

Reconnect Field Guide 1999

Written by
Reconnect Provincial Steering Committee
1995-1997

This historic document has been edited and published by Merlyn Horton, SafeOnline.ca. Horton was one of many authors of this document and publishes this document for educational purposes.

This Field Guide was written to provide a philosophical framework for communities to use to set up a Reconnect Program. When the Guide was written Reconnect was mandated under the GAIN Act of British Columbia

But the Field Guide never was enacted. When the Child and Family Services Act was proclaimed in of 1997, Reconnect was no longer legislated. The Field Guide has since gathered dust in file drawers across the province of British Columbia. - used by some Programs and unheard of by others.

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Overview

Reconnect is the Ministry's key contracted program providing services to street-involved children and youth. Agencies delivering services to street youth should be funded through the Reconnect budget, not other program allocations.

Services are purchased by the Ministry of Social Services on a contract basis from nonprofit societies, companies and private individuals. Through the use of street workers, youth care workers, and social workers, street youth are identified and offered individual counseling, in addition to a variety of core services, resources and/or referrals that are compatible to their needs and available in their communities.

Program improvements and future program directions are recommended by the Provincial Reconnect Committee, with representatives from Ministry and Reconnect agencies. This policy is therefore written for the utilization of both Ministry liaison and agency staff.

Objectives

- To provide relevant prevention, rehabilitation and support services to "at-risk" and "high-risk" street-involved children and youth to age 19 years; and to educate and facilitate alternatives that promote a safe, healthy lifestyle.
- Through street outreach, to identify, contact and attempt to establish relationships with "at-risk" and "high risk" street-involved youth; to determine risk assessment, the social worker and/or agency worker will consider Risk Factors (see Appendix).
- To facilitate, and support youth to explore creative options which may include the decision to be repatriated to their family and/or community. If repatriated to their family and/or community, where appropriate the social worker may request the Reconnect agency to assist with case management, liaising/coordinating services, follow-up.

Mandate

Reconnect agencies will offer core services appropriate to the individual youth's needs and to the community's needs as a part of a continuum of integrated services.

- The increasing numbers of youth under age sixteen will be regarded as high-risk service priority.

Both MSS liaison and Reconnect have an obligation to advocate on behalf of youth in the community to develop critical key services including housing and shelter, health services appropriate to meet youth needs, and rights.

Guiding Principles of Service

Service providers of the Reconnect program will follow these guiding principles in the provision of services to street-involved children and youth:

1. In accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Canada and British Columbia are signatories, all children and youth have a right to live free from and be protected from emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, and neglect. This includes the right not to be deprived of their basic needs, and primary emphasis will be placed on meeting a youth's crisis needs for protection, shelter, medical assistance, food and clothing. Longer term needs, though no less important, will be the secondary consideration.

2. Strategies to protect street-involved children and youth will be based on risk reduction, constructive alternatives and practical assistance tailored to the needs of an individual youth based on what is effective, or likely to be effective, and appropriate in the circumstances. Youth under sixteen years of age, at large in the community, without adult supervision and safe housing, are exposed to circumstances that lead to immediate risk.

3. All children and youth are entitled to be informed of their rights, and to be treated with dignity and respect. They must be involved in and advised of all decisions that affect their lives. Youth have the right to accept or refuse services. Intervention strategies will promote the best interests and well-being of children and youth, and will be provided, wherever possible, on the basis of mutual consent.

- follows the least restrictive or disruptive course available and appropriate
- respects the child and youth's needs for continuity and stability
- considers the individual child/youth's developmental differences
- respects cultural, religious and regional differences
- supports the autonomy and integrity of the family
- is provided to aboriginal youth in a manner that recognizes their culture, heritage and traditions.

4. The objective of intervention is wherever feasible and appropriate, and work towards family reconciliation. The earliest possible interventions are the best hope of prevention or curtailing high-risk or street-involved behaviour. Becoming street-involved is a reflection of family, social and systemic problems, not of personal pathology or deviancy.



