

Chapter 22

Social Services—Supervising Community-Based Organizations Delivering Programs to Intellectually Disabled People

1.0 MAIN POINTS

The Ministry of Social Services provides programs and services for people with intellectual disabilities by working with and helping them to access a variety of community-based services. The Ministry uses 97 community-based organizations (CBOs) to deliver residential and day programs to people with intellectual disabilities.¹ *The Residential Services Act* and *The Rehabilitation Act* give the Ministry the authority to enter into agreements with those CBOs.

By November 2023, the Ministry implemented the remaining three recommendations we first made in 2012 about providing services to people with intellectual disabilities.

The Ministry established a framework to help assess CBOs and their ability to deliver services to clients with intellectual disabilities. As part of the framework, Ministry staff interview CBO clients to help assess their quality of life—overall, almost three-quarters of clients interviewed in November 2023 were mostly satisfied with services provided by their CBOs. In addition, the Ministry consistently completed and tracked its review of CBOs' policies and procedures every two years. At December 2023, it reported completing nearly 97% of its reviews within the expected timeframe.

Finally, the Ministry started assessing CBOs' capacity to manage risks during 2023–24. At November 2023, the Ministry completed assessments for almost a quarter of the approximately 190 CBOs it partners with, including assessments for 26 agencies providing services to intellectually disabled people.² It expected to complete the remaining assessments by March 2024.

Active monitoring of CBO performance helps the Ministry assess whether it receives services in accordance with its agreements with CBOs.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

At March 31, 2023, the Ministry of Social Services held agreements with 97 community-based organizations for providing services to intellectually disabled people. In 2022–23, the Ministry paid these CBOs about \$250 million.³

¹ The 97 CBOs provided services to about 3,300 clients with intellectual disabilities.

² The Ministry of Social Services partners with CBOs across Saskatchewan to provide a range of services, including support services for individuals and families, group homes for people with intellectual disabilities, and 24/7 crisis intervention services.

³ Information provided by the Ministry of Social Services.



2.1 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

This chapter describes our fifth follow-up audit of management's actions on three outstanding recommendations we first made in 2012.

Our *2012 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 22, concluded that the Ministry had effective processes to plan for, contract with, and monitor CBOs providing services to people with intellectual disabilities other than the areas identified in our eight recommendations.⁴ By August 2021, the Ministry implemented five of eight recommendations.⁵

To conduct this audit engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate the Ministry's progress toward meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. Ministry management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To carry out our follow-up audit, we discussed actions taken with management, reviewed relevant documentation (e.g., policies and frameworks guiding the Ministry's monitoring of CBOs), and sampled CBO reviews and risk assessments.

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at November 30, 2023, and the Ministry of Social Services' actions up to that date.

3.1 Using Client Outcomes to Monitor CBO Services

We recommended the Ministry of Social Services work with community-based organizations to establish program objectives, and outcome performance measures and targets to be used to monitor and evaluate the services community-based organizations deliver to intellectually disabled people and their families. (2012 Report – Volume 1, p. 192, Recommendation 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement June 17, 2014)

Status—Implemented

The Ministry of Social Services' implementation of its Outcomes-Based Service Delivery (OBSD) Framework provides it with a basis to monitor and evaluate services community-based organizations provide to intellectually disabled people.

Since our 2021 follow-up audit, the Ministry developed its Framework to help assess CBOs and their ability to deliver services to clients with intellectual disabilities. The OBSD Framework (**Figure 1**) aims to provide a clear set of outcomes to improve the quality of life and support systems for these clients, along with defining how to measure these outcomes.

⁴ *2012 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 22, pp. 187–200.

⁵ *2014 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 55, pp. 399–404; *2017 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 33, pp. 281–284; *2019 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 46, pp. 329–331; and *2021 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 37, pp. 265–268.

It includes six distinct person-centred domains, along with three supporting outcome domains.

