

Effective Date: April 30, 2020

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The need for collaborative responses to support families of children/youth with disabilities and/or children/youth who are experiencing vulnerability is more important than ever. The focus of this practice bulletin is to provide guidance to Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)/Delegated Aboriginal Agency (DAA) staff on collaborative approaches that can be explored with school district personnel where children/youth and their family/caregiver may benefit from in-school support options.

EDUC/MCFD Collaborative Response:

- At a provincial level, MCFD and EDUC staff continue to work together on an integrated approach to support students with disabilities and vulnerable learners in this unique time.
- At a local and regional level, MCFD/DAA staff should contact their local school district staff or school principal to facilitate a coordination of services. A list of Inclusive Education Contacts for each School District may be found here: [School District Contacts](#)

Pathway to Collaborative Supports:

A) Identification of Need

MCFD/DAA staff identify children/youth in care or being supported by MCFD/DAA that would benefit from in class support options. Considerations may include:

- Child/youth may be struggling socio-emotionally contributing to challenges in the family/caregiver(s) ability to balance their care needs. For example, the disruption of routine (not going into class for school) and not seeing their community of supports is destabilizing for the child/youth resulting in increased challenges for child/youth such as difficult behavior, loss of skills that were advancing.
- Children/youth and their families who may be struggling socio-economically.
- Children/youth known to MCFD/DAA who may be at risk of placement disruption or instability and where breakdown may be imminent without additional school supports being put in place.
- Situations where planning is underway, such as return to home (if child/youth is in care).

B) Steps to Collaborative Planning

It is understood that every child/youth, family/caregiver circumstance is unique and evolving. Therefore, where MCFD/DAA staff have identified a new urgency where a child/youth with special needs and/or child/youth experiencing vulnerabilities would benefit from in class participation the following process is recommended:

- MCFD/DAA staff support family to connect with their child/youth's school Principal and ask to be actively involved in planning
- MCFD/DAA Worker consults with Team Leader
- MCFD/DAA Team Leader notifies their Director of Operations/DAA Manager
- MCFD/DAA Worker coordinates with the family/caregiver and the School Principal to meet and collaboratively plan.

C) Strategic Operational Planning

MCFD/DAA staff continue to be engaged with children/youth with disabilities and/or those who are experiencing vulnerabilities. MCFD Directors of Operations/DAA Managers meet regularly with their teams to monitor and anticipate which families may be presenting with increased risks and whose child(ren)/youth would benefit from opportunities for in person school participation.

MCFD Directors of Operations/DAA Managers establish regular check in meetings with School District staff (eg. [Director of Student Support Services or District Principal of Inclusive Education](#)). It is recommended that MCFD Directors of Operations/DAA Managers provide a summary over view of supports available to families during this period and key issues families are navigating. School District staff may similarly provide an over view of supports the school district is implementing and key issues faced by families.

D) Planning Considerations

Collaborative planning between the family/caregiver, MCFD/DAA staffing and the School should consider the following:

- Child/youth needs
- Family/caregiver's needs, and
- Supports that can offered by the school in accordance with the guidance and recommendations of the Provincial Health Officer

It is important to acknowledge that supports and services provided by MCFD/DAA, school districts and schools may be functioning differently during this COVID19 period. For example, approaches taken in one school or school district may not be the same in other schools or school districts including independent schools operating on First Nation lands as communicated by First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC). The goal is to work collaboratively to find ways to assist the child/youth and their family/caregiver and prevent children/youth becoming so destabilized they experience regression, loss of skills, or families break down due to caregiver burnout. It will be important to explore a range of possible approaches.

WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

If you have further questions, please contact your Director of Practice or if you are with a DAA, your Practice Analyst.