

MOVING BEYOND NEGLECT

Recommendations for **Child Welfare Agencies**

We recommend that child welfare agencies implement the following outstanding recommendations on child neglect :



Update assessment protocols to clearly differentiate between cases in which a caregiver neglects a child's needs, and cases in which a caregiver is unable to meet those needs because they lack access to essential resources and services. Require workers to stipulate how they will address such structural barriers in their service plans.



Provide workers with additional training and ongoing educational opportunities to understand the challenges faced by the families they serve, including:

- Training to understand historic and structural factors, such as poverty, trauma, racism and colonialism and the impact they have on families.
- Nation-specific Indigenous cultural competency training based on the region in which agencies are situated and the populations workers interact with.
- Opportunities to explore their own social position and cultivate an awareness of how their experiences and identity inform their perspective/contribute to biases.



Amend assessment tools and practices to distinguish between immediate danger to a child and long-term risk to their development, with the understanding that the latter is much more common in cases of neglect.



End reliance on actuarial tools to predict risk posed by a caregiver to a child, as there is little evidence demonstrating that these tools produce accurate or reliable projections.



Counteract the culture of fear in child welfare agencies and increase risk tolerance to allow workers to use their professional judgement and creative problem solving.

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Establish multiple lines of intervention according to the level of risk to the child (i.e. Differential Response), starting with prevention. Mandate cooperative and minimally invasive approaches be used whenever possible, and urgent protection measures, such as apprehension to be used only when there is an imminent risk of serious harm to a child.



Collaborate with governmental and community organizations to provide wraparound services that address the problems underlying “neglect.” Ensure that workers are familiar with service delivery partners and equipped to provide culturally responsive referrals and community connections.



Create conditions that allow workers to invest the time and resources required to establish trusting relationships with families and to use holistic approaches to assessment and intervention.



Increase the number of workers whose sole purpose is to support the well-being of families.



Adopt assessment tools that are holistic, strengths-based, trauma-informed and culturally responsive.



Ensure that child welfare staff reflect the diversity of service users