

Chapter 3

Section 3.01

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

Child and Youth Mental Health

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Follow-Up on Section 3.01, 2016 Annual Report

On March 22, 2017, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Committee) held a public hearing on our 2016 audit of the Child and Youth Mental Health program administered by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (formerly the Ministry of Children and Youth Services). The Committee tabled a report on this hearing in the Legislature in December 2017. The report can be found at www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/standingcommittee/standingcommittee.html.

The Committee made 11 recommendations and asked the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (Ministry) to report back by April 2018. The Ministry formally responded to the Committee on April 3, 2018. A number of the issues raised by the Committee were similar to the audit observations in our 2016 audit, which we followed up on in 2018. The status of the Committee's recommended actions is shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Summary Status of Actions Recommended in December 2017 Committee Report

Prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario

	# of Actions Recommended	Status of Actions Recommended				
		Fully Implemented	In Process of Being Implemented	Little or No Progress	Will Not Be Implemented	No Longer Applicable
Recommendation 1	2			2		
Recommendation 2	2			2		
Recommendation 3	1			1		
Recommendation 4	1			1		
Recommendation 5	4			4		
Recommendation 6	4			4		
Recommendation 7	2			2		
Recommendation 8	2		1	1		
Recommendation 9	2			2		
Recommendation 10	3			3		
Recommendation 11	5			5		
Total	28	0	1	27	0	0
%	100	0	4	96	0	0

The Ministry's responses to this report are a point-in-time reflection of planned activities and approaches from the perspective of the former Ministry of Children and Youth Services (now the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services). The government recently announced that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will be taking on responsibility for child and youth mental health from the former Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Effective October 29, 2018, policy and financial accountability for child and youth mental health transferred to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Future decisions on child and youth mental health policies, programs and services related to the recommendations in this report will be considered in the context of the transfer and integration of the Child and Youth Mental Health portfolio into the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's mental health system.

We conducted assurance work between April 3, 2018, and July 5, 2018, and obtained written representation from the Ministry that, effective October 31, 2018, it has provided us with a complete update of the status of the recommendations made by the Committee in its report.

Overall Conclusion

At the time of our follow-up, the Ministry had established plans to address the majority of the

recommendations in the Committee's report. However, the Ministry required substantially more time to work toward fully implementing the recommendations.

According to the information the Ministry provided to us, as of July 5, 2018, one of the Committee's recommended actions (4%) was in the process of being implemented. However, there has been little or no progress on the remaining actions (96%). That is, the Ministry has, for example, developed but not yet implemented a funding model to allocate funding to child and youth mental health agencies based on the mental health needs of the children and youth it serves. In addition, the Ministry has committed to lead a review of its program guidelines and requirements to further define them so that they can be consistently applied by all agencies; however, the review is not scheduled to begin until December 2018. As well, the Ministry does not expect to have collected sufficient data to set targets for its performance indicators until 2024.

Detailed Status of Recommendations

Figure 2 shows the recommendations and the status details that are based on responses from the Ministry, and our review of the information provided.

