

Ridge Meadows Child Advocacy Centre

Memorandum of Understanding

Between:

ACT2 Child and Family Services

Cythera Transition House Society

Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Community Services

Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Community Victim Services

Ministry of Children and Family Development Maple Ridge

Ministry of Justice Court Support/Victim Services Port Coquitlam Courthouse

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Ridge Meadows Detachment

School District 42

(The Parties)

Definitions

Agency – An agency is an organization engaged in providing services to the public which include services relevant to the functioning of the Ridge Meadows Child Advocacy Centre

Agency participant – where appropriate, an agency may appoint an appropriate front-line employee other than an agency representative to participate in case conferencing, provided that the participant understands and signs the CAC confidentiality protocol

Committee – The Committee is the Ridge Meadows Child Advocacy Centre Committee

Mission

A community-based child and youth-centred response that facilitates a compassionate integrated approach to the identification, investigation, prosecution and treatment of child abuse.

The Parties

Act 2 - ACT 2 provides trauma informed clinical counseling to children, youth and their families.

Cythera Transition House and Counseling Services – Cythera provides support for women and children impacted by domestic violence/abuse. This support includes safe shelter, counseling, practical information, advocacy and help with linking to services such as housing, legal services, income assistance, counseling and other community resources. Cythera's programs include services for children and youth from 3 to 18 years of age who have witnessed and/or experienced serious family conflicts but are not currently living in the abusive situation. The program offers individual and/or age-appropriate group counseling.

Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Community Services – MRPM Community Services is an accredited, multi-service non-profit organization providing quality community programs and services to Maple Ridge & Pitt Meadows since 1971.

Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Community Victim Services – Community Victim Services is one of the programs provided by MRPM Community Services. CVC provides accompaniment, guidance, and support to victims through the criminal justice system as well as providing information, community referrals, and emotional and practical support to victims, their families and witnesses. All child victims of crime within Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows are served by Community Victim Services.

Ministry of Children and Family Development Maple Ridge - MCFD's mandate falls under the Child, Family and Community Services Act, to assess child protection reports, provide support services and investigate in collaboration with community partners, the safety and wellbeing of children. MCFD and the RCMP work collaboratively and jointly in responding to reports of suspected child abuse or neglect. The role of MCFD in the CAC is to better protect children by reducing trauma caused by multiple interviews; improving collaboration to ensure coordinated investigations and services to families.

Ministry of Justice Court Support/Victim Services Port Coquitlam Courthouse - Victim Court Support Caseworkers provide support services to child victims/witnesses and their families in respect of their involvement in court processes. This includes providing general court information/orientation, information specific to the case involving the victim, and coordinating health, social, and justice system resources and services for victims. The Victim Court Support Program works collaboratively with the lead CAC victim service agency (Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Community-based victim services) to support child victims/witnesses and their families including facilitating ongoing information about the court process, court orientation and accompaniment.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Ridge Meadows Detachment - The Ridge Meadows RCMP is the policing agency for Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows and Katzie reserve, and represents the criminal investigative body for offenses involving child victims of crime or child witnesses of

crime. While prevention of crime is also a role for the RCMP, regarding the functions of a CAC the RCMP would play more of an assisting role to Agencies such as MCFD.

School District 42 – School District 42 provides for the education needs of children in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows. Employees and volunteers strive to ensure that all students have freedom from neglect, abuse, or witnessing violence. When students are suspected of witnessing violence, or experiencing neglect or abuse, it is reported immediately. When abuse or neglect is confirmed, SD42 employees work collaboratively with community agencies to provide intervention and support.

Purpose

The purpose of this MOU is to provide a framework through which the parties fulfill the Mission, and to delineate the roles and responsibilities of the parties as well as the parameters of information sharing, communication, and problem resolution.

The process and procedure for the implementation of the Ridge Meadows Child Advocacy Centre Pilot Project is appended to this MOU (Appendix A).

Statement of Guiding Principles

1. **Timely response** – every individual who accesses the CAC deserves a timely, co-ordinated response by CAC participants, with emphasis on prompt and effective service that is child- and youth-sensitive. This streamlined process is intended to diminish the negative impact and trauma to the child or youth that can arise from the unnecessary repetition of their story.
2. **Collaboration** – The CAC emphasizes the co-operative integration of processes when providing services which address the needs of the child/youth and their families/caregivers. Through open communication, the needs and viewpoint of each participant and individual is recognized and honoured.
3. **Confidential** – Confidentiality is a vital part of the CAC experience, where information is shared between the individual and CAC partners. All participants may be certain that their involvement with the CAC will be conducted in an environment of integrity, dignity and respect.
 - Integrity: An honest, professional service approach to all participants that incorporates current and best practices
 - Dignity: Recognizing, honouring and trusting the individuality of parties involved.
 - Respect: Communicating, listening and understanding in order to demonstrate trust and respect.
4. **Recognition** – The CAC will provide an environment that recognizes and validates the individual and their experiences. The CAC creates the opportunity for the individual and

service providers to work together to build on the individual's strengths and to assist them in developing their abilities to move forward through the "system" and into their future.

