

2020-21

Responding with Resilience



Child and Family Services
of Western Manitoba

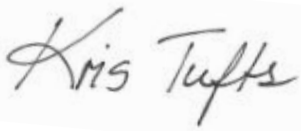
A MESSAGE FROM US

Hello Agency friends,

As for everyone, spending the entire last year in a global pandemic has required fortitude, resilience and resolve. What started as a worry for physical health, is now also a worry for emotional and mental well-being. We are honored to be part of a community of caring people who helped to look out for and after those most in need. Despite the continual challenges of the past year, our Agency remained steadfast in our commitment to families. All families need support during these times. This report highlights some of those challenges, their impact, and our Agency's response. Staff were challenged to find creative, safe ways to remain connected to families and responsive to their needs. They adapted with perseverance. As essential service workers, working with the knowledge that children have better outcomes when they are with their families, staff accelerated their efforts to achieve this. Starting with the question, "what do families and their networks need to keep their children safe at home"?

To help preserve or regain relational, cultural and community connections, the **"Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis Children, Youth and Families"**, came into force in January 2020. This federal legislation provides for notification of child welfare involvement to **Indigenous Governing Bodies**. It recognizes the inherent right to self-government that follows traditional values and practices. This legislation along with changes to standards in working with high-risk **Expectant Parents**, also follows the principles of prevention and support services. These are values inherent in our Agency. The continuing **Single Envelope Funding** model allows for the flexibility to create or continue innovative programs and services aimed at fulfilling these principles.

The pandemic drew attention to escalating social issues in our community that affect the safety and health of children and families. This year, more than ever, we are grateful for community connections and supporters who also showed resourcefulness and resilience in their work with those who are most vulnerable.



Kris Tufts

President, Board of Directors



Arlene Stewart

Chief Executive Officer

ADAPTING TO COVID-19

Working with vulnerable children and families in a pandemic did not come with pre-existing guidelines. We know the pandemic has had many effects. Disruptions to services and supports to children and families brought more concerns for their well-being and saw increased responsibility on Agency workers. **They stayed connected with families.** We also prioritized the emotional and physical safety of children in care who needed to maintain some form of contact with their first families.

What it means to be trauma-informed during a pandemic:

- Realizing the impact of trauma, including trauma caused by a global health crisis
- Recognizing signs and symptoms of trauma and attempts at coping. Understanding the factors that support resilience and healing
- Responding with trauma informed services, like concrete needs for families, respite, and helping to plan for their children when they are unable to do so
- Resisting re-traumatization with interventions that limit further negative impacts



CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

- Ensuring family continuity
- Trauma facilitators to provide guidance to families and staff
- Virtual parenting programs
- Respite child care



COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT

- Using staff rotations
- Providing resources for parents
- Activity kits for parents
- Continued in-person contact
- Visiting plans



COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

- Using clear language
- Transparency
- Access to PPE
- COVID-19 impact survey
- Child Trauma Research Centre (CTRC) resources for staff

DESIGNATED INTAKE SERVICES

2,365

intakes responded to this past year

Globally, there is emerging research on the impacts of the pandemic on children, youth and families. Disruptions to usual services and supports, increased use of substances, elevated anxieties and financial insecurity, all increase stress in families who might have already been dealing with multiple traumas. Public Health orders to stay at home had families isolated, services restricted, and concerns for increases in abuse and domestic violence.



In this past year, our staff conducted a minimum of **1,108** field visits.



Of all intakes, **38%** were concluded at the intake level where no further services were required