Figure 2: Committee Recommendations and Detailed Status of Actions Taken

Prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 1 The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services work collaboratively with other ministries that provide mental health services to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> determine the impact of their initiatives on the mental health outcomes of children and youth and further leverage initiatives that result in improved mental health outcomes for children and youth; Status: Little or no progress. further analyze increases in in-patient hospitalizations and hospital emergency room visits by children and youth for mental health issues, assess the nature of these visits, and use this information to put in place actions to reduce visits by, for example, focusing on health promotion, prevention, and early intervention. Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>The Ministry has not made significant progress toward implementing this recommendation. The Ministry identified that it plans to work with the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care, Education, and Training, Colleges and Universities (formerly Advanced Education and Skills Development) to develop common indicators to measure the mental health outcomes of children and youth by September 2020. Thereafter, the Ministry indicated that it intends to use these indicators to measure the impact of initiatives, and assess if specific initiatives require their own evaluation framework. In addition, the Ministry plans to fully implement its Business Intelligence (BI) solution that will capture anonymized client-level data at all agencies by April 2020. The Ministry expects that the implementation of the BI solution will enable better analysis of mental health outcomes and better targeting of mental health investments.</p> <p>To gain a better understanding of increased emergency department utilization rates by children and youth for mental health and addictions issues, the Ministry engaged the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES), which provided the Ministry in 2017 with a report examining the data. The Ministry advised us that it is currently working with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to complete a comprehensive analysis of available data on the use of hospital-based mental health services by children and youth by the fall of 2018. The Ministry indicated that this work will be used to inform future policy decisions that address the increase. However, the Ministry has not established a timeline for when it expects to use this information to put in place actions to reduce hospital visits.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, in consultation with Children’s Mental Health Ontario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigate and analyze the reasons for the long wait times for children and youth in need of mental health services; and use this analysis to reduce wait times for children and youth seeking mental health services; Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>The Ministry has made little progress toward implementing this recommendation. The Ministry’s plans to address this recommendation include analyzing three years of wait-time data in the fall of 2018; developing an approach to assessing variability in wait times in consultation with Children’s Mental Health Ontario (CMHO); establishing and communicating baselines and acceptable ranges for variability in wait times to child and youth mental health agencies by November 2018; and annually discussing variances in wait times with agencies beginning in the summer of 2019. The Ministry is also planning to use the Business Intelligence solution that it intends to fully implement at all agencies by April 2020, to capture anonymized client-level data, including more accurate wait-time data. However, the Ministry indicated that it does not expect to have captured sufficient data to establish wait-time targets and a strategy to address wait times until 2024.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigate and analyze the reasons for the increasing number of emergency room visits and in-patient hospitalization of children and youth with mental health needs; and use this analysis to enable more children and youth with mental health needs to access mental health care services outside of hospital settings. <p>Status: Little or no progress.</p>	<p>To gain a better understanding of increasing emergency department utilization rates by children and youth for mental health and addictions issues, the Ministry engaged ICES, which provided the Ministry in 2017 with a report examining the data. The Ministry advised us that it is currently working with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to complete a comprehensive analysis of available data on the use of hospital-based mental health services by children and youth by the fall of 2018. The Ministry indicated that this work will be used to inform future policy decisions that address the increase. However, the Ministry has not established a timeline for when it expects to use this information to put in place actions to reduce hospital visits.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services work in consultation with Children’s Mental Health Ontario and Local Health Integration Networks to help hospitals develop and implement protocols and assessment tools for assessing the mental health needs of children and youth seeking treatment at hospitals.</p> <p>Status: Little or no progress.</p>	<p>The Ministry advised us that it has made limited progress toward implementing this recommendation. The Ministry identified that in January 2018, the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health (Centre) completed a report that provides an overview of tools currently used by lead child and youth mental health agencies to assess mental health needs. The report identified the main strengths and challenges of the tools to help find common tools that the mental health sector can use for clinical interventions and decision-making, and for measuring performance. The Ministry plans to work with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to align their data, use of standardized tools, collection of performance indicators and reporting, to improve the quality of the data they use for decision-making and providing mental health services. This will include examining opportunities to use standardized tools and processes across sectors to support identification of needs. The Ministry plans to undertake this work by September 2020.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services work in consultation with Children’s Mental Health Ontario and Local Health Integration Networks, hospitals, and lead child and youth mental health agencies to develop and implement system navigation protocols for better managing clients’ transitions between hospitals and child and youth mental health services, as well as transitions between community-based services.</p> <p>Status: Little or no progress.</p>	<p>The Ministry noted that lead agencies are building connections locally across children’s services, including those in the health, education and broader children’s services sectors, and bringing service providers together to improve local planning through the core services delivery report and the community mental health report.