

PROTOCOLS FOR FOSTER HOMES

PART 1: Protocol For Investigating Abuse or Neglect In Foster Homes

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PART 2: Protocol For Resolving Issues Between Foster Parents and Vancouver Island MCFD Staff

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PART 3: Protocol For Reviewing Quality of Care Concerns in Foster Homes

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**Ministry of Children and Family Development
Vancouver Island Region**



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Protocol For Investigating Abuse or Neglect In Foster Homes



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Vancouver Island Region

PROTOCOL FOR INVESTIGATING REPORTS OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT IN FOSTER HOMES

Purpose

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), Vancouver Island Region has developed the following protocols for dealing with issues and concerns about foster parents:

- Protocol for Investigating Abuse or Neglect in Foster Homes
In circumstances where there have been allegations that a child has been or is likely to be harmed in the foster home, the *Protocol for Investigating Abuse or Neglect in Foster Homes* is to be applied.
- Protocol for Reviewing Quality of Care Concerns in Foster Homes
Where there have been allegations that the rights of a child in care have been breached or the quality of care provided to a child has not met the standards as described in the *Standards for Foster Homes*, a Quality of Care Review is to be conducted.

Use the *Protocol for Reviewing Quality of Care Concerns in Foster Homes*, which is located within this document, following the *Protocol for Investigating Abuse or Neglect in Foster Home*. See Practice Advisory #12 (September, 2006) *Foster Parent Protocols* for further information.

- Protocol for Resolving Issues between Foster Parents and Ministry Staff
The *Protocol for Resolving Issues between Foster Parents and Ministry Staff* applies whenever there is a disagreement between a social worker and a foster parent regarding:
 - care issues
 - plans of care
 - goals for the child
 - issues regarding caregiver standards
 - caregiver support
 - administrative or financial issues, or
 - any other issue not covered by the *Protocol for Investigating Abuse or Neglect in Foster Homes* and that are not about the services to the child

Please refer to the *Protocol for Resolving Issues between Foster Parents and Ministry Staff*.

- Complaint Resolution Process
Where the foster parent has a complaint on behalf of a child in care, about the quality or eligibility of services for that child, the foster parent may contact one of the Regional Complaint Resolution Consultants to discuss their eligible concerns.

This document replaces the former regional protocols released in 2003. These protocols have been developed in partnership with the BC Federation of Foster Parents Association (BCFFPA),

the Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents (FAFP), and the Foster Parent Support Services Society (FPSSS).

Foster parents and the staff of the Vancouver Island Region share responsibility for meeting the public's expectations about the quality of care children receive in foster homes. These expectations are mandated by law under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA)*.

The goal of the protocols is to clarify the roles, responsibilities and rights of everyone involved in investigations. It is acknowledged that the highly vulnerable children foster parents care for and high standard of care expected of them puts them in a position where there are more likely than the general population to undergo scrutiny and receive concerns about the care they provide. Moreover, given the complexity of decisions surrounding the children and families in which foster parents are involved, there is a need for an effective framework for resolving differences while strengthening foster care placements and preserving relationships between caregivers and the Ministry.

Definitions

For the purposes of this document:

- “child” means a person under the age of 19
- “foster home” means a foster parent with a resource file (RE) for which MCFD is responsible
- “foster parent” means a “caregiver” as defined in the *CFCSA*
- “MCFD director” means a person delegated by a director under *CFCSA* for MCFD

Scope

This protocol framework applies whenever a report is made that a child under the age of 19 has been or is likely to be abused or neglected in a ministry foster home. It includes children in care and children placed in foster homes for respite. It does not apply to foster homes under the exclusive responsibility of CLBC or delegated Aboriginal agencies. This protocol is to be used in concert with the following: *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA)*; *Protocols with the Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia*; *Child and Family Development Service Standards*; *Children in Care Service Standards*; *Caregiver Support Service Standards*; *Quality Assurance Standards*; policies and procedures developed within the MCFD regions; and, the *Protocol For Investigating Abuse or Neglect in Foster Homes under the Responsibility of Community Living British Columbia*

Support

This protocol is intended to ensure that foster parents receive the support they desire during an investigation. Foster parents have a right to a support person of their choice.

Ministry staff ensures that the support person(s) for the foster parent(s) understands and signs a confidentiality agreement prepared by the Director, prior to the support person's involvement in the protocol process.

Application of the Protocol

Determining Whether to Investigate or Conduct a Quality of Care Review

Whenever information is received regarding concerns about the care or treatment of a child in a foster home, the director has a duty to assess the information and determine if an investigation is required.

Use the *Protocol for Investigating Allegations of Abuse or Neglect in Foster Homes* in circumstances where there have been allegations that a foster child has been or is likely to be harmed. Where there have been allegations that the rights of a child in care have been breached or the quality of care provided to a child has not met the standards as described in the *Standards for Foster Homes*, a Quality of Care Review is to be conducted. Use the *Protocol for Reviewing Quality of Care Concerns in Foster Homes*. See Practice Advisory #12 (September, 2006) *Foster Parent Protocols* for further information.

Grounds for Commencing a Protocol Investigation

A protocol investigation should be undertaken whenever information is received indicating that:

- a child has been, or is likely to be, physically harmed by the child's caregiver;
- a child has been, or is likely to be, sexually abused or exploited by the child's caregiver;
- a child has been, or is likely to be, physically harmed, sexually abused or sexually exploited by another person and if the child's caregiver is unwilling or unable to protect the child;
- a child has been, or is likely to be, physically harmed because of neglect by the child's caregiver;
- a child is emotionally harmed by the caregiver's conduct;
- a child is deprived of necessary health care;
- the development of a child is likely to be seriously impaired by a treatable condition and the child's caregiver refuses to provide treatment; and,
- the caregiver of a child is unable or unwilling to care for the child and has not made adequate provision for the child's care.

For the purpose of this document, but without limiting the meaning of "sexually abused" or "sexually exploited", a child has been or is likely to be sexually abused or sexually exploited if the child has been, or is likely to be:

- encouraged or helped to engage in prostitution, or
- coerced or inveigled into engaging in prostitution.

For the purposes of this document, a child is emotionally harmed if the child demonstrates severe:

- anxiety,
- depression,
- withdrawal, or
- self-destructive or aggressive behaviour.

Investigation Steps

The following steps constitute a protocol investigation:

- Stage 1 – Assessing the child protection report and determining the most appropriate response (max 5 days)
- Stage 2 – The protocol investigation (max 30 days)
- Stage 3 – The protocol investigation outcome
- Stage 4 – Meeting to report the investigation results
- Stage 5 - Resolving disagreements about the investigation
- Stage 6 – Service quality assurance

Stage 1 - Assessing a child protection report and determining the most appropriate response

When a report has been made that a child may need protection, as described under *Grounds for Commencing a Protection Investigation* (on previous page), it must be assessed as follows:

Investigating Social Worker (Child Protection)

The investigating social worker is responsible for all aspects of the investigation, from commencement to conclusion. The social worker:

- Receives and assesses the report;
- Consults and shares information with the Community Services Manager, the designated Team Leader, the resource social worker, and the child's social worker;
- Completes an immediate safety assessment for each child in the foster home;

Community Services Manager (Child Protection and Guardianship) – or designate

- Makes the decision about the appropriate response to a child protection report within 5 days of receiving the report, based on the information received regarding the safety and well-being of a child in a foster home;
- During the investigation, determines any immediate action needed to ensure the safety and well-being of any children in the home;
- Approves the investigation plan and oversees implementation of the plan;
- Determines, in consultation with the Team Leader responsible for the resource, if the child can remain in or be returned to the home;
- Informs the foster parents in writing with a copy to the resource Social Worker, within 5 days of the commencement of an investigation.