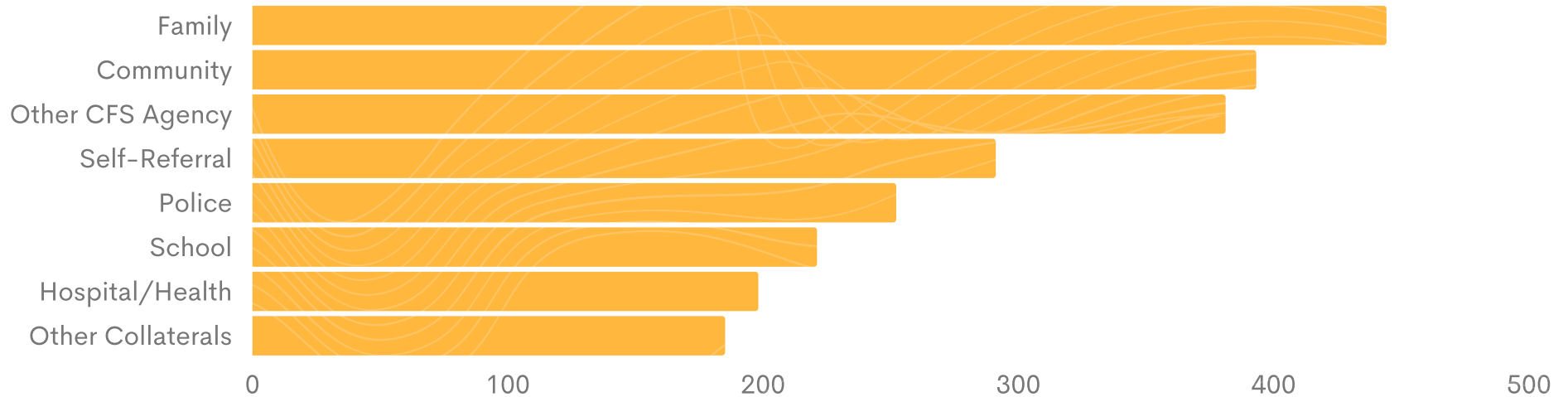


The SDM[®] Safety Assessment was completed **485** times to help assess immediate safety of a child

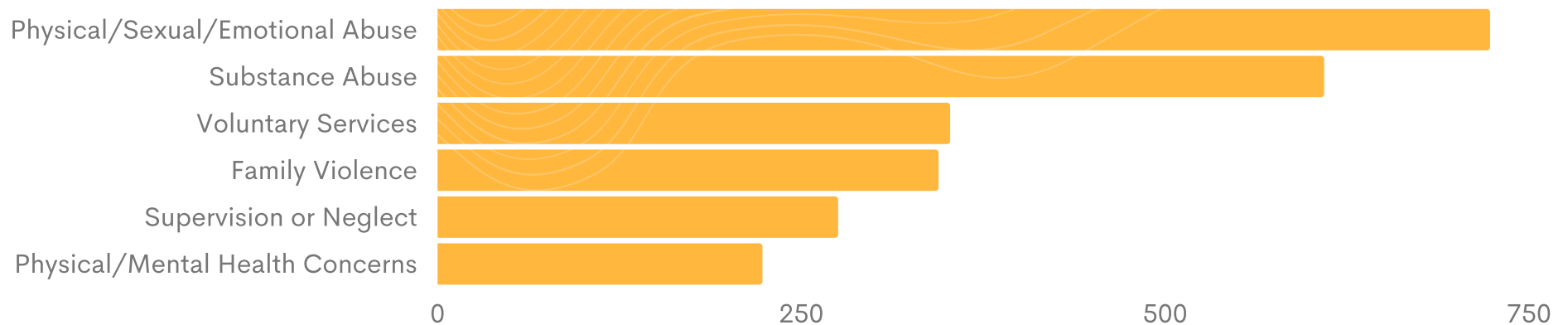
This year, our Agency received 352 requests for voluntary services.
244 of these requests were for supports and services for families in crisis

The impacts of the pandemic could be related to the main issues the Agency saw in families referred to us for services. Substance use that affects parents' ability to be safe with their children, was the leading cause of child removals. Methamphetamine remains a grave concern for safety with its detrimental effects on the brain and body.

Intake Referral Sources



Issues Present at Intake



FAMILY SERVICES

90%

of the children we work with are living at home with their families

Families are dynamic and complex. Families living in a pandemic, more so. Family services focuses on strengthening families and their protective capacities. This year more than ever, family service workers have needed to find creative and safe ways to remain responsive to families' needs, while assessing the safety and well-being of children.

Many families have demonstrated resilience as they navigate their way through changes, challenges and limited supports. Still, others have struggled with heightened issues affecting their well-being and their ability to parent their children. Some elements of case planning to address safety or worries were interrupted as treatment services were restricted.