</p> <p>However, significant work remains outstanding before this recommendation is fully implemented. The Ministry’s current plans to address the recommendation include leveraging lead child and youth mental health agencies’ reports dealing with core service delivery and community mental health over the course of the 2018/19 fiscal year, to identify promising practices. In addition, the Ministry plans to work with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, as well as other ministries and stakeholders to identify priorities such as supporting co-ordinated pathways from schools to child and youth mental health agencies, and to begin work on these pathway priorities in 2018. The Ministry anticipates that by 2020 it will complete work in areas such as sector guidelines on identified pathway priorities.</p> <p>The Ministry is also working with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to support the implementation of 10 demonstration youth wellness hubs. These hubs are walk-in centres where young people aged 12 to 25 can get one-stop access to mental health and addictions services. The hubs also provide primary care, education, and employment and housing services for youth. The Ministry advised us that it is supporting the development of a framework for evaluating this initiative, and the results will be used to inform the Ministry’s plans for creating co-ordinated pathways to services.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 5 The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with lead child and youth mental health agencies in consultation with Children's Mental Health Ontario to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service delivery policy and program requirements for agencies are clear and well understood by agencies, and that all agencies comply with these policy and program requirements for service delivery; Status: Little or no progress. • all agencies have policies in place to guide staff when a client is discharged and needs to transition to another agency or service system, including to adult mental health services; Status: Little or no progress. • agencies consistently follow up with children and youth after discharge to assess their status and facilitate access to additional services if needed; Status: Little or no progress. • agencies update clients on when they will receive service. Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>The Ministry has committed to lead a review of its program guidelines and requirements, leveraging the work and expertise of the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health to update them to ensure they are interpreted and applied consistently. The Ministry plans to convene a reference group to provide advice on the review by December 2018, and to complete its review and update its program guidelines and requirements by June 2019. Based on the review, the Ministry also plans to develop implementation tools and supports for the agencies over the course of the 2018/19 and 2019/20 fiscal years.</p> <p>As part of its commitment to review its program guidelines and requirements, the Ministry plans to collect information and conduct an analysis of the current state of discharge and transition policies by the end of 2018. Based on this review and analysis, the Ministry plans to update its program guidelines and requirements concerning discharge and transition as needed, and develop implementation tools and supports so that agencies can comply with the requirement to have discharge and transition policies by July 2019.</p> <p>As part of its commitment to review its program guidelines and requirements, the Ministry plans to collect information and conduct an analysis on the current state of discharge protocols by the end of 2018, and to explore the option of adding discharge follow-up as a minimum expectation by February 2019. The Ministry also plans to develop a mechanism to monitor discharge and transition follow-up protocols and corrective actions taken, and to implement an oversight and monitoring framework by July 2019.</p> <p>As part of its commitment to review its program guidelines and requirements, the Ministry plans to collect information and conduct analysis on the current state of agency protocols for updating clients on when they will receive services and the challenges to complying with these protocols by the end of 2018. The Ministry plans to explore the option of prescribing how and when clients waiting for services should be updated by February 2019. In addition, the Ministry plans to incorporate its expectations for agencies to update clients into an applicable framework and to develop a mechanism to monitor compliance with these expectations by July 2019.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 6 The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with lead child and youth mental health agencies in consultation with Children’s Mental Health Ontario to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish agency-specific targets for wait times, monitor actual wait times against these targets to assess their reasonableness, and follow up with corrective action when wait times are not met; Status: Little or no progress. assess whether periodic quality assurance reviews of agency files can help ensure that children and youth receive appropriate and effective services; Status: Little or no progress. assess whether requiring supervisory approval of key caseworker decisions and documents that guide mental health services can help improve the quality and consistency of services provided; Status: Little or no progress. when assessing agencies’ compliance with service delivery standards, communicate the outcomes of these assessments to all agency staff to help ensure that issues of non-compliance are addressed agency-wide. Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>The Ministry has made little progress toward implementing this recommendation. The Ministry’s plans to address this recommendation include analyzing three years of wait-time data in the fall of 2018; developing an approach to assessing variability in wait times in consultation with CMHO; establishing and communicating baseline and acceptable ranges for variability in wait times to child and youth mental health agencies by November 2018; and annually discussing variances in wait times with agencies beginning in the summer of 2019. The Ministry is also planning to use the Business Intelligence solution that it intends to implement at all agencies by April 2020, to capture anonymized client-level data, including more accurate wait-time data. However, the Ministry indicated that it does not expect to have captured sufficient data to establish wait-time targets until 2024.</p> <p>Although the Ministry has not made progress toward implementing this recommendation, its plans to do so include developing a Quality Framework that includes service standards, and developing a mechanism for conducting quality assurance reviews of agency files, and a means of monitoring compliance to this requirement by September 2020. In addition, the Ministry plans to evaluate whether these reviews can help ensure that children and youth receive appropriate and effective services by September 2021.