credit union account, refer to the procedures on “Setting up Banking Accounts” (and direct deposit where applicable) on the Youth Services intranet site at

http://icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/youth_agreement.htm.

Payments to Suppliers and Youth

For preferred procedures for making direct payments to suppliers (including landlords or utility service providers), consult your regional financial officer. They will be able to provide more information regarding the use of administrative instruments, such as Purchase Documents (P-Docs), Purchase Cards, cheques or other financial payment mechanisms authorized and/or preferred within your region. Where direct payments with utility service providers are put in effect for hydro/gas/heat, telephone, etc., the form, *Direct Billing Utility Service Requests* (CF0720) (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/youth_agreement.htm) may be used for such purposes.

Third-party payments on behalf of the youth usually only take place if a written third-party agreement exists between the Ministry and a third party, which authorizes such payments (e.g., BC Hydro).

Federal Funding Reimbursement for Aboriginal Youth

Funding for Youth Agreements with aboriginal youth (if so identified) may be reimbursed by the Federal Government. For special administrative procedures for identifying youth in Youth Agreements as aboriginal for federal funding purposes, consult with regional financial operations personnel.

Public Trustee

A delegated worker may wish to consider assisting a youth to contact the Public Trustee where settlement money, an inheritance, an inheritance in trust or income

from an inheritance might benefit the youth during or following their time in a Youth Agreement.

Parental Contribution to the Youth's YA

The standards, policy and procedures related to a parent's contribution to a youth entering a Youth Agreement is covered under *CFS Standard 10* and the Reference Guide: *Parental Contributions to a Child's Care*. Specifically in regards to a YA, *CFS Standard 10* (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/manuals/cfd_policy/cfd_service_standards.pdf) policy states that:

“Consider waiving a parent's financial contribution when... in the case of a youth agreement, requiring the parent to contribute is not in the youth's best interests.”

Although parental contribution ought to be considered wherever possible with the youth's parents, the Youth Agreement itself is not dependent on a Maintenance Agreement being signed.

Where a parent cannot contribute financially but still wishes to support their youth, sometimes creative “in kind” contributions can be facilitated or supported (e.g., start-up items to furnish the youth's accommodation).

If a youth moves from an “in care” service plan (e.g., VCA, SNA or TCO) to a Youth Agreement, where maintenance agreements are in place, it may be prudent to request a renewal of the Maintenance Agreement with the parent.

Regardless of the outcome in considering a maintenance agreement, the parent of a youth entering a YA does not receive the Federal Child Tax Benefit or the provincial Family Bonus benefits during the time the youth is under a Youth Agreement. The parent can contact Canada Revenue Agency with any questions they may have.

13. Developing a YA ~

Step #3: Entering into a Legal Agreement

STANDARD 13
ENTERING INTO A YOUTH AGREEMENT
<p>In addition to the Youth Agreement statutory timeframes and requirements listed directly below, prior to signing any Youth Agreement (initial or renewed), the following are completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• proof of the youth's identity is on file.• the consent to disclosure of necessary personal and file information associated with signing a Youth Agreement is explained and agreed upon.• the terms of the Youth Agreement are reviewed with the youth to ensure understanding. <p>Each Youth Agreement (CF0700) with component Plan for Independence and Schedule A are signed by the youth and a duly delegated representative of a <i>CF&CS</i> director, and copies are provided to the youth.</p>

Statutory Terms and Requirements

According to *CF&CSA* Section 12:

- initial term of a Youth Agreement must not exceed three (3) months.
- A YA may be renewed for terms of up to six (6) months.
- A Youth Agreement does not continue past a youth's 19th birthday.
- The director must recommend that the youth seek advice from an independent third party.

Establishing Identity

Proof of youth personal identity will have been required to establish eligibility regarding age, but is also essential in establishing that youth are in fact who they say they are prior to entering into a legal agreement with them. Refer to Standards 5 for more information on ID.

Understanding Their Legal Contract

Important aspects of the YA to ensure youth understanding of include:

- the start and end dates.
- goals, youth commitments, services provided, and expectations/ requirements associated with signing a Youth Agreement.
- the number of days notice agreed upon or required if either the youth or the director wish to terminate the agreement (minimum of 7 days notice if the director is terminating).

Term of Youth Agreement Services

Note that entering into an initial agreement for the maximum period permitted by legislation may not be necessarily in the youth's best interest.

The services provided under a Youth Agreement are only authorized by the legal agreement itself under *CF&CSA* s. 12.2, and thus legitimized only within the specified dates of the agreement. Services provided before or after the agreement dates would

be paid for through some other means (e.g., Support Services to Youth, “SSY” under CF&CSA s. 12.1 or other service options available locally).

