

Young Offender Services Program

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The Young Offender Services program is administered by the Ministry of Community and Social Services under the authority of the provincial *Child and Family Services Act* and Regulations. The program provides services primarily to youths aged 12 to 15 years who are charged under the federal *Young Offenders Act* with a *Criminal Code of Canada* offence or under the *Provincial Offences Act*.

Young offenders who are 16 and 17 years old at the time they commit an offence are served by the Ministry of Solicitor General and Correctional Services. Children under the age of 12 cannot be charged with an offence and are handled outside the young offender legislation, generally by Children's Aid Societies.

The objective of the Ministry's Young Offender Services program is to protect society through a combination of programs that provide for the safety and security of offenders, and to actively assist, support and encourage the offenders to become law-abiding citizens.

The program's primary responsibility is to ensure that young offenders comply with the orders of the Youth Court. Court orders can take the form of either dispositions or detention orders resulting from judicial proceedings or alternative measure sanction referrals by a Crown Attorney. For the 1995/96 fiscal year, the program operated at or near full capacity. The program's service indicators according to the type of court orders were as follows:

Program Service Indicators by Type of Court Order

	Average Daily Count	Annual Admissions	Annual Days of Custody/ Detention	Average Days in Custody/ Detention
Open Custody*	413	3,456	150,834	44
Secure Custody*	260	2,222	94,743	43
Open Detention*	144	5,112	52,494	10
Secure Detention*	110	4,327	39,968	9
Probation and Community Service	—	8,561	—	
Alternative Measures	—	5,962	—	
Totals	927	29,640	338,039	

* Detention is placement in a facility before, or on remand from, a court hearing, while custody results from the terms of a court disposition.

Source: Ministry of Community and Social Services

We noted that since our last audit in 1993 annual admissions to custody and detention programs have increased approximately 43%, while total days of care have decreased approximately 7%. As a result, there are more youth coming into custody and detention programs, but on average they are there for shorter periods of time.

For the 1996/97 fiscal year, the Ministry spent \$127 million on young offender services, including \$79 million in transfer payments to approximately 100 agencies. The federal government contributed approximately \$24 million toward these costs under the provisions of the Young Offenders Cost Sharing Agreement.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

Our audit objectives were to assess whether the Ministry's procedures were adequate to ensure that:

- legislative and judicial requirements and program policies and procedures were complied with; and
- the program was being delivered with due regard for economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The scope of our audit included a review and analysis of the Ministry's administrative procedures and guidelines, as well as interviews with appropriate head office, area office and agency staff. We also reviewed a representative sample of case files to determine whether documentation on file complied with Ministry requirements. In addition, we reviewed a representative sample of transfer payment agency files and visited agency facilities where warranted.

Our audit also included a review of the audit plans and relevant reports issued by the Ministry's Comprehensive Audit and Investigations Branch. However, we were unable to reduce the

scope of our audit work as the Branch had not issued any reports on the Ministry's administration of the Young Offender Services program in the last two years.

OVERALL AUDIT OBSERVATIONS

During our previous audit of this program in 1993, we identified a number of concerns relating to case file documentation and the funding and inspection of transfer payment agency facilities. While the Ministry generally agreed with our recommendations, we found that many of the recommendations had not been implemented at the time of our current audit.

As a result, the Ministry's administrative procedures continue to require strengthening to ensure compliance with legislative and judicial requirements and program policies and procedures.

Specifically, the Ministry needs to ensure that:

- where required, risk/needs assessments and case management plans for young offenders are initiated, completed and updated on a timely basis;
- case files contain adequate documentation demonstrating compliance with all terms and conditions of probation and community service orders;
- probation supervisors review a sample of each probation officer's files to ensure compliance with required documentation standards, and adequately document the results of their reviews; and
- inspections relating to the annual licensing of young offender facilities involve checking compliance with both *Child and Family Services Act* standards and the additional requirements prescribed in the *Young Offender Services Manual*.