Term and Interim Review/Amendment

This MOU will be in effect from the date of signing by each party to an end date of December 31, 2013 with renegotiation discussions to begin November 1, 2013.

This agreement will be reviewed in May, August, and November 2013) and may be amended by agreement of all parties.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Lead Agency

For the term of this MOU, and further to the Terms of Reference¹, Ridge Meadows Community Services will be the lead administrative agency. The responsibilities of the Lead Agency include:

- Administration;
- Financial management of the project and quarterly financial reports to the Committee and to funders as required;
- Organization, agenda, chairing, and minute-taking of CAC committee meetings;
- Hiring and supervision of CAC staff;
- Application of the agency's information and privacy policy in respect of the CAC and its' staff.

For the services outlined above, the Lead Agency will be remunerated 10% of all funding received for the development and operation of the CAC.

2. Obligations for all signatory Parties

- a) All parties will designate one primary and one alternate representative to the Committee;
- b) All parties will ensure that representatives are well-informed on the processes, policies, and commitments of the CAC;
- c) An agency representative will attend and participate in monthly and special meetings of the CAC Committee;
- d) All party representatives will participate in subcommittees provided that it does not conflict with or compromise their agency's policies;
- e) All parties commit to have an agency participant able and willing to participate in case conferencing on an urgent and scheduled basis.

General Provisions

¹ Appended – Appendix B

Information Sharing/Confidentiality

The parties recognize that information-sharing is a vital part of working collaboratively, and at the same time recognize the importance of respecting and protecting the privacy of the children, youth and families whom we serve.

The CAC and its' staff will be governed by the Information and Privacy Policy of the lead agency, Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Community Services.

The parties further agree

- to use as little identifying information as possible throughout the CAC process;
- Initial case conferencing will use an identifier and only generic information (male/female, age, general circumstances) rather than name, school, neighbourhood, or other identifying information;
- All participants in case conferencing will sign an agreement to maintain confidentiality and not share personal information they have gained as a result of the collaborative work of the parties outside of the case conferencing or agency context.

With Consent: The parties will develop in collaboration and use a mutually agreed upon *Informed Consent to Collect and Disclose Information* document that complies with relevant federal and provincial protection of privacy laws. **Initial consent to refer the child/youth/family to the CAC will be explained and provided by the initiating agency.** If consent is obtained, the CAC coordinator or advocate will provide verbal and written explanation to each client and/or their guardian(s) to request consent to the sharing of information among signatory parties for the purposes of a collaborative effort to provide the best service possible.

Without Consent: Whether or not a client has signed an Informed Consent, the parties agree to the following terms for sharing of information:

- immediately report any concerns regarding safety issues of the child, youth or family members as required by law;
- share relevant information as permitted by governing federal and/or provincial law to assist in the prosecution of child abuse or related charges - including disclosure of incidents which may be separate from or in addition to those currently under investigation or prosecution – and in the support of the child/youth client and non-offending family members.

Decision Making

The Committee will endeavour to make decisions through consensus. It is agreed that consensus pertains to a round table discussion and comment by each participating party representative resulting in a group decision. Should consensus not be reached, the Chair will

assess the current representation at the table and may defer decision making until such time that representation is more complete. All recommendations are sought by the Chair and captured in the meeting minutes (as per Terms of Reference).

It is recognized that items for further discussion and decision may be carried forward to a subsequent meeting prior to a decision being made. Members are encouraged to ask the Chair for extension to ensure adequate allotment of time to process issues prior to a decision being made.

Where consensus is not possible, a decision will be made by achieving a three quarters (3/4) majority by open vote with one vote per Agency.

In some cases where time sensitive decisions are required, it is acknowledged that input and consensus may require communications via email or other method. When required, time deadlines for reply will be clearly noted in all communications and any non-response to such requests will be interpreted as abstention.

