

A Case Study Evaluation of Winnipeg's Child Advocacy Centre,
Snowflake Place for Children and Youth

by

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Abstract

Child abuse is a reality that exists across all countries, cultures, ethnicities and socio-economic groups. Since the mid 1980s there have been child advocacy centres whose main function is to work with the children and families affected by physical and sexual abuse in order to minimize the trauma that is suffered by victims. In the 31 years that child advocacy centres have existed, there has not been a great deal of empirical studies to evaluate their effectiveness. Evaluations have become increasingly common and are often an expectation that funders have for non-profit organizations such as Winnipeg's child advocacy centre, Snowflake Place for Children and Youth (Snowflake Place).

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of Snowflake Place through the use of a mixed methods case study evaluation employing the tenets of utilization-focused evaluation. A utilization-focused evaluation framework was developed with an evaluation committee comprised of representatives from key stakeholders of Snowflake Place. A total of 30 interviews were conducted, including 20 with individuals from key service providing partners of Snowflake Place and 10 non-offending caregivers of children who were forensic interviewed at Snowflake Place. This study also analyzed the data tracked by Snowflake Place on its service recipients during the organization's three years of operation.

The results show that although the organization has only been operating for three years, and with substantial change and growth each year, Snowflake Place is able to provide consistent high quality services such as forensic interviews. Results indicate that Snowflake Place has the potential to improve upon the overall positive experiences of both service providing partners and service recipients. The study also critically examines and describes both the advantages and challenges of the utilization-focused evaluation process that was used.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Every year there are over 500 allegations of child abuse made in Winnipeg, and about half of these cases are referred to Winnipeg's child advocacy centre (CAC), Snowflake Place for Children and Youth (Snowflake Place for Children and Youth, 2015). Operational since 2013, Snowflake Place for Children and Youth (Snowflake Place) follows the CAC model that originated in Huntsville, Alabama in 1984 in order to respond to allegations of child abuse (Burnside, 2014; Faller & Palusci, 2007). The model uses a multidisciplinary team of law enforcement, social workers, forensic interviewers and victim services personnel in order to consistently respond to allegations of child abuse in a comprehensive, culturally competent and child-focused manner (Burnside, 2014; Newman, Dannenfelser & Pendleton, 2005). The main goals of CACs such as Snowflake Place are to minimize the trauma to child victims or witnesses, as well as their families, by handling allegations of abuse with a systematic and coordinated response (Bonach, Mabry, & Potts-Henry, 2010; Hubel et al. 2014; Quas, Goodman, & Ghetti, 2005; Rasmusson, 2011; Walsh, Jones, & Swiecicki, 2014).

Research Problem Statement

Snowflake Place partnered with the University of Manitoba to develop and implement a utilization-focused evaluation in order to assess some of the agency's outcome goals. There is a need for community-academic partnerships in order to enhance the capacity of non-profit organizations such as Snowflake Place to meet funding requirements, such as evaluations, and to use empirical evidence to support their program model and growth as an organization. An evaluation committee was put together with key agency partners to create the utilization-focused evaluation plan used in this study. The researchers in this study facilitated the evaluation and

collected and analyzed empirical data related to the organization's program theory. The evaluation specifically focused on how two newly introduced forensic interviewers have impacted the quality of service at Snowflake Place. The evaluation also examined the experiences of partnering service providers as well as service recipients as they relate to the organization's processes and procedures. Snowflake Place has now been fully operational for three years, and it required an evaluation to address several questions that relate to organizational roles, activities, outputs and short-term outcomes.