With respect to ensuring economy, efficiency and effectiveness in program delivery, the Ministry needs:

- to critically assess an agency's funding request to ensure that funding approvals are commensurate with the services provided;
- to ensure program surpluses are identified and recovered on a timely basis; and
- to implement, measure and evaluate program, where feasible, outcome indicators to determine the effectiveness of the program.

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DETAILED AUDIT OBSERVATIONS

COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATION, COURT ORDERS AND MINISTRY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

In addition to ensuring that young offenders comply with orders of the Youth Court, the Young Offender Services program is also expected to maximize the opportunities for young offender rehabilitation by providing programs to meet their special needs. To meet such expectations, the Ministry's Children, Family and Community Services Division has developed program delivery standards and guidelines which are contained in the *Young Offender Services Manual*. All service providers are required to comply with the provisions of the *Manual*.

Where required by "guilty findings," dispositions resulting from judicial proceedings are assigned to probation officers who assume all case management responsibilities. There are approximately 210 probation officers working out of 68 probation offices that report to 12 area offices. The case management responsibilities include coordinating required services and maintaining mandatory information on file. Documentation which must be on file in most cases includes: disposition orders, predisposition reports when requested by a judge, risk/need assessments and case management plans, plans of care for custody orders exceeding 30 days, and probation officers' case notes.

CASE MANAGEMENT

A risk/needs assessment and case management plan is to be prepared by a probation officer for every offender who receives a disposition resulting in custody or probation. This plan includes an individual assessment of the young offender's needs and risk level, specific goals for the young offender, a determination of how these goals are to be achieved, and the method of evaluating goal achievement. Updates to the plan are to be prepared regularly until termination or transfer of the offender to another probation office, and must also indicate progress made on the pre-established goals.

The Ministry currently only requires that a risk/needs assessment and case management plan be initiated for all young offenders within 30 days of receiving a disposition from the Youth Court. However, proposed changes would require that the assessment and case management plan be completed within four to six weeks of the disposition date. In addition, assessment and management plan updates are to be completed at various intervals depending on the evaluated risk level of the young offender. For example, if the risk of re-offending is assessed to be high, an update is required every three months. All completed assessments and management plans are to be reviewed and approved by a probation supervisor.

A plan of care must be prepared for every young offender placed in a custody facility for more than 30 days. Plans of care provide a framework for the planning and monitoring of services provided to a young offender while in custody and the young offender's response to these services. When required, plans of care must be prepared within 30 days of admission to a facility and must be updated quarterly. In addition, a discharge report must be prepared within 30 days of the young offender's release from the facility.

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At the time of our last audit in 1993, we found that a number of young offender files did not include the then-required “case management plans” or required updates. However, compliance with these documentation requirements was expected to improve with the 1994 introduction of the “Risk/Needs Assessment and Case Management Planning” tool incorporated into the Ministry’s computerized Young Offenders Strategic Information System (YOSIS).

However, in reviewing a representative sample of case files for young offenders we found many instances where the file documentation still did not comply with the Ministry’s requirements. In a majority of the files at least one of the mandatory documentation requirements described below was missing.

Mandatory Documentation Missing

Required Documentation	Percentage of Files Missing at Least One Document
Risk/need and case management plans including updates	58%
Plans of care including updates	22%
Court Orders	4%

Source: Office of the Provincial Auditor

In addition, our review of province-wide YOSIS data as of December 1996 identified 8,400 active young offender cases requiring a risk/needs assessment and case management plan. Of these cases, 840 did not have an initial risk/needs assessment or case management plan completed within six weeks of the disposition date. Additionally, updated assessments and plans were overdue in 2,300 other cases. For example, we noted that updated assessments and plans for high risk young offenders were overdue an average of four months. In these cases, the last assessment done would have been seven months old since one assessment is required every three months.

In 7,100 active cases at least one risk assessment and case management plan had been completed. However, 1,300 or 18% of these cases had not been signed off in YOSIS as required, indicating review and approval by a probation supervisor. Similarly, risk/needs assessments and case management plans for over 550 closed cases had not been reviewed and approved in YOSIS by a probation supervisor.