</p> <p>The Ministry has not made progress toward implementing this recommendation. However, its plans to do so include developing a Quality Framework that includes service standards, and developing a mechanism for requiring supervisory approval of key caseworker decisions and auditing files to ensure compliance with this requirement by September 2020. The Ministry also plans to examine the relationship between supervisory approval and the ability to improve quality and consistency of services by September 2021.</p> <p>Although the Ministry has not made any progress toward implementing this recommendation, it advised us that it plans to establish as an expectation that the outcome of assessments of compliance with service standards are communicated to agency staff by September 2020.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 7 The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with lead child and youth mental health agencies in consultation with Children's Mental Health Ontario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to develop caseload guidelines; Status: Little or no progress. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that agencies periodically compare themselves against these guidelines in order to help assess the effectiveness and efficiency of their operations. Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>Although the Ministry has taken action to address this recommendation, significant work remains outstanding before it is implemented. The Ministry worked with the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health (Centre) to develop a plan to engage stakeholders to develop recommendations for caseload guidelines, and the Centre subsequently established a working group that it co-chairs with CMHO and includes representation from the child and youth mental health agencies.</p> <p>The Centre and CMHO provided a draft interim report to the Ministry in June 2018 that recommended that caseload guidelines should not be developed; instead, they recommended that workload guidelines should be developed. The Ministry advised us that it remains committed to implementing the recommendation to develop caseload guidelines, and has not made any decisions regarding the recommendations in the interim report. The Ministry expects a final report from the Centre and CMHO in December 2018. The Ministry advised us that it plans to review and analyze the recommendations from the report along with other research and data on caseloads to determine next steps in the development of caseload guidelines.</p> <p>The Ministry advised us that because the processes and tools required for ensuring that agencies are comparing themselves against caseload guidelines are dependent on the development of these guidelines, no progress has been made toward implementing this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8 The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with Children's Mental Health Ontario, lead child and youth mental health agencies, and Local Health Integration Networks to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a process for tracking and reviewing client complaints in order to identify trends that may require follow-up and/or corrective action; Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>The Ministry has not made any progress toward implementing this recommendation. The Ministry plans to develop and implement a consultation strategy to collect information on how agencies and Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) are defining, documenting, tracking and assessing complaints by January 2019. By April 2019, the Ministry plans to establish a working group that includes CMHO, LHIN and lead child and youth mental health agency representatives to develop a common understanding of what constitutes a complaint, and to explore the feasibility of collecting complaint information to identify trends that the Ministry may need to address. Based on the results of this exercise, the Ministry will decide whether to include a process for tracking complaints in its Quality Framework by September 2020.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> build client experience standards that will measure the service experiences of children, youth, and families; and enable continuous improvement of the client experience. Status: In the process of being implemented by September 2020. 	<p>The Ministry is collecting data related to service experience through its existing performance indicators that measure the proportion of former clients who reported having a positive experience. In addition, the Ministry plans to develop a Quality Framework by September 2020 that will include client-experience standards. The Ministry plans to work with stakeholders and experts to identify additional data that may help measure client experience, and to review client-experience data that is being collected to identify gaps. The Ministry also plans to develop service-experience benchmarks and to develop a mechanism to ensure that client-experience standards are followed.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9 To ensure that children and youth with mental health needs across the province consistently receive timely and appropriate services, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement a funding model that allocates funding to child and youth mental health agencies that is commensurate with the mental health needs of the children and youth they serve; Status: Little or no progress. develop and implement a funding model to allocate funding to Indigenous-operated agencies that is commensurate with the mental health needs of the children and youth they serve. Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>The Ministry has taken action to address this recommendation. It engaged a consultant and developed a funding model that is intended to allocate funding to agencies based on the needs of the communities they serve. The funding model is designed to allocate 90% of funding to agencies based on the socio-economic factors in the communities they serve, including the child and youth population, the number of lone-parent families, the unemployment rate, education levels, the number of visible minorities, and the number of low-income families. However, the Ministry has not set a timetable to implement the new funding model, and has not determined whether it will use the new model to allocate funding to the agencies.</p> <p>Although the Ministry noted that it is discussing service delivery models and funding approaches with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis partners in the context of holistic services and nation building, it has not yet determined how and when it will implement this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10 To ensure that consistent and appropriate services are provided to children and youth across Ontario, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with lead child and youth mental health agencies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> further define Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services program requirements so that they can be consistently applied across Ontario by all agencies that deliver mental health services; Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>The Ministry has committed to lead a review of its program guidelines and requirements, leveraging the work and expertise of the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health to update them to ensure they are interpreted and applied consistently. The Ministry plans to convene a reference group to provide advice on the review by December 2018, and to complete its review and update its program guidelines and requirements by June 2019. Based on the review, the Ministry also plans to develop implementation tools and supports for the agencies over the course of the 2018/19 and 2019/20 fiscal years.