Program Overview

Snowflake Place is a CAC that delivers a service model designed to provide a professional, culturally sensitive, child-oriented setting that brings together a multidisciplinary team to respond to allegations of child abuse (Burnside 2014; Newman, Dannenfelser & Pendleton, 2005). This model originated in the United States in the mid 1980s in order to reduce the trauma and stress on children that results from having to provide multiple interviews after allegations of abuse are made (Burnside, 2014; Faller & Palusci, 2007; McDonald, Scrim, & Rooney, 2013). CACs such as Snowflake Place accomplish this by improving the coordination of all service providers that are required to make contact with the child and his or her family during the investigative process. The multidisciplinary team that works at Snowflake Place includes law enforcement, child and family services, victim service providers and forensic interviewers (forensic interviewers are employees of Snowflake Place). Snowflake Place is a non-profit charitable organization that is governed by a Board of Directors and employs an Executive Director and Executive Assistant.

Program Rationale

The formation of Winnipeg's CAC began in 2005 with a feasibility study initiated by the Manitoba Government (Burnside, 2014). Soon after, a working group was created comprised of representatives from key stakeholder groups such as police, Child and Family Services (CFS), Victim Services and multiple levels of government. It met from 2006 to 2012 in order to develop the delivery model and secure funding approval (Burnside, 2014). In 2010 the federal government increased funding to support victims through the creation and enhancement of CACs across Canada (\$5.25 million over five years) and announced additional funding resources in 2012 (\$5 million over five years) (McDonald et al. 2013). With both provincial and federal funding approved in 2012, the Winnipeg Child Advocacy Centre was established in January 2013 and officially opened its doors (Burnside, 2014; Snowflake Place, 2015). The centre was officially named Snowflake Place for Children and Youth, or Snowflake Place, as it is commonly known, in February 2014 (Burnside, 2014; Snowflake Place, 2015). The name Snowflake Place was chosen to represent every child's unique story, the same way every snowflake is unique.

Child physical and sexual abuse exists in all countries and across all cultures, ethnicities and socio-economic groups. Winnipeg is no exception to this social issue and there are over 500 allegations of child abuse reported to police annually (Snowflake Place, 2015). In its first 15 months of operation, Snowflake Place was able to see 204 of these children and their families, and during their next year of operation, that number increased to 211 (Snowflake Place, 2015). Prior to the opening of the CAC in Winnipeg, the city had no centrally located, coordinated response to child abuse across the different service providers that make contact with a child and his/her family during the investigative process. This lack of a CAC meant that there was little consistency in how children were interviewed, what the environment was like and who they were

seen by. Researchers argue that it may be most detrimental and traumatic for children to have to relive the abuse they suffered by unnecessarily repeating what happened to them (Cross et al., 2008; Cross, Jones, Walsh, Simone, & Kolko, 2007; Hagborg, Stromwall, & Tidefors 2012). The reasoning is that children often do not fully understand what happened to them and why, so it is important that the questions and interview process do not further confuse them (Jones, Cross, Walsh, & Simone, 2007; Tavkar, Hansen, 2011).

Program Description

Snowflake Place currently operates under a single entry referral system, where law enforcement is able to refer specific cases to the organization. There will generally be an allegation made to a third party (non-offending caregiver, teacher, social worker, etc.) that is serious enough to warrant notifying the police. The police will then determine whether there is enough evidence, or the possibility of gathering enough evidence, to proceed with the investigation. Snowflake Place does not have the capacity to handle all of the child abuse cases in Winnipeg, but when cases are referred to it, it tries to get the child and family in for the forensic interview as soon as possible. During their second year of operation, Snowflake Place also began accepting referrals from rural communities through the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The executive assistant will generally greet the family at Snowflake Place and take them to the child-friendly family waiting room to explain the process to the child and the family.

The child will then be introduced to the forensic interviewer doing the interview and will go with the interviewer to a specific, neutral interviewing room. The police and CFS workers are able to watch and listen to the interview as it takes place from monitoring stations outside the interview room. Once the interview is complete, the child is taken back to the family in the

family room. If there is a disclosure of abuse and enough evidence to proceed with criminal charges, the family will be referred to Victim Services, and the audio/video recording of the forensic interview will be used in court as evidence. Snowflake Place gathers demographic data on all service recipients with a form that is filled out by the family while the child is being interviewed. Any follow up information regarding the legal proceedings is gathered through communications with victim service personnel.