Voluntary Family Services Cases

179

2019-20



204

2020-21



364 children are receiving voluntary services designed to build and strengthen support networks and to prevent maltreatment

Protection Family Services Cases

315

2019-20



338

2020-21



776 children are receiving protection services

IN-HOME SUPPORT AND SUPPORTED ACCESS

Staff work with parents on areas that affect family functioning and child well-being. Working with parents on issues from budgeting to domestic violence, **In-Home Support** provides a weekly connection and support in families homes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

When children are in out-of-home care, supported access provides the opportunity for coaching and feedback for parents to improve their relationship with their children. Supported visitation along with in-home support, helps to address the issues that contributed to children coming into care. **During the pandemic, children in care were prioritized for contact with their parents.** Where in-person contact wasn't safely possible, virtual visits occurred with a rush to secure devices to do so. Some families had reunification plans altered as treatment services for parents were interrupted.

A "visit house" is available to provide a more natural setting for family visits.



IN-HOME SUPPORT

98 families were served through this program, with **197** children. Of these families, **79%** averted a child coming into Agency care.



SUPPORTED ACCESS

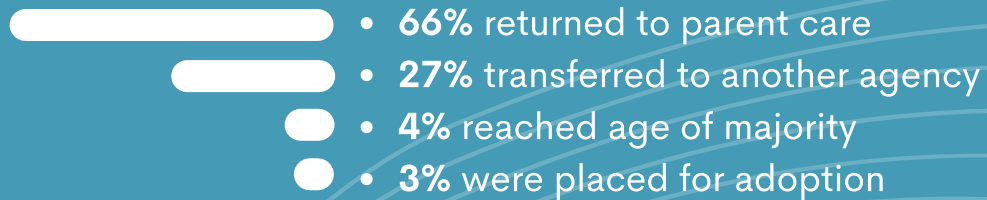
61 families were served through this program, with **97** children. This work also involves maintaining connections between siblings.

CHILDREN IN CARE

A goal within provincial child welfare reform is to reduce the number of children in care. With this and the continuing research into life and health outcomes for these children, our Agency remains committed to this goal. Despite families' and the Agency's best efforts, particularly within the stressors of a pandemic, sometimes children need out of home care. When this happens, **we turn to family and natural networks for placement resources whenever possible.**

The pandemic forced critical decisions about balancing safety and maintaining connections for our children in care. Where there was restricted in-person contacts, we turned to virtual visits, depending on the child's age and needs. Parents and children alike needed the reassurances of continued contact with each other by various means.

Of the children who exited Agency care:



The total volume of Days Care increased by **2.8%** from last year



45% of children exited care within 1 month or less



Of the children in Agency care, **66%** experienced a Kinship placement



This year, **5** children left care with Guardianship granted to a family member

AGREEMENTS WITH YOUNG ADULTS

Recognizing the uncertainty youth exiting care could face in a pandemic, temporary changes to legislation allowed for extended supports under **Agreements with Young Adults** (AYA). This applied to youth in care turning 18, regardless of legal status, and young adults turning 21.

Total Number of Agreements

20

2019-20



28

2020-21

Annual AYA Outcomes

82% have access to safe and reliable housing

72% are in programs and training

66% have a reliable source of income

31% are pursuing post-secondary education

72% have numerous permanent connections

YOUTH WORKS PROGRAM

Children's Aid Foundation of Canada

31

youth in care were supported through this program

Our Agency continues as **1 of 6** partner agencies across Canada delivering the **Youth Works Employment Program**. Youth in care or from care between the ages of 16 and 29 work with an **Employment Mentor** on resumes, job searches and interview skills. Employment workshops and individual coaching help to overcome barriers some youth in care face in finding and keeping employment. This program is open to eligible youth in care from all Child and Family Services agencies in the Westman area.

National Youth Works Outcomes

80%

developed pre-employment skills

80%

developed employability skills

75%

felt increased confidence and preparedness

RESOURCE HOMES



31 Places of Safety



63 Licensed
Resource Homes

Resource Parents

Resource parents managed unique challenges through the pandemic. Children who are not living with their first families have already experienced trauma. The COVID-19 crisis increased their needs and pain-based behaviours. Our Agency's **Resource Parents** navigated safety challenges during needed visitation, managed reduced or eliminated respite options and oversaw home-schooling. Dealing with heightened anxieties of the children placed with them and their first families, along with their own.