Independent Third Party Advice

Recommending that the youth seek independent third party advice prior to signing their YA is both necessary and prudent to ensure that the youth understands the binding legal agreement they are entering into and what is expected of them. Non-performance according to the agreed upon goals, expectations and requirements outlined under a Youth Agreement has definite and potentially serious consequences for the youth up to and including termination of the agreement.

An *independent third party* may be defined as anyone who is not involved with an agency that administers, delivers or provides services to the youth through a Youth Agreement. This person could be further characterized as someone with no conflict of interest, whose judgement the youth trusts and who will not financially benefit from the Youth Agreement (e.g., an aunt, a friend, a school counselor/teacher, a community program worker, a member of a community social group).

Independent third party advice does not imply legal advice.

If Agreement Cannot be Reached

When agreement with a youth cannot be reached (including goals within a *Plan for Independence* or payments within a *Schedule A*):

- it may be helpful to advise youth of other services that may be available to them, including referral to community agencies and services.
- it is important to assess the need to make a report to Child Protection.

Other Signatures

Depending on regional clinical and financial policy/practice, Youth Agreements, Plans for Independence and Schedule A's may require other signatures (e.g., clinical supervisor or authorized spending authority).

Copies of Agreements and Consent to Disclosure

The youth is entitled to receive copies of all major pieces of documentation in their Youth Agreement process. With youth consultation and consent, others involved in supporting their Youth Agreement may be provided copies of the youth's agreement documentation.

Consent means the consent of a youth to release of information (see also top of CF0700). Others who might receive a copy of a youth's *Youth Agreement* (in part or in whole depending on their involvement) include but is not limited to:

- the youth's contracted support worker,
- members of the youth's family,
- the youth's aboriginal community,
- the youth's therapist, counsellor or doctor (e.g., addictions or mental health practitioner), or
- the youth's probation officer.

14. Monitoring a Youth Agreement

STANDARD 14

MONITORING A YOUTH AGREEMENT

The commitments and progress of a youth in a Youth Agreement are closely monitored as stipulated in the youth's Plan for Independence to address the youth's risk factors through:

- regular contact with the youth; and
- collaborative contact with other involved individuals and practitioners.

Where circumstances significantly change within a youth's life, additional contact, home visits and collaboration are facilitated to address the changes.

If the youth is not fulfilling their commitments as specified within the Plan for Independence, the youth is informed of their non-performance that may trigger a full review and/or termination of their Youth Agreement.

Home visits are completed with the youth present, and as specified in the monitoring section of the *Plan for Independence*.

Monitoring Roles and Responsibilities

Where monitoring involves other youth service providers and professionals, it is helpful to make clear individual roles and responsibilities in the monitoring process.

Monitoring in practice involves an evidence-based approach that verifies expectations and confirms actions, and includes regular meetings and home visits with the youth according to the Plan for Independence.

Frequency of Monitoring and Home Visits

There is usually a higher need for more frequent (i.e., at least weekly) face-to-face meetings with the youth during the first three months of a YA. Likewise, more frequent or regular home visits at the beginning of a first YA by a contracted youth worker or the delegated worker may be a proactive way of implementing a supportive and safe *PFI*. As an agreement progresses and worker confidence in the youth's ability to manage their accommodation increases, home visits might be less necessary and become less frequent.

Conversely, concerns around the youth's progress may also dictate a need for more frequent meetings, and possibly a full review of their agreement. It may be wise to increase meetings and home visits in circumstances that include, but are not limited to the following:

- a change in residences.
- a major shift in the youth's peer group association.
- the youth is going through a turbulent period due to rehabilitation (e.g., mental health or addictions therapy).
- the youth is experiencing a personal/family crisis of some sort.
- the youth may be experiencing a major setback or disappointment in regards to their personal goals.

Reasonable Level of Safety

In a Youth Agreement, youth are primarily responsible for keeping themselves safe. By the time they have been screened for eligibility for a YA, the delegated worker will have been convinced that with supports identified the youth has such capacity. In YA's, representatives of the Ministry are not the youth's guardian or custodian, but provide reasonable levels of support to assist youth in creating safe and secure accommodation for themselves. Home visits help to ensure a reasonable level of safety and well-being exists for youth.