Community Services Manager (Resources) – or designate

- Ensures that the foster parent is informed of their right to access a foster parent support person;

Resource Social Worker

- In the event that the decision is made not to conduct a protocol investigation, the resource social worker informs the foster parent of the report and the decision. All reports will also be discussed between the foster parent and the resource worker in the annual review.
- Confirms with the foster parent(s) that they have received a letter informing them of the investigation, advises the foster parent(s) of the investigation process and their rights, including the right to access available supports.

Child's Social Worker

- The director responsible for the child's care completes and submits a Reportable Circumstances report using the "Alleged Abuse or Neglect of a Child in Care by an Approved Caregiver" template. Reports are submitted as soon as possible after the report is received when a decision has been made to commence a protocol investigation.
- The Public Guardian and Trustee is informed through the Reportable Circumstances report when there is a death, critical injury, or serious incident involving a child who is in the care of the director, or whenever there is an allegation of abuse or neglect in a foster home that results in a decision to investigate.
- Informs the parents of children in the foster home that an investigation under this protocol will be commenced and the reasons. This occurs in all cases when a child is in care by agreement and respite care. Parents of children in care by court order are informed as appropriate.

Stage 2 – The protocol investigation

Investigating Social Worker (Child Protection)

- Plans and carries out the investigation according to the Child and Family Development Service Standards;
- At the commencement of the investigation, meets with the foster parents to explain:
 - the concerns,
 - the process of the investigation;

Community Services Manager (Child Protection and Guardianship) – or designate

- Informs the foster parents in writing of the investigation and updates the foster parent on progress every two weeks during the investigation.
- Makes decisions about placement of the child if it becomes necessary to change placements.

Community Services Manager (Resources) – or designate

- Ensures that a support person is available to the foster parent.

Resource Social Worker

- Throughout the investigation or intervention, the resource social worker assists the foster family by providing information and offering ongoing support.
- With the written consent of the foster parent, contacts and informs the support person(s) and/or agency identified by the foster parents that an investigation has begun, and arranges for the support person(s) where indicated to sign a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix O), prepared by the director prior to the support person's involvement in the protocol process.
- Provides the investigating social worker with relevant information about the foster home.

Child's Social Worker

The primary responsibilities of the child's Social Worker:

- If the child is moved from the foster home during the investigation, continues all payments related to service and maintenance for up to 45 days from the date the child is moved unless it is determined earlier than 45 days that the child will not be replaced in the home (The appropriate manager may extend payments beyond 45 days in cases of financial hardship or other unusual circumstances.)
- Maintains contact with and support for the child throughout the investigation.

- Prepares and assists the child in the case of a placement change or any other changes in the child's comprehensive plan of care.
- Informs the child's parent or legal guardian and, where the child is aboriginal, the child's aboriginal community, and for children over the age of 12 years, the child, about any changes in plans or placement of the child.
- Provides the investigating social worker with information about the child's history and circumstances.
- Involves the child and ensure the child's views are taken into consideration in any contemplated planning or placement changes and communicate related decisions to the child and, as applicable, the child's parent or legal guardian, relevant delegated staff and others involved with the child.

Foster Parent Support Person(s)

The support person may be affiliated with:

- Foster Parent Support Services Society support workers
- Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents support workers,
- designated foster parent support persons, and
- friends or family and/or any person the foster parent identifies as a support.

A foster parent support person:

- Provides information to the foster parent(s) on the process regarding protocol investigations.
- Provides information on avenues of support available to the foster parent(s).
- Supports the foster parent(s) throughout the process of the protocol investigation.
- Maintains confidentiality regarding information about the foster parent(s), foster parents' family and/or children in care by signing a non-disclosure and confidentiality agreement (see Appendix 0).
- Contributes to maintaining a relationship between Ministry staff and the foster parent(s).

Stage 3 – The protocol investigation outcome

Investigating Social Worker (Child Protection)

- At the conclusion of the investigation Determines if a child has been or is likely to be harmed by the foster parent.

Community Services Manager (Child Protection and Guardianship) – or designate

- Informs the foster parents in writing, or designates a team leader to do so, of the results of the investigation and decisions affecting the foster parents.
- Makes decisions about placement of the child if it becomes necessary to change placements.

Child's Social Worker

- Meets with the child at the conclusion of the investigation to explain and discuss any issues, decisions, or changes, including any of the child's concerns.

Stage 4 – Meeting to report the investigation results

Investigating Social Worker (Child Protection)

- At the conclusion of the investigation, meets with the foster parents to explain the findings of the investigation.

Resource Social Worker

- At the conclusion of the investigation, joins the investigating social worker in the meeting to discuss the outcome of the investigation with the foster parents. Support persons may be included as requested by the foster parents, as long as they have signed a confidentiality agreement prepared by the director.

Stage 5 - Resolving disagreements about the investigation

Foster parents

- If the foster parent is dissatisfied with the process or outcome of the investigation, the foster parent may, within 14 days of receiving the written decision of the investigation, forward a written request for a review of the decision to the Community Services Manager (Child Protection and Guardianship).

Community Services Manager (Child Protection and Guardianship) – Stage 1

- Within 30 days of receiving the request, review the investigation, reach a decision, and provide written notification to the foster parents of the decision and the reasons for the decision. The Community Services Manager may choose to meet with the foster parents in person to provide the written decision.
- If the foster parent is not satisfied with the decision of the involved Community Services Manager (Child Protection and Guardianship) at the Stage 1 review level, the foster parent may, within 14 days of receiving that decision, forward a written request for a Stage 2 review by the Director of Integrated Practice (or uninvolved designate).

Review by Director of Integrated Practice (or uninvolved designate) – Stage 2

Within 30 days of receiving a request for a review, the Director of Integrated Practice (or uninvolved designate) may complete a review of the investigation, reach a decision, and notify the foster parents (and where applicable the specialized residential resource contractor) of the decision by registered letter.

- The decision of the Director of Integrated Practice (or uninvolved designate) is final.