5. Communities must be allowed and assisted to play their vital and supportive role in the lives of families and youth. Services must be community based, coordinated and integrated, readily available and accessible when and where youth need them.

6. A helping relationship of concern, trust, mutual respect and confidence with a youth is most effective when it is nonjudgmental and non-authoritarian, established on the basis of voluntary participation by the youth. Ideally, it will be provided by the consistent involvement of an appropriately designated worker. All interventions with or on behalf of a youth will be accountable and documented.

7. 40% or more of youth become street-involved resulting from family or community rejection/discrimination. The two primary bases for discrimination include aboriginal/identifiable ethnic minority and sexual orientation (e.g., lesbian, gay, or bisexual). These youth - and those living with HIV or AIDS - have the right to services delivered in a nonjudgmental, accepting manner. They have the right to choose not to be open about their sexual identity.

8. Aboriginal youth should be provided with reasonable efforts to reunite them with their family, extended family, and/or Aboriginal nation of origin.

Program Description

Reconnect is the Ministry's key contracted program for providing services to street-involved children and youth.

Agency Core Services

Agencies delivering Reconnect programs will provide specific services to be identified on Schedule A of the contract as listed below but not limited to:

- *locate and identify "at risk" and "high risk" youth (see Appendix, Risk Factors);
- provide street level outreach services (e.g., "user friendly" hours of availability, location, youth-specific services that provide opportunities for additional life skills support);
- educate and provide information on healthy lifestyle alternatives;
- assist youth to achieve the goal of managing self-advocacy/self-referral, or to assist youth to obtain referral and/or access to various community and government

Program Description (con't)

- *provide crisis intervention which may include parent-teen conflict resolution;* repatriate and/or assist with repatriation/reintegration to home and community wherever appropriate; where appropriate, the receiving Reconnect agency will assist with coordinating services to repatriated youth;
- liaise with and support effective working relationship with other community agencies and government resources;
- participate in development of provincial tracking process;
- participate in regional and provincial Reconnect committees.

Additional Services

Reconnect workers should coordinate their services with the Ministries of Health, Social Services, Attorney General (including probation and police), and Education, and any other agencies whose services may benefit street youth. The Ministry and a Reconnect agency may negotiate additional services specific to their local community needs.

Defining At-Risk and High Risk Youth

Both the current Family and Child Service Act, and the Child, Family and Community Service Act (when implemented), provide for a street-involved child or youth to be deemed in need of protection.

- See Risk Factors (Appendix) in making a determination of the degree of risk.
- Youth under 16 years are high-risk service priority.
- Degree of street included or street entrenched (e.g., potential to have social and emotional and basic needs met on the street).
- Disconnected from family and/or community or Ministry services.
- Difficult to engage (e.g., refuses to abide by rules, structure, expectations).

Referrals

Anyone can make a self-referral or refer a youth to a Reconnect program.

Case Management

Based on the Guiding Principles of this policy, Reconnect services are to be delivered and coordinated using a case management model and in an integrated fashion in order to best meet the needs of an individual youth. This requires close coordination of all service providers, ministries, contract service providers, youth, and where appropriate their families. Collaboration will determine who is to be the case manager.

1. Case management will be client-focused, flexible and tailored to meet the unique demands and needs of individual youth as they vary over time. It will have seven elements:

- initial contact
- assessment
- development of service plan
- identify specific elements (e.g., time frame, follow-up);
- service delivery
- tracking
- termination
- evaluation

2. In developing the service plan, Reconnect and social workers will consider alternative resources, and will consult with and involve the youth in all decisions. Youth will have the option to choose to refuse services.

3. Agencies will commit themselves to and be accountable for shared responsibility in the planning, development, coordination, and delivery of services to street-involved youth. This will include developing and participating in a provincial system to track individual clients.

Development of protocols between local community agencies and statutory bodies will facilitate appropriate referrals, effective case management, and provincial tracking of high risk transient and street-involved youth.