Recommendation

In order to ensure and demonstrate that the services provided are appropriate to an individual’s needs, the Ministry should ensure that all required case management documentation is completed and updated on a timely basis.

Ministry Response

The Ministry agrees that required case management documentation such as risk needs assessments and case management plans should be completed on a timely basis.

The Ministry already has in place case documentation/management standards in the Young Offender Services Manual requiring: timely completion of case management documents and regular supervision/file review/sign-off by probation supervisors.

In addition, the Ministry will put in place a mechanism for reviewing standards compliance in all young offender program sectors this year.

COMPLIANCE WITH COURT ORDERS

We concluded that the Ministry had adequate documentation on file to demonstrate the enforcement of custody dispositions and alternative measures.

However, where dispositions included probation or community service, 29% of the files that we reviewed lacked adequate documentation indicating whether all of the terms of these dispositions had been completed. For example, in many of these cases documentation was insufficient to demonstrate that probation officers had provided young offenders with counselling services or therapy, or had reviewed school attendance records and progress reports as required by the conditions of probation.

With respect to community service orders, young offenders normally work with individuals or organizations to complete the order. The Ministry then needs to obtain written confirmation of the work completed. However, in one third of the files that we reviewed, there was no written confirmation or other evidence that community service orders had been completed. In addition, the Ministry does not have any guidelines specifying appropriate community service placement or what type of activity qualifies for the completion of a community service order. We also noted that, at one area office, young offenders received bonus hours towards their required community service time for good behaviour and travel time. This is inconsistent with the community service orders issued by the Youth Court.

Recommendation

The Ministry should ensure that each file contains adequate documentation to demonstrate compliance with all applicable Youth Court orders. In addition, the rationale for the Ministry's use of discretion in connection with community service order placements should also be fully documented.

Ministry Response

The Ministry agrees that case management files should include adequate documentation to demonstrate compliance with court orders, including community service orders administered through outside agencies.

Ministry procedures focus on non-compliance which is to be specifically identified and followed up. On termination of the order, the file is to more fully reflect the youth's compliance and non-compliance, the officer's response to non-compliance and the status on termination.

These expectations are confirmed in the updated Young Offender Services Manual. All case management documentation will be monitored through regular supervision and compliance review.

BRING FORWARD NOTES

When a young offender's disposition information is recorded in YOSIS, the system automatically generates bring forward due dates for the initial risk/needs assessment and case management plan and subsequently required updates. Probation officers therefore are able to use this system to track when risk/needs assessments and case management plans and updates need to be prepared.

We noted that many probation officers did not use this optional feature of the system to track when initial reports or updates were due. In December 1996 YOSIS bring-forward reminder reports indicated that approximately 460 initial risk/needs assessments and case management plans and 3,500 updates were overdue. On average, the reports or updates were overdue approximately five months.

We also found that the system allows probation officers to:

- arbitrarily delete or change system-generated bring forward due dates; and
- change the date that a risk/needs assessment and case management plan was actually completed in YOSIS by backdating the report at any time prior to its review and sign-off by a probation supervisor.

Recommendation

In order to help ensure that all the required documentation needed to perform an effective case management function is prepared and updated in a timely manner, the Ministry should remind its probation officers that:

- although optional, the bring forward feature on the Young Offenders Strategic Information System should be used to monitor risk/needs assessment and case management plan due dates; and
- outstanding bring forward notes should be cleared on a timely basis.

Ministry Response

The Ministry agrees with the importance of timely case management documentation.

The responsibilities of probation officers for case management documentation are identified in the updated Young Offender Services Manual. The Ministry recognizes that the bring forward system is one tool available to them for tracking when reports are due.

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The Ministry will reinforce requirements for timely documentation through regular supervision and compliance review. In addition, the Ministry will ensure through the Young Offenders Strategic Information System Business Practice Guide that probation staff are aware that the bring forward system may be used to track due dates.