Stage 6 – Service quality assurance

Director of Integrated Practice

- Ensures there is a regional system of tracking:
 - the number and type of issues requiring assessment or investigation under this protocol,
 - the number of homes with more than one investigation under this protocol in the past year,
 - the levels and types of homes involved (restricted, regular, specialized level 1, 2 or 3), and
 - the number of years of service of the foster parent(s) involved.
- Ensures that, in conjunction with regional staff, regional foster parent organizations and the Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents, there is an annual review and discussion of issues requiring resolution under this protocol, which addresses such issues as:
 - any additional training or support required by foster parents or delegated staff,

- the appropriate matching of children to the skills and resources of foster homes involved,
- the identification of any patterns in the use of the protocol which would guide regional actions to be taken.

Timeframes

Time is of the essence in this protocol. Foster parents shall be informed of the decision to investigate within 5 days of receiving the report. They shall also be informed of the status of the investigation every two weeks from the decision to commence an investigation. The period of time under which the investigation shall occur is 30 days unless extenuating circumstances require the length of time to be extended. In instances where the time period must be extended, the reasons will be explained in writing to the foster parent.

Documentation

Documentation on MIS includes:

- Foster Home Identifying Information;
- Date and nature of the report
- Investigation findings (including whether the report is substantiated);
- Recommendations
- Cross reference to full documentation on file.

The following is documented on the *Detailed Protocol Investigation Report Format* (See Appendix L):

- Foster Home identifying information;
- nature and source of report;
- CICs currently and previously in the home
- Protocol Process including interviews, findings, and recommendations

The foster parent is to receive a summary report of the investigation at its conclusion (see Appendix M). This report shall be drafted by the investigating social worker or other person deemed appropriate by the designated supervisor. It contains:

- nature and description of report
- a summary of steps taken;
- the findings;
- the decision about the ongoing use of the home; and
- recommendations.

A decision **not** to proceed with a protocol investigation is also documented. The decision will include a summary of the report regarding the foster home, the reasons for not initiating a protocol investigation and what, if any, response is taken. The documentation is placed on the foster parent's resource file.

Sample Letters, Consent to Contact a Support Person and a Confidentiality Agreement are included at the end of this document.

Records Management

All records created and received by the MCFD director under this protocol will remain under the custody and control of the director.

The investigating social worker enters the protocol investigation on the resource (RE) file on MIS/SWS and, in that location, stores all records created under this protocol including: a printed copy of the protocol investigation; investigation notes; interviews; correspondence; and all other supporting documentation. All documents are stored on the file in chronological order with the signed copy of the protocol investigation on top. Copies of the protocol investigation may be stored in ORCS/ARCS.

If the Public Guardian and Trustee requests any records created under this protocol, the director may disclose such records to the Public Guardian and Trustee, pursuant to S. 79(h) of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* and in accordance with the director's protocol with the Public Guardian and Trustee.

Appendix 1-A

Sample Letter #1 – From the CSM (Child Protection) informing the foster parents that an investigation has begun and the reasons.

Letterhead

Date

Foster parents

Address

City

Postal Code

Dear

On *(date)* my office received a report concerning a child placed in your care. I have looked into the concern and have asked a child protection social worker to investigate. I am sending you this letter so that you know what was reported and to explain what will happen next.

The report we received concerned *(child's name)*. I am not entitled to tell you who made the report, but the person's main concern was:

(Give a brief summary of the report of abuse or neglect)

I have asked for an investigation because:

(Give a brief explanation)

The social worker who is conducting the investigation will meet with you in person to inform you about the investigation. Your resource social worker will also be at the meeting to provide support to you. Your resource social worker will explain the process to you and the help available through the foster parent association. At the meeting, you will have the chance to give your views of the report and ask any questions you have.

Your resource social worker will act as a support person during the investigation. Your resource social worker will also give you a letter with the name of a person from your foster parent association who can provide support. You have a right to a support person of your choice. You may also hire a lawyer to represent you.

At the end of the investigation, the investigating social worker will prepare a summary of the investigation. I will send you a copy of that summary and the ministry's decision about the matter by *(date)*.

You will find an easy-to-use guide to the investigation process in the Protocols for Foster Homes kit. The kit also contains a detailed description of the process as well as a checklist that you may find helpful.

I encourage you to discuss any concerns about this process with your resource social worker or a representative of the foster parent association. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Community Services Manager, Child Protection

cc: BCFFPA support person
Investigating protection social worker

Appendix 1-B

Sample Letter #2 – From the CSM (Child Protection) informing the foster parents that a report has been received that does not require investigation but that may require a quality of care review.

Letterhead

Date

Foster parents

Address

City

Postal Code

Dear

On *(date)* my office received a report concerning a child placed in your care. I have looked into the concern and am satisfied that there is no reason to investigate any further. I am sending you this letter so that you know what was reported and how the ministry and foster parents deal with these situations.

The report we received concerned *(child's name)*. I am not entitled to tell you who made the report, but the person's main concern was:

(Give a brief summary of the report of abuse or neglect)

I have decided that an investigation is not required because:

(Give a brief explanation)

I have discussed the concern with the child's social worker(s) and your resource social worker. They and other ministry staff are now required to assess whether there is any remaining concern about the child's care in your foster home. Your resource social worker will contact you as soon as possible to talk over the report and to let you know whether any further review of the concern is necessary.

If you do not feel that you have been treated fairly in this process, you may ask the manager responsible for your foster home *(name and phone number of Community Services Manager responsible for the resource)* to begin a formal process to resolve the issue under the Protocol for Resolving Issues. You will find both a summary and a detailed description of this process in the Protocols for Foster Homes kit.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the ministry staff involved with your foster home and the child. A copy will also be placed on the child's file and your foster home file.

I encourage you to participate fully in discussing this matter when you meet with your resource social worker and to raise any questions you have.

Sincerely,

Community Services Manager, Child Protection

cc: Child's social worker
Resource social worker
Community Services Manager responsible for the resource
Community Services Manager responsible for the child

Appendix 1-C

Sample Letter #3 – From the child’s social worker informing the parent apparently entitled to custody that an investigation has begun.

Note: Restricted to non-CCO situations unless an access order has been granted.

Letterhead

Date

Child’s parent
Address
City
Postal Code

Dear

We recently received a report of possible abuse or neglect of your child while in foster care. I am not entitled to tell you who made the report, but the person’s main concern was:

(Give a brief summary of the report of abuse or neglect)

A manager for the ministry has looked into the report and has asked a social worker to investigate. The social worker who will conduct the investigation is *(name of social worker)*.

At the end of the investigation, I will send you a letter to let you know what decision we have made about the placement of your child in the foster home.

If you have any questions about the report or investigation, please contact me. I will be happy to discuss them with you.

Sincerely,

Child’s social worker

cc: Family Services file
Resource social worker
CIC file

Appendix 1-D

Sample Letter #4 – From the child’s social worker to the child’s aboriginal band, agency or community informing them that a report has been received and an investigation has begun.

Note: Only the designated representative of the child’s band, agency or community who has already been involved with the child should receive this information.

Letterhead

Date

Aboriginal band, agency, community
Address
City
Postal Code

Dear

We recently received a report of possible abuse or neglect of *(child’s name)*. The child is a member of *(name of band, agency or community)*. I am sending you this letter so that you know what was reported and how the investigation will proceed.