Aboriginal Youth

Reconnect programs will liaise with Bands, Tribal Councils and other Native organizations (e.g., local Native Friendship Center) to ensure appropriate planning and service delivery for street-involved Native youth. There should be a special sensitivity to familial, social, spiritual and cultural heritage. Any intervention must support Native youth remaining within their immediate or extended family, e.g., by the custom of the youth's

Aboriginal Youth (con't)

community. The youth must be involved in this decision, and should be provided with the option to choose culturally appropriate services.

See also Services To Aboriginals for more detailed information on protocols and services relating to Aboriginal youth.

Confidentiality

Section 22.1.1.a of the Family and Child Service Act allows information to be shared by social workers and agency staff where it is "necessary to ensure the safety or well-being of a child." Youth will be advised that information will be shared on this basis.

Under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, youth may apply for information on their files.

Criminal Record Checks

The agency/contractor supplying Reconnect services must have a system in place whereby criminal record checks are conducted on all employees and volunteers working with or having contact with children or youth. The Employers' Handbook, Help Stop Child Abuse is available from the Ministry of Attorney General for further guidelines.

Communications

This Ministry will facilitate the development, implementation and evaluation of a communications system for tracking, case management, and information-sharing between Reconnect agencies, and between Reconnect agencies and the Ministry.

Repatriation

The social worker in collaboration with Reconnect agency staff will involve Reconnect youth clients, and where appropriate their family, in all decisions and case service plans. Where repatriation/reintegration to the youth's family or community is the agreed-upon plan, the social worker may request the Reconnect agency to assist to ensure liaising with and/or coordination of services, case management, and follow-up takes place.

Roles and Expectations

Reconnect Program Agency/Program Workers

- Services to be provided by agency as specified in this policy, "Core Services
- Reconnect programs have a dual role to deliver prevention and/or rehabilitation components.
- Tracking Evaluation Plan. Each Reconnect program must have a tracking/evaluation plan that addresses individual case outcomes and provides information to provincial program review.
- The case plan will include time frames.
- The client will be involved in the evaluation plan.

Ministry Liaison

- is the key local ministry contact; provides interpretation of mss policy, procedures, and protocol;
- provides support to reconnect agencies by ensuring positive relationship and regular communications;
- advises and provides information to other ministry staff on the role and function of the reconnect program and reconnect agencies.
- Workers with agencies to resolve contract and program issues.
- After hours team and/or zenith-1234 children's help line may act as liaison in situations requiring immediate response.

District Supervisor

- works with Reconnect agencies to facilitate appropriate services and referrals as specified in Core Services section of this policy;
- ensures that the assigned Liaison fulfills the role and expectations;
- ensures that other Ministry staff in contact with Reconnect agencies maintain effective collaborative relationships.

Area Manager

- administers the area budget for Reconnect and prepares an annual budget submission based on an assessment of area needs;
- screens program proposals and approves contracts with nonprofit societies, individuals, and companies, to provide Reconnect services as specified in the Core Services section of this policy;
- Agencies delivering services to street youth should be funded under the Reconnect Budget, not through other program allocations; - A list of approved programs is to be sent to the Family and Children's Services Division; - The Ministry liaison is to be informed of Reconnect programs in their district catchment area.

Roles and Expectations (con't)

- ensures that contractors have a system in place for completing criminal record checks on employees (refer to the employer's Handbook for guidelines); * ensures that contracting societies adhere to financial reporting requirements.
- monitors services provided to ensure that contract terms are met;
- ensures that an evaluation process is in place;
- is knowledgeable about other local Reconnect agencies and their services;
- advises Reconnect programs about other Reconnect programs in region.

Regional Director

- * monitors the regional Reconnect budget.

Family and Children's Services Division\

- assists in the development of policy and program definitions in conjunction with appropriate field staff and the provincial Reconnect Committee, and coordinates recommendations to the Deputy Minister;
- provides consultation to Area Managers regarding all aspects of the Reconnect program policy;
- assists in the development of an evaluation process.



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