Figure 1—OBSD Framework



Source: Adapted from the Ministry of Social Services' *Outcomes-Based Service Delivery Framework*.

Each of the Framework's domains include defined outcomes along with specific indicators to assist the Ministry with assessing outcome achievement. **Figure 2** provides an example of the outcomes and indicators for the emotional wellbeing domain.

Figure 2—OBSD Framework's Emotional Wellbeing Domain

Emotional Wellbeing	
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with intellectual disabilities experience emotional wellbeing throughout their lives • People with intellectual disabilities feel safe in their homes and communities
Person-Centred Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel good about myself • I feel a sense of pride when I express personal gifts and talents • I am supported by someone who shares similar interests and values • I feel I am doing well emotionally • I am able to live a spiritual life in the ways that I want to • I trust the people I live with/who support me • I feel safe • I feel relaxed in interactions with others
Observation Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease with presence and/or support from staff and others • Demonstration of positive emotional responses (e.g., efforts to manage stressful situations) • Demonstration of satisfaction with their lives
Service-Level Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with mental health services, when needed • Supports to address identified safety concerns, if needed, put in place with involvement of the client • Achievement of goals related to emotional wellbeing • Where requested, receives guidance and supports for sexual orientation and gender identity

Source: *Outcomes-Based Service Delivery Framework*, p. 12.



The Ministry developed a Community of Practice with certain CBOs participating in the piloting of the Framework. The Community of Practice meets monthly to encourage discussions between Ministry staff and CBOs and to gather feedback on any areas of concern brought forward by CBOs. We reviewed evidence of meeting summaries from the Community of Practice that the Ministry shared with its own staff to create awareness of successes and challenges encountered while piloting of the Framework.

At November 2023, the Ministry's implementation of the Framework is ongoing. It is focusing its efforts on assessing the Framework's person-centred indicators by interviewing CBO clients—doing so helps the Ministry gather information about clients' quality of life. Ministry staff use a survey tool to enter client responses obtained during in-person interviews. We reviewed the survey tool and found it appropriately reflected the OBSD Framework by including 40 questions spanning the six distinct person-centred domains.

The Ministry completed its first set of interviews with 56 clients in November 2023 and planned to assess another 200 clients by January 2024. We reviewed the survey results for all 56 clients initially interviewed and found some clients did not respond to certain questions. However, the Ministry appropriately identified this issue and planned to make adjustments to prevent client misinterpretation of specific survey questions. We found the Ministry accurately reported the results of these client surveys to Ministry staff and the Community of Practice in November 2023. For example, the survey results found almost three-quarters of clients mostly satisfied with services provided by their CBOs.

Going forward, the Ministry indicated it plans to continue evaluating results from client surveys to determine the best strategies to monitor services delivered to people with intellectual disabilities. It expects to complete its OBSD Framework pilot by spring 2025 at which time it will decide how to incorporate the remaining CBOs within the Framework.

The OBSD Framework provides the Ministry with a sound basis for monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of services CBOs provide to intellectually disabled people and their families.

3.2 Monitoring Procedures Consistently Completed and Tracked

We recommended the Ministry of Social Services follow their established monitoring procedures as outlined in their agreements with community-based organizations that provide services to individuals with intellectual disabilities. (2012 Report – Volume 1, p. 196, Recommendation 6; Public Accounts Committee agreement June 17, 2014)

Status—Implemented

The Ministry of Social Services consistently completes and tracks its reviews of community-based organizations' basic policies and procedures within expected timeframes. The Ministry expects CBOs' basic policies and procedures to address the protection of clients' rights, completion of person-centred plans, and the provision of comprehensive behavioural supports (e.g., how to help clients learn and do things that will keep them and others safe).

