

Child Welfare Service Performance Indicators – Halton Children’s Aid Society

Safety Outcome - Recurrence of Child Protection Concerns in a Family after Ongoing Protection Services Were Provided

Definition:

The percentage of family cases closed at ongoing protection in a fiscal year that were re-investigated within 12 months after closing where the child protection concerns were verified.

Why is this Measure Important?

Closing a case following ongoing services suggests that child protection concerns have been addressed and no longer require ongoing Children’s Aid Society involvement or there are factors that are present that are beyond the control of the agency. The recurrence of child protection concerns is higher for these families as they often experience multiple complex difficulties, such as poverty, mental health issues, addictions and other adverse life events. However, at the conclusion of Children’s Aid involvement, many families continue to receive supportive services from other agencies in the community. This indicator measures the extent to which services have been successful in reducing risk to children. This measure is important for further understanding of those families that return to a Children’s Aid Society with verified protection concerns and those that do not, in terms of the families’ willingness to work with agency, the emergence of new child protection concerns not present at the time of closure, the level of engagement and intensity of the services offered, as well as the risks, strengths and needs of children and families.

Limitations of the Data:

The data results do not identify whether it is the same child who experienced a recurrence of protection concerns; only that protection concerns have reoccurred in the same family. The reason for investigation and verification represents any recurrence of any kind of protection concern rather than recurrence of the same protection concern (e.g., a case may return with different protection concerns than those originally identified). Data represent only those families reported to a CAS and do not include protection concerns that are not reported or not identified.

Key Considerations

There is no agreed-upon benchmark for the “acceptable” level of recurrence. While a lower level is generally desirable, the rate of recurrence is unlikely ever to be 0% for a variety of reasons, including the long-lasting nature of many of the struggles experienced by families commonly known to the child welfare system, e.g., poverty, substance abuse and mental health problems. Furthermore, the reconnection of some families with the child welfare system can be in and of itself a protective factor to children whose families are connected with necessary supports.

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Results:

Data suggest that the majority, 77-82% of families do not return for service within 12 months of service closure. A minority of families return to the Halton Children’s Aid Society with verified child protection concerns within 12 months: between 18-23% in each of the years under review.

These data have been compiled and analyzed by the University of Toronto, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work through the Ontario Child Abuse & Neglect Database System.