The report we received indicated that:

(Give a brief summary of the report of abuse or neglect)

The ministry has assigned a child protection social worker to investigate the report. The name of this social worker is *(name of social worker)*.

At the end of the investigation, I will send you a letter to let you know what decision we have made about the placement of the child in the foster home.

If you have any questions about the report or investigation, please contact me. I will be happy to discuss them with you.

Sincerely,

Child’s social worker

cc: Investigating social worker
Child’s file

Appendix 1-E

Sample Letter #5 – From the child’s social worker informing the child with capacity about the investigation.

Letterhead

Date

Child’s name

Address

City

Postal Code

Dear

We recently received a report about the care you are receiving in your foster home. A child protection social worker will meet with you soon to talk about the report. The social worker will also talk to your foster parents and other people who may have information about your foster home.

If you have any questions or worries about what is happening, contact me and I will meet with you to talk them over. If you feel that you would like to have someone (*from your band/community if aboriginal*) with you when you talk to the child protection social worker, let me know and I will try to make sure that the person can be there.

Sincerely,

Child’s social worker

cc: Investigating social worker
Child’s file

Appendix 1-F

Sample Letter #6 – From the CSM (Child Protection) informing the foster parents of the investigation outcome (sent with the protocol investigation summary) WHERE THE HOME IS TO REMAIN OPEN.

Letterhead

Date

Foster parents

Address

City

Postal Code

Dear

On *(date)*, I informed you that the ministry had started an investigation into a report concerning *(child's name)*. The child protection social worker who conducted the investigation was *(name of social worker)*. The investigation is now complete.

I have considered the information gathered during the investigation and have consulted with other ministry staff. We have now reached the following decision:

(State the decision regarding any action needed to ensure the safety and well-being of any children in the home)

The reason for my decision is:

(Give reasons)

We have also reached a decision about the future use of your home:

(State the decision regarding future use of the home)

I have included a copy of the investigation summary with this letter. A copy of this letter and the investigation summary will be placed on the child-in-care's file and on your foster home file.

Your resource social worker and the child protection social worker who conducted the investigation will meet with you as soon as possible to discuss the investigation and the decision. At the meeting, you will have the chance to give your views of the investigation and to discuss any unresolved issues or any support you need.

If you feel the investigation was unfair in any way, you can ask for a review by the Office of the Director of Integrated Practice and Policy. You must send your request in writing within 14 days of receiving this letter. Send your letter to:

(Office of the Director of Integrated Practice and Policy and address)

The Office of the Director of Integrated Practice and Policy will review the investigation and inform you of the result of the review within 30 days. Your resource social worker or BCFFPA support person can provide you with more information and support if you decide to ask for a review. You will find an easy-to-use guide that describes the review process in the Protocols for Foster Homes kit. You can also ask for a review by the Ombudsman at any time.

I encourage you to raise any concerns about the investigation with your resource social worker or BCFFPA representative. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Community Services Manager, Child Protection

Appendix 1-G

Sample Letter #7 – From the CSM (Child Protection) informing the foster parents of the investigation outcome (sent with the protocol investigation summary) WHERE THE HOME IS TO BE CLOSED WITHOUT CAUSE.

Letterhead

Date

Foster parents
Address
City
Postal Code

Dear

On *(date)*, I informed you that the ministry had started an investigation into a report concerning *(child's name)*. The child protection social worker who conducted the investigation was *(name of social worker)*. The investigation is now complete.

I have considered the information gathered during the investigation and have consulted with other ministry staff. I regret to inform you that we will no longer be placing children in your home.

Due to the circumstances of the complaint and the statements made by you and others concerning the allegations, I am not able to conclude with certainty that the allegations that led to the investigation actually occurred as reported. However, the ministry's obligation to children in care is to act solely in their best interests. Given all the circumstances, I have concluded that the ministry would not be fulfilling its obligation if it continued to place children in your home.

Please accept this letter as notice that your foster home is now considered closed. Your contact with the ministry will terminate on *(date)*.

If you feel the investigation was unfair in any way, you can ask for a review by the Office of the Director of Integrated Practice and Policy. You must send your request in writing within 14 days of receiving this letter. Send your letter to:

(Office of the Director of Integrated Practice and Policy and address)

The Office of the Director of Integrated Practice and Policy will review the investigation and inform you of the result of the review within 30 days. Your resource social worker or BCFFPA support person can provide you with more information and support if you decide to ask for a review. You will find an easy-to-use guide that describes the review process in the Protocols for Foster Homes kit. You can also ask for a review by the Ombudsman at any time.

I encourage you to raise any concerns about the investigation with your resource social worker or BCFFPA representative. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Community Services Manager, Child Protection

Appendix 1-H

Sample Letter #8 – From the CSM (Child Protection) informing the foster parents of the investigation outcome (sent with the protocol investigation summary) WHERE THE HOME IS TO BE CLOSED WITH CAUSE.

Letterhead

Date

Foster parents
Address
City
Postal Code

Dear

On *(date)*, I informed you that the ministry had started an investigation into a report concerning *(child's name)*. The child protection social worker who conducted the investigation was *(name of social worker)*. The investigation is now complete.

I have considered the information gathered during the investigation and have consulted with other ministry staff. We have now reached to following decision:
(State the decision)

The reason for our decision is:
(Give reason or reasons)

I regret to inform you that after carefully examining the investigation findings, we have decided that we will no longer be placing children in your home. Our reason(s) for this decision is/are:
(Give reason or reasons)

Please accept this letter as notice that your foster home is now considered closed. Your contract with the ministry will terminate on *(date)*.

I have included a copy of the investigation summary with this letter. A copy of this letter and the investigation summary will be placed on the child-in-care's file and on your foster home file.

Your resource social worker and the child protection social worker who conducted the investigation will meet with you as soon as possible to discuss the investigation and the decision. At the meeting, you will have the chance to give your views of the investigation and to discuss any unresolved issues or any support you need.

If you feel the investigation was unfair in any way, you can ask for a review by the Office of the Director of Integrated Practice and Policy. You must send your request in writing within 14 days of receiving this letter. Send your letter to:
(Office of the Director of Integrated Practice and Policy and address)

The Office of the Director of Integrated Practice and Policy will review the investigation and inform you of the result of the review within 30 days. Your resource social worker or BCFFPA support person can provide you with more information and support if you decide to ask for a review. You will find an easy-to-use guide that describes the review process in the Protocols for Foster Homes kit. You can also ask for a review by the Ombudsman at any time.

I encourage you to raise any concerns about the investigation with your resource social worker or BCFFPA representative. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Community Services Manager, Child Protection

Appendix 1-I

Sample Letter #9 – From the child’s social worker informing the child with capacity about the investigation decisions.

Letterhead

Date

Child’s name

Address

City

Postal Code

Dear

We have finished our investigation about the care you are receiving in your foster home. We have looked carefully at all of the information and have come to these decisions.

About your placement:

What will happen next:

If you have any worries or questions about the investigation or anything else, contact me and I will meet with you to discuss them.