Rationale for Evaluation

There has been limited research on CACs and even fewer experimental or quasi-experimental studies to gather empirical evidence that supports the CAC model. CACs in Canada are funded by their respective province as well as federally through Justice Canada and are required to complete regular evaluations. Following its first year of operation, Snowflake Place employed a program monitoring or process evaluation, consistent with guidelines developed by The National Institute of Justice in the United States (Jackson, 2004a). Linda Burnside, the evaluator, summarized the data regarding children and families seen at Snowflake Place and conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with individuals from partner agencies. The purpose of this program monitoring evaluation was to examine the CAC's strengths and challenges following its first year of operation (Burnside, 2014). Recommendations from the evaluation, such as the establishment of forensic interviewers, have since been put in place at Snowflake Place, and now the organization required a second evaluation to examine its outcomes in terms of goal attainment and conformity to CAC standards (Burnside, 2014; Jackson, 2004a). By using a utilization-focused evaluation (Patton, 2012) which involved the primary intended users of the findings to make the decisions about the entire evaluation process, it increased the likelihood that the information would be used for more than simply satisfying a funding requirement.

Relevance of Study

This study is unique because it used a utilization-focused evaluation that was completely participatory and collaborative for the key stakeholders of the organization. This study was not simply an evaluation but used an evaluation research approach. No formal research on CACs in Canada has been conducted and published, and Canadian CACs have relied on information from research conducted in the United States and other countries such as Sweden (Burnside, 2014; McDonald et al. 2013; Rasmusson, 2011). Currently there is a national multi-site study being conducted by Proactive Information Services Inc. through the Department of Justice Canada to better understand how CACs across Canada are operating (Department of Justice Canada, 2015). The national multi-site study will be completed in 2017. The present study can be used to complement the data from the national multi-site study and for comparative purposes. In Canada there is no governing body such as the United States' National Children's Alliance (NCA), which is why all Canadian CACs operate uniquely (Department of Justice Canada, 2014). Research suggests that it is important to understand how each CAC operates because there is no single best model, and understanding how each organization developed to suit the unique needs of their communities, increases the overall understanding of what can make CACs effective (Ashcroft, Daniels & Hart, 2004; Faller & Palusci, 2007; Jackson, 2004b).

The purpose of the study was to examine the case of Snowflake Place in order to better understand how this CAC model has developed to adapt to the needs of the diverse population that live in Winnipeg and Manitoba. By increasing the understanding of the unique CAC model in Winnipeg, it will add to the collective knowledge of CACs across Canada and may be used to strategically guide the decisions around new and developing CACs around the country. The systematic evaluation approach used in this study is also relevant because it can increase the

understanding of how to gather data and examine CACs. The utilization-evaluation approach emphasizes that the evaluation committee comprised of key stakeholders are involved in all decisions about the evaluation design, process and interpretation. A purpose of this study was to better understand the process of working with the stakeholders of Snowflake Place in order to facilitate an evaluation that will successfully yield rich data about the CAC and how it operates.