CASE FILE REVIEW

Ministry policy requires probation supervisors to conduct comprehensive semi-annual reviews of a sample of case files to ensure compliance with case management and documentation standards. However, the policy does not specify what the review should encompass or what file review documentation is required.

We were unable to find any file documentation or other evidence that the required case file reviews had been completed. This was particularly worrisome in light of the file deficiencies previously noted. However, at the time of our audit we noted that one area office had implemented a standard review checklist that it had developed to promote consistent case file reviews.

Recommendation

To ensure that Ministry policy is followed and that probation officers perform their duties satisfactorily, the Ministry should require probation supervisors to review a representative sample of young offender files for each probation officer and adequately and consistently document the results of their reviews.

Ministry Response

The Ministry agrees that case management files should be reviewed periodically by probation supervisors.

The Ministry has approved new Young Offender Services Manual standards requiring regular supervision of all probation officers as part of ongoing performance management. The expectations include the specified components of file review, with the results to be documented and used in improving performance as necessary.

LICENSING OF RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

The licensing provisions of the Regulations under the *Child and Family Services Act* set out minimum acceptable standards for the provision of residential care to children. As a result, the Ministry inspects and licenses young offender facilities to ensure that they are in compliance with the Regulations and, for example, meet fire safety and health standards.

Our review of licensing files for young offender facilities indicated that the licensing reviews were up to date and the facilities met the requirements of the *Child and Family Services Act*.

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However, as we reported in 1993, additional standards for young offender facilities prescribed in the *Young Offender Services Manual* had still not been incorporated into the Ministry's licensing inspection checklist, even though the Ministry indicated at that time that it would do so. As a result, inspectors advised us that they currently do not review young offender facilities for compliance with the *Manual's* additional requirements, for such things as: lowering the resident to staff ratio; having a minimum of two workers awake at night; using, training, supervising and insuring volunteers; and using mechanical and physical restraints.

Recommendation

The Ministry should ensure that the additional standards required in the *Young Offender Services Manual* are incorporated into the young offender facility inspection and licensing process.

Ministry Response

The Ministry agrees that the Young Offender Services Manual standards should be incorporated into the licensing checklist.

The Ministry will pilot a compliance review mechanism which includes the integration of Young Offender Services Manual standards with the Child and Family Services Act requirements contained in the licensing checklist.

SERIOUS OCCURRENCES

The Ministry requires all facilities to report within 24 hours any occurrences such as deaths, serious injuries, assault or physical abuse of residents. As a result of observations in our 1993 report, the Ministry changed the serious occurrence reporting procedures by issuing a "Question and Answer" package which clarified the definitions and procedures regarding the reporting of serious occurrences.

As a result, we found that serious occurrences were generally reported to the Ministry as required.

DUE REGARD FOR ECONOMY EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

AGENCY ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to hold transfer payment recipients accountable for their management of public funds, a Management Board Directive on Transfer Payment Accountability prescribes a four-step framework that includes setting expectations, contracting for services, monitoring performance and taking corrective action when necessary.

The Ministry advised us that accountability is currently achieved through service planning, funding reviews, annual expenditure reconciliations, facility inspections and licensing, and the Ministry's working relationship with agencies.

AGENCY FUNDING

Many Ministry projects and studies—some dating back to 1980—have indicated that service funding should be based on an assessment of priorities and identified needs. Implementation of this principle would ensure that funding is appropriate for the circumstances involved and commensurate with the underlying services provided.

Notwithstanding the Ministry's earlier studies, young offender agencies continue to be funded on the basis of historical cost budgets adjusted for across-the-board percentage funding changes, rather than on an assessment of individual priorities and needs. In addition, in some cases where the Ministry approved additional one-time funding, there was no evidence in the files we reviewed that the Ministry assessed the reasonableness of the additional amounts requested or approved.

We identified significant variances in the cost of similar custody services provided by both the Ministry and transfer payment agencies.