Sincerely,

Child’s social worker

cc: Child’s file

Appendix 1-J

Sample Letter #10 – From the child’s social worker, informing the parent apparently entitled to custody about the investigation outcome (sent only where the parent was informed at the start of the investigation).

Letterhead

Date

Child’s parent
Address
City
Postal Code

Dear

I wrote to you on *(date)* to inform you that the ministry had started an investigation into a report we received about your child in foster care. We have now completed the investigation.

We have carefully considered all of the information gathered during the investigation and have decided on the following action.

(Describe any actions taken)

(State the decision about the child’s placement)

Our reason for this decision is:

Your child is *(doing well/not doing well)* and we have provided the following support:

(Describe the support provided)

If there is any change in this decision, you will be notified as soon as possible. If you have any questions or worries about this decision, please contact me to discuss them.

Sincerely,

Child’s social worker

cc: Child’s file

Appendix 1-K

Sample Letter #11 – From the child’s social worker to the representative of the child’s Aboriginal band, agency, or community informing them about the investigation outcome.

Note: Only the designated representative of the child’s band, agency or community who has already been involved with the child should receive this information.

Letterhead

Date

Representative of aboriginal band, agency, community
Address
City
Postal Code

Dear

I wrote to you on *(date)* to inform you that an investigation had begun into a report we received about *(child’s name)* while in foster care.

The investigation has now been completed. After reviewing the findings of the investigating child protection social worker, we have reached the following decision:

(State decision regarding the continued placement of the child in the foster home)

If there is any change in this decision, you will be notified as soon as possible. If you have any questions or worries about this decision, please contact me to discuss them.

Sincerely,

Child’s social worker

cc: Child’s file

Appendix 1-L

Detailed Protocol Investigation Report Format

This format is for recording information gathered during protocol investigations. It is recommended that investigating workers use this format to prepare updates and record interviews as they occur in order to facilitate the preparation of the final report.

A. Identifying Information

1. Family Care Home Identifying Information

- a. Name(s) of caregivers
- b. Contracting agency, if applicable
- c. Resource file number
- d. Level of care/type of resource
- e. Office code/name

2. Nature and Source of Allegation

- a. Date of intake
- b. Source of concerns
- c. What happened
- d. Where did it happen
- e. When/how often did it happen
- f. Other relevant information from the complaint intake

3. Current CIC(s) Identifying Date (complete for each CIC)

- a. Name
- b. Birth date
- c. Legal status
- d. Date of placement/duration of placement
- e. Social Worker
- f. Team Leader
- g. CS file number

4. Past CIC(s) Identifying Date (complete for each CIC)

- a. Name
- b. Birth date
- c. Legal status
- d. Social Worker
- e. Team Leader
- f. Placement dates

B. Protocol Process

- a. Date investigation commenced
- b. Immediate Safety Assessment, Plan and Actions taken
- c. Report status
 - i. Initial
 - ii. Update #1, 2, ...
 - iii. Final draft
 - iv. Final
- d. Anticipated completion date

C. Results of the Initial Investigation

1. Prior Contacts Before Interview

- a. Team Leaders
- b. Social Workers
- c. Community Services Managers
- d. Police (if appropriate)
- e. Files reviewed
- f. Review of previous investigations (if applicable)

2. Interviews (list all interviews in the order in which they occurred)

(If an important party is not interviewed, provide an explanation)

- a. Children in care
- b. Alleged abuser (if appropriate)
- c. Witnesses
- d. Consultation with other professionals (e.g., doctors, police, therapists, social worker)
- e. Supporting documentation (e.g., police or medical reports)

D. Results of the Investigation

- a. Summary of the findings
- b. Identify any concerns about caregiver functioning

E. Recommendations

- a. If CIC removed, explain why, duration, and barriers to returning, if any
- b. Whether or not home should remain open or be closed
- c. Caregiver concerns and how they are being dealt with (if appropriate)
- d. Additional recommendations (e.g., training, areas for further assessment, supports needed)

Investigating Social Worker

Signature
Name
Date

District Office

Code/name
Team Leader
Phone number

Appendix 1-M

Guidelines for Preparing the Protocol Investigation Summary For Foster Parent

Copies of the Protocol Investigation Summary sent to anyone other than ministry staff or foster parents must be screened to ensure they conform to privacy legislation (*FOIPPA*) and the confidentiality provisions of the *CFCSA*.

Your Protocol Investigation Summary should include all of the following information. Use these headings to ensure that summaries are consistent:

Date:

Name(s) of Foster Parent(s)/Caregiver(s):

Name of Investigation Child Protection Social Worker:

Name of Resource Social Worker:

Child's social worker:

Nature of the report (physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect):

Description of the report (list specific concerns in summary format):

Child's Information (for each child in care in the foster home and the foster parents' children):

Child's Name:

Age/DOB:

Gender:

Subject of report? Y/N

Investigation start date:

Immediate Actions taken to ensure the safety and well-being of the child(ren) in care:

Investigation completion date:

Investigation findings, including whether the report is substantiated:

Recommended actions to ensure the continued safety and well-being of the child(ren) in care:

Signature of Investigating Child Protection Social Worker

Date:

Signature of Investigating Child Protection Team Leader

Date:

Signature of Community Services Manager for Child Protection

Date:

Appendix 1-N

CONSENT TO CONTACT A SUPPORT PERSON

I, _____,

consent to the Director's delegate contacting _____

(name of agency and/or other support person) and inviting the named person(s) to attend interviews with me related to the Protocols for Foster Homes.

Name of Foster Parent

Name of Foster Parent

Signature

Signature

Address

Address

Address

Address

Date

Date

Witness Name

Witness Name

Signature

Signature

Date

Date

Appendix 1-O

NON-DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I, _____,
(Print name)

- am aware that as a support person for a foster parent who is subject to a Foster Home Protocol Investigation, I may receive information of a personal nature related to the foster family or to a child in care of the Director and
- will not to disclose any information that I may receive in my role as a support person to any other person, in accordance with S.75 of the Child, Family and Community Services Act of British Columbia, unless compelled by law to do so.

Signature of Support Person

Signed this _____ day of _____, 20_____

Witness Name

Witness Signature

Date

Protocol For Resolving Issues Between Foster Parents and Vancouver Island MCFD Staff



Vancouver Island Region

**PROTOCOL
FOR RESOLVING ISSUES BETWEEN FOSTER PARENTS AND
VANCOUVER ISLAND MCFD STAFF**

Purpose

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), Vancouver Island Region has developed the following protocols for dealing with issues and concerns about foster parents:

- Protocol for Investigating Abuse or Neglect in Foster Homes
In circumstances where there have been allegations that a foster child has been or is likely to be harmed in the foster home, the *Protocol for Investigating Abuse or Neglect in Foster Homes* is to be applied.
- Protocol for Reviewing Quality of Care Concerns in Foster Homes
Where there have been allegations that a child's rights have been breached or the quality of care provided to a child has not met the standards as described in the *Standards for Foster Homes*, a Quality of Care Review is to be conducted.