2 Licensed Group
Homes



1 Emergency
Placement Resource

Group Homes

Implementing a trauma-informed response and a healing framework with youth whose trauma was escalated in the pandemic, proved incredibly challenging. In some cases, youth required emergency placements and emergency care. Safety and provincial restrictions prevented visitors in the group home, including family and social workers. Staff supported youth in available ways.



4 children left care
to an Adoption
Placement

Adoption

Some adoption services were paused and some adoption planning was altered. Attending **Adoption Education** is required to be listed as an approved adoptive parent applicant. Our Agency's Adoption worker and Resource Home trainer developed a virtual adoption education series that allowed for **6** couples to complete this requirement.

PREVENTION, EARLY INTERVENTION AND PERMANENCY

Elsbeth Reid Family Resource Centre

- 125 new families to the Centre
- Respite childcare, virtual parenting programs, 1-1 outreach

Preschool Enrichment Program

- 43 preschool children served
- Re-opened to serve 15 school-aged children of essential workers

Victoria Daycare Centre

- 60 children served
- Separate cohorts
- Child care for essential workers

Prevention Committee

- 33 families served
- 74 children served
- Respite, essential items, family assistance to help prevent children from entering care

Expectant Parent Services

- 12 expectant parents
- Prevention services offered on a voluntary basis to strengthen support networks

Sun Fund for Kids

- 53 children to day camps
- Overnight camps cancelled

Family Finding Framework

- 30 staff trained
- "Urgent connecting of relatives and community members to create safety and healing in families while protecting and promoting health" (Kevin Campbell)

Family Engagement Meetings

- 169 meetings held
- 77 families and 156 children served
- Child-centred family driven case plans

Children's Therapy Program

- 107 families served
- Complex and intergenerational trauma treatment, sexual abuse treatment
- Support to caregivers, supported reunification

Intensive Permanency Services

- 9 youth served
- Relational healing and connections

This year at the Family Resource Centre reflects life.

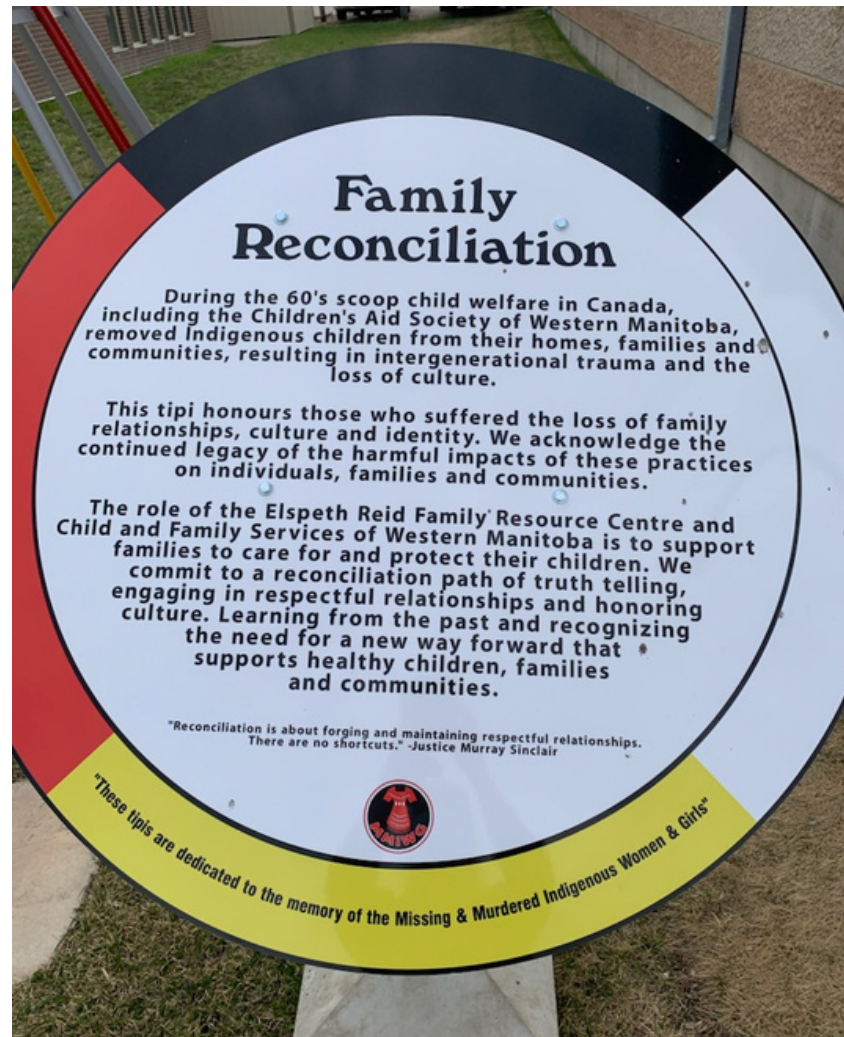
*This year presented an entirely new set of circumstances for are us as people and as staff for we were tested in our patience, in our skills, our endurance and our willingness to sacrifice for others. COVID-19 was unexpected and a different kind of challenge. The Family Support sector has always had to be buoyant. The capacity to **flex to community needs** is foundational to our Centre. **Meeting the needs of our children** requires us as families to face the unforeseen. Our choices as people to accept what is, to pivot and swivel around all of life's curveballs is by nature what life is all about. Over this past year we listened to countless stories of heartache and triumph. These stories tell us something far beyond what any statistical report can ever tell you about our Center. We listened to many stories of marital relationships that were tested. We supported many parents as they became teachers to their children at home. We heard many stories of people resuming crafts and hobbies long ago shelved and of parents rediscovering the joy of play. Many parents shared with us creative ways that they were staying sane while in isolation with children 24/7, day after day, week after week, month after month.*