Cost Variances by Type of Custody

Type of Custody	Budgeted Cost Per Day Based on Full Occupancy for Agencies Reviewed (\$)	Province-Wide Average Costs Per Day by Area Office, Based on Actual Expenditures and Occupancy (\$)
Secure Custody (Ministry operated)	264-353	303-407
Secure Custody (Agencies)	207-349	238-427
Contracted Open Custody (Agencies)	173-305	186-365
Per Diem Open Custody (Agencies)	103-230	103-230

Source: Ministry of Community and Social Services data

Since the cost per day of custody is expected to vary with client needs and the extent of services provided, the above-noted range of costs may well be justified. However, due to a lack of detailed cost information or other analysis performed by the Ministry, it was unable to demonstrate the reasonableness of either the range of costs or the individual program costs incurred.

From our review of agency funding requests and other work that we performed at the agencies, we noted a number of questionable items whose reasonableness had not been assessed. The following examples illustrate our concerns.

- A fully funded agency, which normally provided nine beds, was paid an additional \$60,000 by the Ministry in the 1995/96 fiscal year to provide a tenth bed. However, this bed was accommodated within the existing physical layout of the facility and incurred little, if any, incremental cost to the agency.

Our review of the agency's occupancy records indicated that the tenth bed was occupied for only 50 days during the year and for six months was not used at all. In fact, the facility's average daily occupancy was only eight individuals during the whole year.

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We also noted that in 1995/96 the agency received \$36,000 for building rent which represented an increase of approximately 60% from the previous year.

- Another agency was paid \$830,000 in the 1995/96 fiscal year for “one-time expenses” without assessing the reasonableness of this amount.

Recommendation

In order to help ensure that total program funding and subsequent expenditures are reasonable and appropriate, the Ministry should:

- **assess the reasonableness of all funding requests; and**
- **compare the costs of similar programs. Significant cost variations should then be explained and justified before funding is approved.**

Ministry Response

The Ministry acknowledges that criteria for assessing the reasonableness of funding requests should be documented. The Ministry will document any changes in demand when making annual funding decisions.

The Ministry agrees that there is a need to assess comparative program costs. The Ministry is aware that there is a range of funding for individuals with similar needs and that there is a need to rationalize service costs. As part of its strategy to ensure an efficient use of resources, the Ministry will establish provincial benchmarks for residential care programs in the form of levels of support with corresponding funding ranges. Once provincial levels are established, the Ministry will put into effect funding levels for residential services. These limits will be phased in over a three-year period and will reflect the different needs of individuals and the different kinds of services that they receive.

ANNUAL PROGRAM EXPENDITURE RECONCILIATION

Agencies are required to submit an Annual Program Expenditure Reconciliation (APER), together with an audited agency financial statement, no later than four months after the fiscal year-end. APERs are to be reviewed and approved by the Ministry within 12 months of the fiscal year-end. The APER is to reconcile a program’s total actual expenditure with the approved budget in order to identify a surplus, if any.

We found that the APER process was generally ineffective for the following reasons.

- While most agencies submitted their APERs and audited financial statements on a timely basis, many of them were not reviewed or approved by the Ministry within one year as required. For example, one agency’s APERs had not been reviewed or approved for the past five years resulting in approximately \$1.5 million in declared surpluses not being recovered. The Ministry advised us that “the timing of the recovery was delayed pending a determination regarding the future direction of the program” at this agency.

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- In some instances the Ministry had not pursued agencies that had not submitted APERs or audited financial statements on a timely basis. For example, during the past seven years one agency had submitted only two audited financial statements and three APERs, which identified \$102,000 in surpluses. The agency's last APER related to the 1993/94 fiscal year and the last financial statement was for 1992/93.

We also noted that the Ministry's Comprehensive Audit and Investigations Branch had reviewed the agency's 1993/94 financial records and identified additional ineligible and inappropriate expenditures totalling \$91,000 for that year.