Use the *Protocol for Reviewing Quality of Care Concerns in Foster Homes*, which is located within this document, following the *Protocol for Investigating Abuse or Neglect in Foster Home* (see page xx). See Practice Advisory #12 (September, 2006) *Foster Parent Protocols* for further information.

- Protocol for Resolving Issues between Foster Parents and Ministry Staff
The *Protocol for Resolving Issues between Foster Parents and Ministry Staff* applies whenever there is a disagreement between a social worker and a foster parent regarding:
 - care issues
 - plans of care
 - goals for the child
 - issues regarding caregiver standards
 - caregiver support
 - administrative or financial issues, or
 - any other issue not covered by the *Protocol for Investigating Abuse or Neglect in Foster Homes* and that are not about the services to the child
- Complaint Resolution Process
Where the foster parent has a complaint on behalf of a child in care, about the quality or eligibility of services for that child, the foster parent may contact one of the Regional Complaint Resolution Consultants to discuss their eligible concerns.

The purpose of this protocol is to ensure that:

- Issues between the Vancouver Island Region and foster parents are resolved quickly, informally and locally, whenever possible.

Support

This protocol is intended to ensure that foster parents receive the support or help they need to resolve issues in a fair and transparent manner. Foster parents have a right to a support person of their choice.

Ministry staff ensures that the support person(s) for the foster parent(s) understands and signs a confidentiality agreement prepared by the Director, prior to the support person's involvement in the protocol process (see Appendix B).

Application of the Protocol

Social Workers and foster parents develop professional and respectful working relationships. Prior to the commencement of this protocol, both parties are expected to make every effort possible to informally resolve issues and concerns that arise. When this is not possible, the Local Resolution Process (Stage 1) may be applied.

Steps to Resolution

- Stage 1 – Local Resolution at district office level (max 17 days)
- Stage 2 – Formal Resolution involving Community Services Manager (max 30 days)
- Stage 3 – Final Resolution by the Director of Integrated Practice (max 30 days)

Stage 1 – Local Resolution Process (Optional but recommended)

A preliminary local meeting, chaired by the Resource Team Leader, may be requested by either party.

Foster Parents or Social Worker

- Either the foster parent(s) or involved Social Worker may request a meeting if preliminary attempts at resolution were unsuccessful. Additional participants may include only those parties directly involved with the issue.

Resource Team Leader

- Receives notice from either the foster parent(s) or the Social Worker of an issue that requires resolution. The notice identifies the issue(s) and possible resolution.
- Immediately confers with the Resource Social Worker and Team Leaders, as appropriate.
- Within 10 days, convenes a meeting between the foster parent(s), the Resource Social Worker, the child's Social Worker and others involved with the issue to review the concerns and make every effort to reach a resolution.
- Within 7 days of the meeting, notifies in writing all relevant parties of the results of the meeting.

Resource Social Worker

- Schedules a meeting within 10 days of receiving the request and advises all participants.
- Advises the relevant Team Leaders about the issue and the meeting.
- If no agreement is reached at this Stage 1 Local Resolution meeting, the Resource Social Worker informs the foster parent(s) of how to proceed to the Stage 2 Formal Resolution process.
- Provides support and consultation to the foster parent(s) throughout the process.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution Process (Resolution by Community Services Manager)

If an issue is unresolved, either party may request the involvement of a Community Services Manager. This stage of resolution is completed within 30 days of the Community Services Manager receiving written request for a Stage 2 resolution.

Foster Parent(s)

- Within 7 days of receiving the written results of the Stage 1 Local Resolution meeting with the Resource Team Leader, the foster parent(s) may request in writing that the Community Services Manager to resolve the issue.
- Accompanied by support person(s), if involved, the foster parent(s) participate in and present the concerns and suggested solutions during the Stage 2 resolution process.

Community Services Manager

- Within 7 days of receiving the request for a Stage 2 Formal Resolution, the Community Services Manager contacts the foster parent(s) and arranges a meeting.
- Convenes a meeting of the involved Team Leader, the foster parent(s) and any support person(s) they have chosen, and any other staff or parties who may be helpful in resolving the issue.
- Listens to and reviews the concerns and suggestions of both parties. *When an issue has a direct effect on a child in care, the child's views are taken into consideration in any decision.*
- In coordinating the Formal Resolution Process, the Community Services Manager may:
 - interview the foster parent(s) and any other relevant parties, including children in care,
 - conduct a review of the relevant files,
 - interview involved staff and service providers,
 - ask for written submissions from the involved parties, and
 - consider any other options that may be helpful or appropriate, including alternate dispute resolution processes.
- When reaching a resolution of the issue, the following factors should be considered:
 - the obligation of the Director to ensure the safety and well-being of children in care,
 - the best interests of the child,
 - principles of administrative fairness (e.g. timeliness, unbiased review)
 - the child's rights under the Child, Family and Community Service Act, Section 70,
 - the reasons for decisions and the concerns about the issue,
 - past efforts to resolve the issues,
- Within 30 days of receiving the written request for a resolution, notifies all parties in writing of the decision.

Stage 3 – Final Resolution by Director of Integrated Practice (or uninvolved designate)

- Within 30 days of receiving a request for a review, the Director of Integrated Practice (or uninvolved designate) may review the decisions reached at stage 2 and notify the foster parents (and where applicable the specialized residential resource contractor) of the decision by registered letter.
- The decision of the Director of Integrated Practice (or uninvolved designate) is final.

Documentation

When the issues have been resolved, regardless of the stage at which resolution took place (i.e.: Stage 1, 2 or 3), the foster parent will receive a letter from the appropriate authority as outlined in Stages 1, 2 and 3. The letter will articulate the outcome of the Protocol and any further planning or actions required, if necessary. This letter shall be filed on the Resource (RE) file and reviewed during the subsequent foster parent annual review.

Service Quality Assurance

Director of Integrated Practice

- Ensures there is a regional system of tracking:
 - The number and type of issues requiring formal resolution under this protocol,
 - The number of homes with more than one issue requiring formal resolution under this protocol in the past year,
 - The levels and types of homes involved (restricted, regular, specialized level 1, 2 or 3),
 - The number of years of service of the foster parent(s) involved.
- Ensures that, in conjunction with regional staff, regional foster parent organizations and the Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents, there is an annual analysis of issues requiring resolution under this protocol, which addresses such issues as:
 - Any additional training or support required by foster parents or delegated staff,
 - The appropriate matching of children to the skills and resources of foster homes involved,
 - The identification of any patterns in the use of the protocol which would guide regional actions to be taken.

Records Management

All records created and received by the MCFD director under this protocol will remain under the custody and control of the director.

All correspondence received and generated under this protocol shall be filed on the Resource (RE) file.

Appendix 2-A

CONSENT TO CONTACT A SUPPORT PERSON

I, _____,

consent to the Director's delegate contacting _____

(name of agency and/or other support person) and inviting the named person(s) to attend interviews with me related to the Protocols for Foster Homes.