*We all gained an appreciation of **the value of affection** for we all longed for the hug, the warm embrace of a grandparent. Many of our families endured financial stress and uncertainty. Some were already living in poverty, others finding a new financial low. We tried to provide comfort to parents who lost their children. Children who lost their parents, siblings who lost each other. And we were there walking alongside for the hope and joyfulness of reunification. Over this past year we saw the **creativity of staff**. They were finding ways to honour that trusting relationship that we have earned with so many families. We saw **child care** staff who did their essential work on creating safety, stability and community around children. We saw **staff** willing to take risks to be at work and remain **in service to other families**.*

*Over this past year we saw many **community partners** much like ourselves stumble and fumble and find our footing once again so that we could help hold each other through this year. Over this past year we had a renewed deep gratitude for the little big things in life. We learned something about our own capacity to be resilient through Global pandemics, floods and personal losses, all in a year. We learned more than we ever wanted to know about Zoom, Teams, wi-fi, pods and projectors. We learned how to cope with the stress of worrying about our own children's mental health, physical health all while remaining **in service to other children**. We remain steadfast. At initial reflection it was a year like no other, but in another way, we did what we've always done. We listened and comforted and encouraged and reminded ourselves that we do what we need to do to weather it all. May we enter into this next stage remembering the teachings that this experience has offered to us - **gratitude, patience and remaining steadfast in our confidence in our ability to enjoy each of life's chapters**.*

Lisa Ramsay,

Family Strengthening Coordinator at the Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre



As part of the **Tipi Legacy Tour**, this Tipi was installed in ceremony at the Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre as a symbol of commitment to **Truth and Reconciliation**.

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

For the Year End, March 31, 2021

Unaudited, Prepared by Mark Gillis, Comptroller

	Revenue	Expense	Surplus/Deficit
Executive Core	1,055,292	1,055,292	0
Central Program	5,067,703	4,921,352	146,351
Designated Intake	1,249,452	1,249,452	0
Resource Centre	486,652	486,652	0
Prevention	629,630	629,630	0
Group Care	953,960	1,101,596	-147,636
EPR	327,979	378,783	-50,804
Enhanced Children Support	56,456	85,942	-29,486
Victoria Daycare	401,166	387,537	13,629
Preschool Enrichment	295,356	295,356	0
Child Maintenance	3,892,457	3,474,124	418,333
Youth Employment Program	43,738	43,738	0
TOTAL	14,459,841	14,109,454	350,387

OUR SUPPORTERS



United Way
Brandon & District



**Canada Post
Community
Foundation**



TUNDRA OIL & GAS

Manitoba



Rotary



Brandon Area
Community Foundation
rooted in community



**CHILDREN'S
AID FOUNDATION
OF CANADA**





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