The Ministry expects staff to conduct basic standards reviews at CBOs every two years (i.e., monitoring procedures). These basic standards reviews require staff to review CBOs' policies and procedures, verify compliance with those policies and procedures by interviewing CBO staff, and develop action plans for improving areas of non-compliance. These reviews include assessing whether the CBOs' policies align with the Ministry's *Comprehensive Personal Planning and Support Policy* (e.g., documenting person-centred plans for all intellectually disabled clients).⁶

Since our 2021 follow-up audit, we found the Ministry began tracking staff completion of basic standards reviews in a spreadsheet. At December 2023, the spreadsheet showed Ministry staff completed reviews within the last two years for almost 97% of the CBOs providing services to people with intellectual disabilities.

We tested a sample of nine CBOs and found the Ministry completed basic standards reviews for all but one CBO within the last two years as expected. We found the Ministry's tracking spreadsheet accurately showed this one review as incomplete.

Tracking and monitoring the Ministry's reviews of CBOs' policies and procedures increases the likelihood CBOs follow appropriate policies to support individuals with intellectual disabilities as they work to build better lives for themselves.

3.3 Assessments of CBO Capacity to Manage Risks Progressing

We recommended the Ministry of Social Services develop and implement complete policies and procedures for addressing risks identified in community-based organizations that provide services to individuals with intellectual disabilities. (2012 Report – Volume 1, p. 194, Recommendation 3; Public Accounts Committee agreement June 17, 2014)

Status—Intent of Recommendation Met

The Ministry of Social Services has begun assessing community-based organizations' capacity to manage risks and plans to assist them toward increasing their capacity to mitigate identified risks.

In March 2023, the Ministry began implementing its Capacity Assessment and Planning (CAP) Framework to help assess capacity of its service providers, including CBOs. The Ministry designed its CAP Framework to increase collaboration and information sharing across its program divisions, helping to create a more consistent approach when working with CBOs.

The Ministry developed a tool under the CAP Framework to help staff assess risk in five key areas—financial, staffing, governance, operations, and other. Ministry managers approve the completed CAP assessments.

At November 2023, the Ministry piloted its tool by completing CAP assessments for 44 agencies, including 26 agencies providing services to intellectually disabled people. The

⁶ The *Comprehensive Personal Planning and Support Policy* establishes province-wide policies that Ministry and CBO staff are expected to follow in the provision of effective and ethical supports to individuals with intellectual disabilities.



Ministry works with approximately 190 agencies across all of its service areas and expected to complete the remaining assessments by March 2024.

The Ministry summarized the results of its initial CAP assessments in a dashboard highlighting areas of concern and each agency's capacity assessment results. Our review of the dashboard found the primary issues identified in the initial CAP assessments revolved around risks of CBOs being victimized by fraud (e.g., only one person involved in financial transactions, no criminal record check policy) and having ineffective governance processes (e.g., governing body does not review CBO policies or engage in strategic planning). The Ministry also explained that its initial CAP assessments highlighted areas (e.g., CBO staffing) where it needs to work with CBOs to gather consistent information for monitoring CBO capacity.

The Ministry indicated that once it completes CAP assessments for all service providers, it will further refine its tool and determine an appropriate frequency (e.g., every three years) for revisiting its assessments. Once Ministry senior management review the CAP assessment results for all CBOs and approves the assessment tool, the Ministry expects to determine how to assist service providers with increasing capacity to mitigate identified risks, along with anticipated timelines. For example, the Ministry indicated it may consider offering a fraud awareness training session so CBOs can learn how to mitigate fraud (e.g., two signatures on cheques, having senior staff not sign off on their own expense claims), or hold a workshop to help strengthen CBOs' understanding of good governance processes.

We tested a sample of three CAP assessments for CBOs providing services to individuals with intellectual disabilities and found staff appropriately used the Ministry's tool when completing the assessments, and managers approved the assessments. In addition, we found the Ministry's dashboard accurately reflected the results of the assessments. None of these assessments identified significant risks requiring immediate mitigation.

Identifying key risks impacting CBOs' ability to deliver uninterrupted service to clients will help the Ministry and CBOs determine ways to mitigate these key risks.