Dispute Settlement

The values enumerated above emphasize respect and collaboration. When agency representatives are in disagreement, these values are an important focus. When there is a dispute between representatives of agencies, all attempts should be made to respectfully resolve it between these representatives. If this does not effectively resolve the issue, the representatives should take it to their respective supervisors to seek assistance in resolving it.

Complaint Process

If a complaint is received by the CAC regarding a party, the complaint will be forwarded to the agency to process through the agency's own complaint process with a request that a summary of the resolution of the complaint be sent to the CAC. Complaints regarding CAC staff will be processed through the complaint process of the Lead Agency.

Media and Communications

The parties share information about the CAC openly with community partners to support common goals and outcomes within the community.

All media inquiries about the CAC should be referred to the Chair. CAC and its agency members will not respond to any inquiries regarding specifics of any client or matter of which they have knowledge as a result of involvement in the CAC.

The Chair may delegate a representative to address any external inquiries/communications.

23/01/2012

Any inquiries regarding criminal charges or court process must be referred to the RCMP and/or Crown Counsel for official response in respect of those matters.

DRAFT

Appendix A

Process

We envision a two stage development of the process in the pilot, the first to meet immediate needs and an enhanced second phase to fully develop the vision (funding dependent).

Stage one: The process for this stage of development is as follows:

1. Initiation through report to RCMP and/or MCFD
2. Determine nature of case to identify lead (criminal or non-criminal child protection²)
3. Investigate response required (e.g.criminal charges, child protection needs)
4. Conduct preliminary needs assessment (acute/non-acute, medical, safety concerns, transition house, etc.)
5. Initiating party requests consent to refer the child/youth/family to the CAC.
6. If it is an acute case of sexual abuse/assault (reported within 72 hours), transport to Vancouver Children's Hospital for medical examination and treatment.
7. If non-acute case of sexual abuse/assault, arrange for child/youth and family support as needed to attend HEAL Clinic at Surrey Memorial Hospital (victims 18 years and younger) or SANE program at Abbotsford Hospital (victim is 14 years or older) as soon as possible after interview is completed.
8. RCMP and MCFD coordinate interview needs; Crown Counsel if necessary. Contact CAC for Advocate to meet with parent at time of interview.
9. A single person (Step Wise trained) conducts interview in child-friendly interview room. MCFD monitors interview in a separate room, coordination to ensure information needs of RCMP and MCFD are met in a single interview. The recording of this interview is treated as a court exhibit.
10. While child is being interviewed, CAC Coordinator/Advocate meets with parent to advise of process and available supports, requests consent to obtaining and disclosing information, identifies needs of child non-offending family members, and conducts comprehensive intake. Comprehensive intake performed by CAC coordinator at CAC office; includes all information that may be needed by any agency (so that family member does not have to complete separate

² If child welfare is the only issue, MCFD will provide all services and the matter would not be handled by CAC

multiple intake forms with the same information), consents to share information, overview of process.

11. CAC Advocate contacts all partner members to arrange initial telephone case conference.

12. Case conference chaired by CAC with all partner agencies (Cythera, ACT2, First Nations, School District, Community Services, Victim Services) within 24 hours if possible. No identifying information is used at this stage; a case identifier will be assigned and only the most basic information (gender, age, type of incident) will be disclosed at this stage. This quick case conference will determine which agencies are required, non-required agencies will be released. Ongoing case conferences between involved agencies will take place at regular intervals (set times every two weeks) to ensure needs are met, necessary information exchanged, and to respond to any issues that may develop.

13. Referrals sent by CAC to engaged agencies. Victim Services Worker (VSW) assigned to provide fully supported and seamless access to services for the child and non-offending family member/guardian throughout entire process, explain process and answer questions, provide emotional support, arrange volunteer drivers for transportation, etc.

14. Crown Counsel³ assesses charges; appropriate early assignment of a Crown Counsel lawyer to case

15. VSW liaises with Crown Counsel for pretrial Crown Counsel interviews, and with Court Victim Services regarding court dates, meeting to introduce child to court process, etc.

16. Enhanced court procedure per Bill C-2, including child friendly separate waiting room, options for mode of testifying, etc.). VSW arranges transportation and accompanies child and supporting family member to Court

17. Post sentencing follow-up through VSW regarding release of offender, etc.

18. Case tracking and evaluation of process by CAC coordinator

³ Crown Counsel are lawyers who work for BC's prosecution service - the Criminal Justice Branch of the Ministry of Justice. Crown Counsel make the decision whether to approve charges by reviewing investigation reports from police and other agencies and conducting a charge assessment in relation to offences under the Criminal Code and other statutes. Crown Counsel are also responsible for prosecuting cases including conducting bail and sentencing hearings.