Vicarious Liability

With home visits that are performed by contracted youth workers, it is important to be aware of the issue of vicarious liability, so that the delegated worker obtains sufficient information from contracted workers to ensure reasonable levels of safety and well-being exist for youth within their accommodation. Among other risks identified for a particular youth, the following environmental risk factors ought to be considered:

- secure entry way to their apartment building,
- proper locking mechanisms on doors and windows,
- evidence of criminal or high-risk activity in close proximity to the youth's accommodation,
- evidence of contact with others who present risk to the youth well-being (e.g., pimps, drug-involved persons), or
- unsanitary conditions related to plumbing facilities.

Restraining Orders

If required, a restraining order may be used to address the safety of a youth while in a Youth Agreement. A delegated worker with Category 4 delegation may obtain a restraining order under Section 98 of the *CF&CS Act* by following the procedures outlined in *Court Procedures for Child Protection*

(icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/manuals/cfd_policy/refguide_adminprocedures.pdf)

15. Amending, Reviewing and Renewing a Youth Agreement

STANDARD 15

AMENDING, REVIEWING AND RENEWING A YOUTH AGREEMENT

Minor amendments to better meet the needs of a youth that do not change the start or expiration dates of a Youth Agreement are documented along with the youth's consent.

A Youth Agreement is reviewed in full with the youth:

- a minimum of two weeks prior to the expiry of an existing agreement.
- at the request of the youth; and
- at the discretion of the delegated worker:
 - when there is non-compliance with the terms of the agreement, or
 - when there is a significant event or change in the youth's life.

When reviewing an agreement, the youth's best interests are assessed in collaboration with the people who contributed to the development of the agreement.

A Youth Agreement renewal and the length of the agreement reflects the youth's best interests, capabilities, goals and needs as assessed through monitoring and review of the previous agreement.

A renewed *Youth Agreement* and its component parts are developed in accordance with Standards 11 to 13.

Amending an Agreement

Legal agreements are time-sensitive, and once signed, the start or end dates cannot be changed. To do so, makes the original agreement null and void, and essentially a new agreement is being signed.

If a Youth Agreement requires substantial changes or amendments, it may be best to terminate the agreement and develop a new one. The rule of thumb around "substantial changes" would be the degree of perceived complexity that is apparent when changes are attempted. However, substantial changes might also be those that change the overall direction and spirit of the agreement.

If an amendment affects the spending under a Schedule A, necessary approval from the required spending authority may be required.

To assist with minor amendments to Schedule A's and direct billing payments, the forms, Modification Agreement (CF0702) and Direct Billing Utility Service Requests (CF0720) are available on-line at

icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/youth_agreement.htm.

Non-Compliance

Non-compliance with the terms of the Youth Agreement would include:

- the youth is not maintaining their personal safety commitments specified within the PFI,
- the youth is engaging in high-risk behaviour or high-risk living arrangements that are inconsistent to their personal safety commitments specified within the PFI, or
- the youth does not meet their goal commitments specified within their PFI, and demonstrates lack of readiness to work within the terms set out in the Youth Agreement.

Significant Changes/Events

Significant change in the youth's life could include changes in the youth's living arrangements, as well as overt behaviours or reported information that are a serious cause for concern. Examples of significant events might be:

- significant property damage to the youth's accommodation (It may not be any overt statement in the youth's Plan for Independence that the youth will keep their accommodation in good condition. However, in supporting a youth to independently live in rental accommodation, it is implied that the youth will not 'trash' their apartment).
- the youth has significantly mismanaged their finances (It is implied within components of the agreement that the youth generally spend money on the things agreed upon in the YA. Money provided for food or medication should not be spent on stereo equipment if it jeopardizes the youth's health.)
- the youth has become involved with criminal activity.

Reviewing an Agreement Prior to Expiration

When reviewing and determining whether to renew the youth's agreement, the following provides for an informed review:

- the youth's progress towards independence.
- the youth's progress in managing the risks in their life.
- alternative goals/strategies within their YA that provide for more realistic expectations and greater likelihood of successful attainment. Youth are bound to make mistakes as part of their development and learning. This needs to be factored into the modification of future plans and goals.
- alternatives to a Youth Agreement that may better meet the needs of the youth, including new options that may now be available to assist family or extended family to care for the youth.

Length of Agreement Renewal

The maximum period of six months allowed for renewal agreements is not necessarily in the youth's best interests. The term of an agreement should not last longer than is required to meet the youth's needs.

Maintenance Agreements at Renewal

If a Maintenance Agreement has been associated with the Youth Agreement that is ending, the Maintenance Agreement may need renewal. Due to changes in family relationships, an initial Maintenance Agreement may be effective in soliciting family connection and support at renewal. (Refer to Standard 12 for more details).