At the completion of our audit, both the APER-identified surpluses and the ineligible and inappropriate expenditures remained unresolved.

Even in cases where APERs and audited financial statements had been received, reviewed and approved by the Ministry on a more timely basis, the effectiveness of the process was questionable because both the APERs and audited financial statements lacked the necessary detail or required financial statement note disclosure to identify inappropriate or ineligible expenditures. For example, based on our review of agency records, we noted that the Ministry:

- has not required any audit assurance for the completeness or accuracy of the APERs themselves since 1992/93;
- approved accruals of future expenditures for such items as anticipated pay equity settlements, when only amounts actually paid within 30 days of the year-end are eligible for reimbursement; and
- approved a \$60,000 administration fee paid to an agency's owner/operator without establishing the reasonableness of the fee.

Recommendation

In order to improve the effectiveness of the expenditure reconciliation process in assessing the reasonableness of expenditures and in supporting future funding decisions, the Ministry should ensure that:

- **the information submitted in the Annual Program Expenditure Reconciliations and the audited financial statements is sufficiently detailed to permit a more meaningful review; and**
- **all agency Annual Program Expenditure Reconciliations and audited financial statements are received, reviewed and approved on a timely basis.**

Ministry Response

The Ministry agrees that Annual Program Expenditure Reconciliations should show enough information to allow for the detection of ineligible expenditure items.

The Ministry has taken steps to inform agencies and their auditors of the Ministry's financial policies. Specifically, the instruction package for Annual Program Expenditure Reconciliations, distributed annually to all agencies, contains all relevant policies, including an extensive list of eligible and

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ineligible expenditures. In the service contract signed by the agencies, it states that they “will comply with Ontario’s policies on the treatment of revenues and expenditures.” This requires agencies to properly reflect expenditures and surpluses in their financial statements. In order to assist in informing agency auditors of the implications of these particular policies, the Ministry wrote an article for publication by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario. The article was distributed to all its members.

In addition, the Ministry continues to take steps to review and appropriately act on all Annual Program Expenditure Reconciliation results. The Ministry has introduced mechanisms to help ensure adherence to its Annual Program Expenditure Reconciliation policies. The Ministry will continue to promote and facilitate increased awareness of these policies for use by agencies and their auditors.

SURPLUS RECOVERY

Under current ministry policy, agencies are allowed to retain surplus operating funds with prior approval in four circumstances: to offset deficits from prior years; to meet critical one-time service requirements; to undertake health and safety initiatives; or to restructure and streamline operations. However, where an operating surplus is to be recovered, recovery procedures must be under way no later than 12 months after the fiscal year-end and be completed within 24 months of the year-end.

We found that some of the funding arrangements resulting in surpluses and the dispositions of these surpluses were questionable, as the examples below illustrate.

- The Ministry paid one agency \$336,000 during the 1994/95 and 1995/96 fiscal years for two different projects.

At the beginning of the 1995/96 fiscal year the agency was paid \$106,000 which was to establish a fund for future years’ purchases of extra services for high-risk young offenders. The Ministry would approve requests by other agencies to provide these services and instruct the agency to transfer the required funds. However, the \$106,000 was paid to the agency even though it already had an accumulated surplus of \$71,000 from similar funding in the previous years. We also noted that during the period from April 1995 to December 1996 only \$38,000 was spent from this fund, leaving \$139,000 of surplus funds at the agency. Furthermore, the Ministry did not keep records for reconciling the funds given to the agency with the amounts transferred to the other agencies which are necessary for determining the balance unspent.

The second project involved a one-time payment of \$230,000 paid to the agency in the 1994/95 fiscal year for unspecified purposes. Although the funds were not spent, they remained with the agency until November 1996 when they were identified as surplus and were transferred to various other agencies for a range of different uses.

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- Another agency was paid \$193,000 in the 1991/92 fiscal year to establish a transportation fund. The fund was cancelled in March 1995 and the money declared surplus as no expenditures had been made from the fund by the agency. At the time of our audit, the agency had been given permission to spend \$109,000 of the funds for other specified purposes.