Stage two: Development of a CAC based process; requires funding for a portion of the CAC Coordinator position, a part time Child Advocate (CA), secure videotaping equipment, and space for the Centre to operate along with necessary furniture and equipment.

The process will largely remain the same as above, with the following significant added features:

1. CAC Advocate on call for after hours support at time of report, if needed and CAC engagement is consented to, to assist with referral/transportation to Transition House, and other immediate needs.
2. Child interview and intake meeting with parent/guardian will take place at CAC. Interviews, appointments for counseling, other services are arranged through and provided at CAC wherever possible – agencies come to child rather than child going to agencies; this avoids the stress of navigating and arranging transportation to different offices, and provides one familiar, comfortable and child-centred location for the child and family member to attend.
3. For non-acute cases, HEAL will attend at CAC to provide on-site services one day per week. If we are able to attain equipment (colposcope) and access one day per week to an appropriate medical examination room (off-site from the CAC), HEAL will also do physical examinations within the Maple Ridge – Pitt Meadows community.

Appendix B

RIDGE MEADOWS CHILD ADVOCACY CENTRE PROJECT COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

January 2013

MISSION: A community response that facilitates a compassionate, integrated approach to the prevention, identification, prosecution and treatment of abuse involving children and youth

VISION

The Ridge Meadows (RM) Child Advocacy Centre (CAC) Project Committee will develop a collaborative and multi-disciplinary network of professionals that will allow for the coordination of child abuse investigation and intervention services.

Efforts will be devoted to forming and instituting the most ideal amalgamation of therapeutic and judicial models of child protection, with particular emphasis on the needs of the Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows Communities. The impact of the RM CAC Project Committee will be seen in:

- 1) Better protect and nurture children by reducing the trauma to children caused by multiple investigative interviews;
- 2) Improve collaboration to ensure coordinated investigations and provide prompt and coordinated services to families; and
- 3) Enhance the quality of investigations to improve the protection of children and the prosecution of offenders.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. TIMELY RESPONSE

Every individual who accesses the CAC deserves a timely, co-ordinated response by CAC participants, with emphasis on prompt and effective service that is child- and youth-sensitive. This streamlined process is intended to diminish the negative impact and trauma to the child or youth that can arise from the unnecessary repetition of their story.

2. COLLABORATION

The CAC emphasizes the co-operative integration of processes when providing services which address the needs of the child/youth and their families/caregivers. Through open communication, the needs and viewpoint of each participant and individual is recognized and honoured.

3. CONFIDENTIAL

Confidentiality is a vital part of the CAC experience, where information is shared between the individual and CAC partners. All participants may be certain that their involvement with the CAC will be conducted in an environment of integrity, dignity and respect.

- Integrity: An honest, professional service approach to all participants that incorporates current and best practices.
- Dignity: Recognizing, honouring and trusting the individuality of parties involved.
- Respect: Communicating, listening and understanding in order to demonstrate trust and respect.

4. RECOGNITION

The CAC will provide an environment that recognizes and validates the individual and their experiences. The CAC creates the opportunity for the individual and service providers to work together to build on the individual's strengths and to assist them in developing their abilities to move forward through the "system" and into their future.

MEMBERSHIP:

The committee will endeavour to include a cross-section of service providers, and government representatives from the Pitt Meadows Maple Ridge Katzie communities, who are involved in the investigation, protection, support, and treatment of children who are victims of/witness to abuse. Membership may include the following:

- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Fraser Health Authority
- ACT 2 Child and Family Services
- Cythera Transition House and Counselling Centre
- Ridge Meadows RCMP
- Ministry of Attorney General; Crown Counsel
- Court-based Victim Services
- Maple Ridge Community Services: Community-Based Victim Services
- School District 42/Aboriginal Services

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Specific sub-committee task forces will be developed as necessary and will draw from the broader community, if deemed necessary.

Roles:

Chair

- Ensures meetings are productive and action-oriented;
- Provides clear direction to the Committee and including any identified Coordinator who may be involved;
- Ensure adequate representation/membership presence at committee meetings;
- Ensures reporting from subcommittees is brought forward to the larger committee table;
- Ensures reporting of a monthly report is forwarded to the Community Network and Ministry of Attorney General.

The Chair is to be elected and rotated on a quarterly basis, as required. The Co-Chair will assume the responsibilities of the Chair, in the Chair's absence.

Co-Chair

Is elected quarterly, serves in the absence of the Chair, and fulfills all above functions.