Name of Foster Parent

Name of Foster Parent

Signature

Signature

Address

Address

Address

Address

Date

Date

Witness Name

Witness Name

Signature

Signature

Date

Date

Appendix 2-B

**NON-DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT
(Resolving Issues Between Foster Parents and MCFD Staff)**

I, _____,
(Print name)

- am aware that as a support person for a foster parent , I may receive information of a personal nature related to the foster family or to a child in care of the Director and
- will not to disclose any information that I may receive in my role as a support person to any other person, in accordance with S.75 of the Child, Family and Community Services Act of British Columbia, unless compelled by law to do so.

Signature of Support Person

Signed this _____ day of _____, 20____

Witness Name

Witness Signature

Date

Protocol For Reviewing Quality of Care Concerns in Foster Homes



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Vancouver Island Region

PROTOCOL FOR REVIEWING QUALITY OF CARE CONCERNS IN FOSTER HOMES

Purpose

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), Vancouver Island Region has developed the following protocols for dealing with issues and concerns about foster parents:

- Protocol for Investigating Abuse or Neglect in Foster Homes
In circumstances where there have been allegations that a foster child has been or is likely to be harmed in the foster home, the *Protocol for Investigating Abuse or Neglect in Foster Homes* is to be applied.
- Protocol for Reviewing Quality of Care Concerns in Foster Homes
Where there have been allegations that a child's rights have been breached or the quality of care provided to a child has not met the standards as described in the *Standards for Foster Homes*, a Quality of Care Review is to be conducted.

Please refer to the *Protocol for Reviewing Quality of Care Concerns in Foster Homes*.

- Protocol for Resolving Issues between Foster Parents and Ministry Staff
The *Protocol for Resolving Issues between Foster Parents and Ministry Staff* applies whenever there is a disagreement between a social worker and a foster parent regarding an issue not covered by the above protocols. Issues may include:
 - payments or contracting,
 - support services to the foster parent, and
 - placement of or moving the child.
- Complaint Resolution Process
Where the foster parent has a complaint on behalf of a child in care, about the quality or eligibility of services for that child, the foster parent may contact one of the regional complaint resolution consultants to discuss their eligible concerns.

The purpose of this protocol is to set out the procedure for reviewing concerns over the quality of care a child is receiving in a foster home, **where the child's safety is not at issue.**

Support

This protocol is intended to ensure that foster parents receive the support they desire during a quality of care review. Foster parents have a right to a support person of their choice.

Ministry staff ensures that the support person(s) for the foster parent(s) understands and signs a confidentiality agreement prepared by the Director, prior to the support person's involvement in the protocol process.

Application of the Protocol

This protocol applies to foster homes approved by a director designated under Section 91 of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (the *Act*), where the caregiver resides in the care setting and has no more than one full-time equivalent employee.

This protocol applies where there are concerns about possible breaches of:

- Standards for Foster Homes, and
- The Rights of Children in Care, as defined by Section 70 of the *Act*.

Review Steps

The following steps constitute a quality of care review:

Stage 1 – Assessment of the quality of care concern (max 5 days)

Stage 2 - The quality of care review (max 30 days)

Stage 3 – The quality of care review decisions

Stage 4 – Meeting to report the review results

Stage 5 – Resolving disagreements about the review

Stage 6 – Service quality assurance

Stage 1 – Assessment of the Quality of Care Concern

Either the child's social worker or the resource social worker may have or may receive a quality of care concern.

Child's Social Worker and Resource Social Worker

- Either social worker informs the other and, in conjunction with their team leaders, within 5 days of receiving the concern, determines whether the concern should be responded to using this protocol.

Resource Team Leader

- Makes the decision whether to initiate a quality of care review.
- Notifies the Resource Team Leader of the decision.
- Ensures that the concern and the decision to conduct a review are recorded on both the child's file and the resource file.

Resource Social Worker

- Informs the foster parents by telephone or in person, within 5 days of the decision to conduct a quality of care review:
 - about the concern and the ministry's decision to conduct a review,
 - of the foster parent's right to ask for support,
 - how to contact a support person through the BCFFPA.
- Approaches the quality of care review process in a supportive manner.
- Ensures that the support person understands and signs an oath of confidentiality prepared by the Director, prior to the support person's involvement in the protocol process (see Appendix C)

Child's Social Worker

- Ensures that any other appropriate protocols are followed (for example, with the child's school or the designated representative of the child's aboriginal community, if involved).

Stage 2 – The Quality of Care Review

The quality of care review is completed and the foster parents notified of the outcome within 30 days of the start of the review.

Child's Social Worker and Resource Social Worker

- Gather information about the concern by:
 - speaking with the person who originally reported the concerns,
 - reviewing respective files on the child and the foster parents, including the child's comprehensive plan of care,
 - meeting with the child (with capacity) to hear the child's views and ensure they are taken into consideration,
 - meeting with the foster parents and obtain their views and suggestions on how to address the concern, and
 - talking to other children in the foster home who may have relevant information about the concern.
- Prepare a report on the findings and recommended action plan and submit it to the involved Team Leaders (see Appendix B).

Resource Social Worker

- Provides the foster parents with information about support available and how to contact the Foster Parent Support Services Society (FPSSS).

Support Person

- If support is requested by the foster parent:
 - offers information about the quality of care process,
 - provides support and consultation as needed, including informing the foster parents of their right to legal counsel (at their expense),
 - acts as an observer and provides support and consultation, as requested, when the foster parents participate in interviews and in any related subsequent delegated staff contact with the foster parents.

Child's Social Worker

- Supports and involves the child and advocates for the child's needs and well-being throughout the quality of care review,
- Determines the child's views about the need for additional support and, where the child requests support or advocacy, arranges for the requested support or advocacy,
- Consults with and involves the child's parent and, if the child is aboriginal, the child's aboriginal community about any changes in plans for, or placement of, the child,
- Personally informs the child (with capacity) about the quality of care review process, the ministry's internal complaint resolution process, and other services available, including:
 - Office of the Representative for Children and Youth,
 - Office of the Ombudsman.

Team Leaders

- Provide consultation and direction to involved social workers

Stage 3 – The Quality of Care Review Decisions

Involved Team Leaders and Social Workers

- Jointly discuss the report and action plan, taking into consideration:
 - whether the match between the child's needs and the skills and resources of the foster home is appropriate,
 - whether the quality of care concern affects the continued use of the home and in what way, and
 - whether additional supports, training, services, or other resources are needed.
- On the basis of this review, decide on a final action plan that includes the responsibilities of those involved and a timetable for the plan.

Child's Social Worker and Resource Social Worker

- Place a copy of the quality of care review report (see Appendix B) and any action plan or decisions on the child's file and the resource file, including summary information regarding any subsequent related decisions.

Stage 4 – Meeting to Report the Review Results

Resource Social Worker

- Arranges a meeting with the foster parents and the child's social worker to discuss the action plan to address the concern:
 - foster parents may ask for a support person already involved to attend the meeting, and
 - social workers may ask their team leaders or others involved with the child or foster parent to attend the meeting .
- At the meeting, discusses with the foster parents:
 - the quality of care review findings and action plan,
 - any unresolved issues or additional supports or service needed,
 - the process available to them if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the quality of care review,
 - the support available to them from FPSSS, and
 - other people who will be notified of the quality of care review outcome (only when necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of the child).