16. Terminating a Youth Agreement

STANDARD 16

TERMINATING AN AGREEMENT

A Youth Agreement is terminated whenever:

- the youth is taken into the care of the director.
- the youth turns 19 years of age.
- the youth dies.
- regardless of age, cohabits with a person to whom the youth is married or with whom the youth has entered into a marriage-like relationship.
- the youth returns home to family.
- the caseworker assesses and determines that:
 - the youth is not fulfilling his/her commitments within the timelines outlined in the agreement's Plan for Independence and review mechanisms and remedial opportunities have not been successful.
 - the circumstances that led to the youth needing assistance under an agreement have been resolved.
 - the agreement no longer meets the youth's needs or is no longer in the youth's best interests.

The process of agreement termination is in accordance with specifications in the Youth Agreement.

Prior to or at termination, the delegated worker:

- advises the youth of other options and services that may be available to them to meet their needs.
- explains pertinent administrative responsibilities to the youth.
- describes complaint processes available to them.
- notifies pertinent practitioners and others involved with the YA and assesses the need for a referral to Child Protection services.

Marriage-Like Relationships

Youth Agreements are not intended to support emancipation into marriage-like relationships. Refer to Standard 7 for more information on "marriage-like relationships".

Giving Notice

As specified within the youth's YA:

- Both the youth and the director's representative may terminate an agreement by notifying each other verbally or in writing within the time frame specified in the agreement.
- Where the director gives the youth notice, written notice or confirmation of notice, including the reasons for terminating the agreement is provided to the youth either by delivering personally or mailing by double register to the last known address of the youth.

Administrative Responsibilities

Depending on youth plans following agreement termination, youth may need to be advised of various administrative responsibilities including:

- the need to give landlord notice, or meet ongoing rental payment responsibility.
- damage deposit responsibilities as required and/or agreed upon.
- the termination of Ministry involvement with utility payments and any subsequent transfer of payment responsibilities to the youth.

Administrative requirements for the termination of payments associated with Youth Agreements may vary between regions. To assist in terminating a youth's agreement and the payments associated with it, tools and forms, such as *Direct Billing Utility Service Requests (CF0720)* are available on the Youth Services intranet site at http://icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/youth_agreement.htm.

Closing Summary

Terminating a Youth Agreement will usually involve a closing file summary to provide a synopsis of what transpired around termination: who terminated for what reasons and to where the youth transitioned (e.g., successful transition to independence, return to family, return to street life, etc). Many youth may not be successful in their first or even second attempt at a Youth Agreement. Viewed positively, termination of their agreement may actually be part of their developmental learning process. Having an accurate picture of where things left off can greatly enhance the assessment process the next time the youth presents in need of assistance.

Refer to Standard #3 for file management details.

17. Critical Injuries and Serious Incidents

STANDARD 17

SERIOUS INCIDENTS INVOLVING YOUTH

The designated director in the region is informed within 24 hours of serious incidents involving youth in a short-term safety plan or a Youth Agreement.

Linkage to CFS Standards

Requirements are prescribed in *CFS Standard 25: "Notification of Death, Critical Injuries and Serious Incidents"* (icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/manuals/cfd_policy/cfd_service_standards.pdf) pertaining to death or critical injury of a youth who has received Youth Services within the past 12 months. Although the threshold for reporting "serious incidents" involving youth receiving Youth Services is different than the threshold for children in care, the procedures are the same.

Circumstances that may constitute "serious incidents" for youth receiving Youth Services are as follows:

- suicide attempts;
- the youth's involvement or exposure to life threatening circumstances, crimes of violence, robbery or major property damage; and
- the youth is missing for more than 10 days or in imminent danger (See below for more detailed considerations).

Missing Youth: Assessing Risk for Imminent Danger

In determining if a youth's absence constitutes a reportable circumstance, staff can review all available relevant information pertaining to the youth including current file information, and consultation with other involved practitioners (e.g., contracted youth workers, police and Crown counsel).

The following risk factors might be considered when assessing the unexpected absence of a youth:

- the youth's level of involvement or former involvement in the sex and/or drug trade;
- current court action against a youth's former pimp where the youth may be subpoenaed to witness;
- a drug case currently before the court where the youth may be subpoenaed to witness;
- the youth's involvement in domestic violence with a violent former partner or spouse;
- history of violent or abusive family members; and
- involvement with violent crime, including gangs, severe indebtedness, and others seeking revenge.

To obtain additional copies of the **Standards for Youth Support Services and Agreements**, refer to:

- the Youth Services intranet website at icw.mcf.gov.bc.ca/provserv/yserv/index.htm or
- the MCFD internet website at www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/publications/youth.htm.