Minute Taker

- Will produce and distribute minutes from all meetings via the Coordinator;
- Clearly shows action items in the minutes;
- Provides administrative support to the committee as needed.

Coordinator

- Reports to the Chair or designate
- Implements the goal and vision of the CAC ensuring adherence to the Mission, Vision and Values developed
- Reports to the CAC Committee at monthly meetings;
- Ensures the development of a strategic action plan that will provide direction for the ongoing work of the CAC Pilot Project Committee;
- Provides administrative support to the Chair of the CAC;
- Responsible for the development of meeting agendas;
- Ensures the distribution of all agendas, meeting minutes and other relevant correspondence;
- Responsible for data collection, statistical analysis and project evaluation of the Pilot Project.

AGENDAS

Meeting agendas are developed by the Coordinator. The agendas will be vetted through the Chair and distributed by Coordinator at least one week before the meeting. Any agenda items committee members wish to add will be forwarded to the Coordinator at least one week before the next meeting

MINUTES

The Minutetaker will be responsible for the taking of minutes at all meetings. The minutes will be distributed to members of the Committee via Coordinator through email distribution no later than three business days prior to the next meeting.

MEETINGS

Meetings are scheduled monthly or as needed. The meetings run for two hours. At present the meetings are held the third Thursday of the month from 9:30am to 11:30am in the Hilton Haider Room on the main floor of the Randy Herman Public Safety Building in Maple Ridge. Additional working groups and meeting times will be scheduled as required.

REPORTING

The Minutetaker of the RM CAC Project Committee will provide minutes from the previous meeting at least three days prior to the upcoming meeting. The Chair or delegate of the RM CAC Project Committee will attend the monthly Community Network Meeting to deliver a verbal update and answer questions. A monthly written update will also be provided to the CN Table and to the Ministry of Attorney General, not otherwise represented at the CN.

DECISION MAKING

Decision making will be made by the Chair and Project Committee through consensus and as per the RMCAC Memorandum of Understanding. It is agreed that consensus pertains to a round table discussion and comment by each participating member resulting in a group decision. Should consensus not be reached, the Chair will assess the current representation at the table and may defer decision making until such time that representation is more complete. All recommendations are sought by the Chair and captured in the meeting minutes.

It is recognized that items for further discussion and decision making may be carried forward to a subsequent meeting prior to a decision taking place. Members are encouraged to ask the Chair for extension to ensure adequate allotment of time to process issues prior to a decision being made.

Where consensus is not possible, a decision will be made by achieving a three quarters (3/4) majority by open vote with one vote per Agency.

In some cases where time sensitive decisions are required, it is acknowledged input and consensus may be necessary through the use of email conversations. When such requirements are needed, time deadlines for reply will be clearly noted in the email, and any non-response to such requests will be interpreted as abstention.

COMMUNICATION

The RM CAC Project Committee shares information in a transparent and open manner about the development and implementation of a Child Advocacy Centre with community partners.

There is an effort to establish a common language and understanding that support common goals and outcomes with the community.

- All relevant communication will be sent in a timely fashion.
- All communications will be consistent with a set of core values (Please refer to Guiding Principles). All media enquiries will be addressed by the Chair or other responsible persons as delegated by the Chair.
- Anyone who represents the RM CAC Project Committee in an external manner must obtain the consent of the Chair beforehand.

COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS

For the duration of the Pilot Project, any complaints regarding an agency which is party to the project will be forwarded to that agency, to adhere to their individual resolution process, with a request that a summary of the resolution of the complaint be sent to the CAC. All complaints involving a RMCAC project employee will be sent to MRPM Community Services (as host agency) adhering to that agency's complaint process (as per the Memorandum of Understanding).

FINANCIAL CONTROLS

The RM CAC Project Committee believes that it is advantageous to the community to make funding decisions collaboratively within the framework of the Terms of Reference. The Committee works within a system of transparency and accountability through committee and project budgets. The representative agency/host agency that manages the CAC funding, Maple Ridge/ Pitt Meadows Community Services, in consultation with the committee, will:

- develop and monitor all committee service contracts in conjunction with the Chair and consultation with the committee;
- supervise the contract deliverables and the contractor, in conjunction with the committee chair;
- develop a committee budget spreadsheet to capture committee revenue and expenses;
- provide a minimum of four financial reports per year to the committee;
- provide administration and financial management of this project; the agency will be remunerated 10% of all funding received for the development and operation of the CAC.

Working groups may be developed for specific projects, including financial budgets, from time to time.

(Fourth Draft ToR approved January 2013)