Child's Social Worker

- Within 7 days of this meeting:
 - meets with the child to discuss any issues, decisions, or changes arising from the quality of care review, including any concerns of the child's,
 - where the decision involves a change in plans for or placement of the child, and where the child is aboriginal, involves the child's aboriginal community,
 - where the decision involves a change in plans for or placement of the child, determines the child's views about the need for additional support and, where the
 - child requests support or advocacy, arranges for the requested support or advocacy, and
 - informs the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the quality of care review.

Stage 5 – Resolving Disagreements about the Review

Foster parents

- If the foster parent is dissatisfied with the outcome of the quality of care review, the foster parent may, within 14 days of being informed of the outcome of the Quality of Care Review forward a written request for a review of the decision to the Community Services Manager responsible for resources.

Community Services Manager (Resources) – Stage 1

- The Community Services Manager may:
 - Within 30 days of receiving the request, review the quality of care review, reach a decision, and provide written notification to the foster parents of the decision and the reasons for the decision. The Community Services Manager may choose to meet with the foster parents in person to provide the written decision.
- If the foster parent is not satisfied with the decision of the involved Community Services Manager at the Stage 1 review level, the foster parent may, within 7 days of receiving that decision, forward a written request for a Stage 2 review by the Director of Integrated Practice (or uninvolved designate).

Review by Director of Integrated Practice (or uninvolved designate)) – Stage 2

- Within 30 days of receiving a request for a review, the Director of Integrated Practice (or uninvolved designate) may review the Quality of Care Review, reach a decision, and notify the foster parents (and where applicable the specialized residential resource contractor) of the decision by registered letter.
- The decision of the Director of Integrated Practice (or uninvolved designate) is final.

Stage 6 – Service Quality Assurance

Director of Integrated Practice

- Ensures there is a regional system of tracking:
 - the number and type of issues requiring formal resolution under this protocol,
 - the number of homes with more than one issue requiring formal resolution under this protocol in the past year,
 - the levels and types of homes involved (restricted, regular, specialized level 1, 2 or 3), and
 - the number of years of service of the foster parent(s) involved.
- Ensures that, in conjunction with regional staff, regional foster parent organizations and the Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents, there is an annual review and discussion of issues requiring resolution under this protocol, which addresses such issues as:
 - any additional training or support required by foster parents or delegated staff,
 - the appropriate matching of children to the skills and resources of foster homes involved,
 - the identification of any patterns in the use of the protocol which would guide regional actions to be taken.

Documentation

Documentation on MIS includes:

- Foster Home Identifying Information;
- Date and nature of the concern (including what s.70 rights or foster parent standards are allegedly breached)
- Quality of Care Review findings (including whether the concerns are substantiated);
- Recommendations
- Cross reference to full documentation on file.

The following is documented on the *Quality of Care Review Report Format* (See Appendix B):

- Foster Home identifying information;
- nature and source of concern;
- CICs currently and previously in the home
- Review process including interviews, findings, and recommendations

A decision **not** to proceed with a Quality of Care is also documented. The decision will include a summary of the concern regarding the foster home, the reasons for not initiating a Quality of Care Review and what, if any, response is taken. The documentation is placed on the foster parent's resource file.

Records Management

All records created and received by the MCFD director under this protocol will remain under the custody and control of the director.

Appendix 3-A

SAMPLE LETTER #2 – From the CSM (Child Protection) informing the foster parents that a report has been received that does not require investigation but that may require a quality of care review.

Letterhead

Date

Foster parents
Address
City
Postal Code

Dear

On *(date)* my office received a concern about *(child's name)* currently placed in your home. I am not entitled to tell you who made the report, but the person's main concern was:

(Give a brief summary of the quality of care concern)

I have decided that an investigation is not required because:

(Give a brief explanation)

However, given that this concern is about the breach of *(child's name)* under section 70 of the *CFCSA* and/or the Standards for Foster Homes I have determined that a *Quality of Care Review* is required.

I have discussed the concern with the child's social worker(s) and your resource social worker. They and other ministry staff will review the concern within 30 days under the region's *Protocol for Reviewing Quality of Care Concerns in Foster Homes*. Your resource social worker will contact you as soon as possible to discuss this matter and to let you know whether any further review of the concern is necessary.

If you do not feel that you have been treated fairly in this process, you may ask the manager responsible for your foster home *(name and phone number of Community Services Manager responsible for the resource)* to begin a formal process to resolve the issue under the Protocol for Resolving Issues. You will find both a summary and a detailed description of this process in the Protocols for Foster Homes kit.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the ministry staff involved with your foster home and the child. A copy will also be placed on the child's file and your foster home file.

I encourage you to participate fully in discussing this matter when you meet with your resource social worker and to raise any questions you have.

Sincerely,

Community Services Manager, Child Protection

cc: Child's social worker
Resource social worker
Community Services Manager responsible for the resource
Community Services Manager responsible for the child

Appendix 3-B

Guidelines for Preparing a Quality of Care Review Report

Copies of the Quality of Care Review Report sent to anyone other than ministry staff or other authorized persons must be screened to ensure they conform to privacy legislation (*FOIPPA*) and the confidentiality provisions of the *CFCSA*.

Your Quality of Care Review Report should include all of the following information. Use these headings to ensure that summaries are consistent:

Date:

Name(s) of Foster Parents:

Name of Resource Social Worker:

Name of Child's Social Worker:

Description of the quality of care concern:

Child's Name:

Age/DOB:

Gender:

Quality of care review start date:

Quality of care review completion date:

Quality of care review findings (summarize relevant information gathered from interviews, file review, other sources):

Recommended action plan to address the quality of care concern:

Signature of Resource Social Worker

Date:

Signature of Child's Social Worker

Date:

Signature of Supervisor of the Resource Social Worker

Date:

Signature of the Supervisor of the Child's Social Worker

Date:

Appendix 3-C

CONSENT TO CONTACT A SUPPORT PERSON

I, _____,

consent to the Director's delegate contacting _____

_____ (name of agency and/or other support person) and inviting the named person(s) to attend interviews with me related to the Protocols for Foster Homes.

Name of Foster Parent

Name of Foster Parent

Signature

Signature

Address

Address

Address

Address

Date

Date

Witness Name

Witness Name

Signature

Signature

Date

Date

Appendix 3-D

NON-DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I, _____,
(Print name)

- am aware that as a support person for a foster parent, I may receive information of a personal nature related to the foster family or to a child in care of the Director; and
- will not to disclose any information that I may receive in my role as a support person to any other person, in accordance with Section 75 of the Child, Family and Community Services Act of British Columbia, unless compelled by law to do so.

Signature of Support Person

Signed this _____ day of _____, 20_____

Witness Name

Witness Signature

Date