Because of the Ministry's lack of detailed cost information or analysis by program, its staff was unable to determine whether allowing the agencies to retain prior years' surpluses was justified or consistent with the four previously identified circumstances for surplus retention. Additionally, in our view prudent government-wide policy would require all prior years' expenditure surpluses to be recovered and used to reduce the deficit.

Recommendation

The Ministry should review the agency funding arrangements that result in year-end expenditure surpluses and establish procedures to recover these surpluses.

Ministry Response

The Ministry recognizes the need to be accountable in recovering surpluses. The Ministry has already taken steps to ensure timely Annual Program Expenditure Reconciliation reporting and surplus recovery, as required in the Annual Program Expenditure Reconciliation policy.

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Shortly after the *Young Offenders Act* came into force in 1985, the Ministry commissioned a consultant to carry out a study for evaluating the implementation of the Act. This included identifying realistic and measurable program objectives and suitable performance indicators for various functions such as custody, probation, alternative measures and community service.

As a result of our 1993 report, the Ministry acknowledged the need to further improve the evaluation of program effectiveness. The Ministry also indicated that a "Policy Framework for Services Funded under the *Child and Family Services Act*" had proposed developing outcome indicators to better assess the effectiveness of various young offender programs.

However, at the time of our current audit, the Ministry still had no outcome measurements to assess the effectiveness of young offender programs province-wide. Head office staff advised us that outcome measures had been developed in June 1995 as part of the Children's Policy Framework, but were never implemented. These measures are now being reviewed as part of the overall ministry restructuring process.

Except for some recidivism (return to crime) studies relating to young offenders in open custody or probation at certain area offices, the Ministry has not conducted any province-wide studies to determine what happened to young offenders after their court dispositions were completed. Such studies would be a first step in evaluating the program's effectiveness.

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Although Ministry staff agreed that a long-term follow-up of discharged young offenders was needed to accurately evaluate the program, they indicated that such studies posed problems. These included the difficulty of tracking the young offenders after they have completed their disposition and the high cost of carrying out such a long-term study.

However, without such evaluations, the Ministry has limited information indicating the specific effects that the programs have had in the rehabilitation of young offenders. Additionally, the Legislature lacks information as to whether the programs offered have been a worthwhile investment.

Recommendation

In order to determine whether the Young Offender Services program is effective, the Ministry should implement and monitor the outcome indicators already developed. If considered feasible, this evaluation should also include measuring the success of the various programs in rehabilitating young offenders over the long term.

Ministry Response

The Ministry agrees that it needs to implement measurable performance targets and indicators and effectively monitor the results achieved against the targets established.

The Ministry will be moving in stages. As part of its 1997/98 Business Plan, the Ministry has developed performance measures for its accountability to the government and to the public. The Ministry will review the draft performance targets and indicators for young offenders as part of this plan. As the Ministry's performance measures are defined, they will be built into the service contracting process.

OTHER MATTER

STAFFING

In 1990 a Ministry staffing study concluded that a probation officer's case management duties could be translated into a "workload equivalency." The Ministry established a benchmark workload of 42 case-point equivalents which translated into approximately 28 actual cases at that time.

Since 1990 the Ministry has implemented a number of policy changes and has introduced various case-management tools. Given these changes, the 1990 workload benchmark may no longer be applicable. We also noted that probation officers currently manage between 30 and 70 actual cases.

Recommendation

To better assess the reasonableness of staffing levels, especially in light of the many program policy changes since 1990, the Ministry should establish a more current workload expectation.

Ministry Response

The Ministry will consider the reasonableness of probation workload in the context of increasing demands for service and constrained resources.

As resources have been reduced and caseloads have increased since 1990, the Ministry has streamlined the administrative expectations of probation officers through the implementation of the standardized risk/needs assessment and case management plan. Further refinement is anticipated through the updated documentation standards and compliance review in 1997/98.