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement a process to monitor whether child and youth mental health agencies are delivering mental health services according to Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services requirements; Status: Little or no progress. explore opportunities to expedite the creation of clear and coordinated pathways to core mental health services, and services provided by other sectors, so that children and youth are connected with the right service regardless of where they request services. Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>Although the Ministry has not made significant progress toward implementing this recommendation, it plans to conduct an analysis of the current state of agencies' compliance with the Ministry's program guidelines and requirements by the end of 2018. After that, the Ministry plans to develop an oversight and monitoring framework to address identified gaps in agencies' compliance by June 2019, and to implement processes and tools to monitor agencies' performance, and to follow up as required by July 2019.</p> <p>The Ministry's plans to address this recommendation include leveraging lead child and youth mental health agencies' core services delivery and community mental health reports over the course of the 2018/19 fiscal year to identify promising practices. In addition, the Ministry plans to work with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, as well as other ministries and stakeholders to identify priorities such as supporting co-ordinated pathways from schools to child and youth mental health agencies, and to begin work on these pathway priorities in 2018. The Ministry anticipates that by 2020 it will complete its work in areas such as sector guidelines on identified pathway priorities.</p> <p>The Ministry is also working with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to support the implementation of 10 demonstration youth wellness hubs. These hubs are walk-in centres where young people aged 12 to 25 can get one-stop access to mental health and addictions services. The hubs also provide primary care, education, and employment and housing services for youth. The Ministry also advised us that it is supporting the development of a framework for evaluating this initiative, whose results would be used in expediting the creation of clear and co-ordinated pathways to services.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11 To help ensure that the Child and Youth Mental Health program is performing as intended to deliver consistent and effective services to Ontario's children and youth who need it, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with Children's Mental Health Ontario, and child and youth mental health agencies, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify and implement performance indicators and data requirements that are sufficient, consistent, and appropriate to use to periodically assess the performance of the program and the agencies that deliver it; Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>The Ministry established a working group in 2017 that included child and youth mental health agencies and the Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health to review and provide feedback on its performance indicators. Based on this feedback, it made changes to both the description and method of calculating of some of the indicators. However, the Ministry is still not collecting data on all of its 13 performance indicators and did not have a timeline for doing so. In addition, it has not introduced additional performance indicators to help measure the performance of the mental health program, and it does not expect to complete the implementation of its Business Intelligence (BI) solution at all agencies until April 2020. The BI solution will capture anonymized client-level data, and the Ministry expects that its implementation will enable better analysis of performance data and mental health outcomes. The Ministry noted that based on the data collected using the BI solution, it will refine, augment and change its indicators over time as the system matures.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement performance indicators that measure the long-term outcomes of children and youth who have accessed mental health services to assist the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to measure the effectiveness of the program and inform future policy decisions; Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>The Ministry has made little progress toward implementing this recommendation to date. The Ministry indicated that it plans to review and determine long-term outcome indicators and associated data measures, and assess the feasibility and suitability of collecting more detailed outcome data by March 2019.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collect data on the number of children and youth with specific mental health concerns that will help inform future policy decisions to better address the needs of children and youth; Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>The Ministry indicated that to address this recommendation, it is going to be working with the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) to facilitate data collection and reporting on mental health illnesses and disorders from a subset of child and youth mental health agencies. By November 2018, the Ministry plans to assess whether data collected from this subset can be extrapolated and appropriately applied at the provincial level to help inform policy decisions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> set targets for the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services performance indicators and use the data it collects to identify instances that may require follow-up and/or corrective action; Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>The Ministry indicated that it first plans to fully implement its new Business Intelligence (BI) solution at all agencies by April 2020, and then begin collecting data using this system for three years before establishing targets for its performance indicators in 2024. The Ministry advised us that the BI solution will capture anonymized client-level data that will enable better target setting and analysis of performance data.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that publicly reported results on the performance of the Child and Youth Mental Health program provide information that is both accurate and meaningful. Status: Little or no progress. 	<p>The Ministry does not publicly report on its current performance indicators, and has not identified a date by which it will share data publicly. However, it has shared data on its performance indicators from the 2015/16 fiscal year with the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES). ICES subsequently publicly published <i>The Mental Health of Children and Youth in Ontario: 2017 Scorecard</i> in June 2017. The ICES scorecard included data on some of the Ministry's performance indicators.</p>