Another purpose of the study was to examine the utilization-focused evaluation approach that was used with Snowflake Place. Meta-study of the utilization-focused approach is important in order to shed light on the process that led to the findings and in order to assess the factors that affect the use of those findings (Patton, 2012). Program evaluation is a growing professional field as well as an area of research that is receiving an increased amount of attention. The increased importance placed on evaluation can be attributed to evaluations becoming common practice, and in many cases, a necessity for most non-profit organizations and government-funded programs. Evaluations provide more utility than just linking effectiveness to cost, and utilization-focused evaluation provides a good framework to maximize the use of findings by having the primary intended users of the information involved in the entire decision-making process. This thesis includes a study of the utilization-focused evaluation approach that can be used to add to the understanding of this tenet of evaluation as well as providing practical information for facilitating this type of evaluation.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The majority of research on Child Advocacy Centres (CAC) comes from the United States where the National Children's Alliance sets national standards and offers accreditation for CACs that can meet their standards. As of 2006 there were over 700 accredited CACs in the United States and many more centres that were in the process of becoming accredited (Burnside, 2014). Despite the volume of CACs across the United States, there has been limited research devoted to evaluating the effectiveness of the CAC model. The first child advocacy type model that opened in Canada did so in Regina in 1993, nearly a decade after the first CAC was established in the United States, although the first recognized CAC opened in Edmonton in 2002 (McDonald et al. 2013). Currently there are over 20 CACs in Canada that are in different stages of development, ranging from feasibility studies to pilot projects and all the way to fully operational centres (Department of Justice Canada, 2013). This literature review summarizes several studies that have examined the processes and effectiveness of CACs in the United States. Two recent studies from Sweden that have been published in English are also examined. To date there is no formal research on Canadian CACs, although McDonald and colleagues (2013) offer a summary of two evaluation reports conducted in Canada. Currently the Department of Justice Canada is in the data collection phase of a large multi-site five-year study that will be complete in 2017.

Canadian Context

As mentioned, there are no current existing data on CACs in Canada as there has not been any formal research. MacDonald and colleagues (2013) provide a summary of CACs in Canada, making reference to research from the United States and supporting the need for

Canadian research. These authors (MacDonald et al. 2013) stated that although no Canadian research exists, several organizations have commissioned evaluations, such as the Government of Saskatchewan for CACs in Regina, Saskatoon and North Battleford, as well as internally by the Zebra Centre in Edmonton. Although feedback from service recipients was positive about the centres, neither of these evaluations employed a research design that could control for other factors to determine whether the positive experiences were a direct result of the CAC. Burnside (2014) conducted a process evaluation for Snowflake Place using case information and demographic data of children seen for interviews between April 2013 and March 2014, as well as semi-structured interviews with 20 representatives from Snowflake's partner organizations. Burnside (2014) found that in its first year, the CAC was able to establish a consistent quality of standards, and recommendations were made for improvements for adolescent service recipients, cultural competence, therapeutic interventions, colocation, medical examinations, specialized forensic interviewers and further evaluation.

Currently there is a large multi-year multi-site study of CACs in Canada commissioned by the Policy Centre for Victim Issues and the Research and Statistics Division of the Department of Justice. The study began in 2012 and will continue until February 2017, with a mid-project report in 2015 and an additional evaluation report on the Federal Victims Strategy. The study is using a mixed-methods approach with semi-structured interviews being conducted with agency staff, clients, partner agency staff and multidisciplinary team members. The study will also be using client data as well as client surveys. The participating sites include: Project Lynx, Whitehorse, YK; SeaStar Child Advocacy Centre, Halifax, NS; Regina Children's Justice Centre, Regina, SK; Caribou Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, Grand Prairie, AB; Koala Place Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, Cornwall, ON; and Sophie's Place, Surrey, BC. According to

the Department of Justice Canada (2015), the four main objectives of the study are to: understand how CACs in Canada are operating; describe the client demographics, service use, and outcomes of CACs in Canada; measure client satisfaction with CAC services; and measure client satisfaction with the criminal justice process. Focusing on Snowflake Place, the current study will add to the data gathered in the national study and can be used for comparative purposes as well.

History of CAC Research

There is not an abundance of other studies in existence regarding CACs, and because of this, there is little overlap in terms of studies with similar objectives that can be used to compare and support each other. Although several of the studies on CACs have employed similar methods, their focus has been on different aspects of how CACs operate and thus cannot be easily generalized. A study by Jenson, Jacobson, Unrau and Robinson (1996) examined three CACs in the state of Utah and how collaboration among service providers affected client experience. The authors interviewed non-offending parents immediately after they had visited a CAC as well as three months later. They reported that parents initially felt very well supported by CAC staff and the services they received, but their satisfaction and feelings of support decreased in the second interview (Jenson et al. 1996). The authors suggested that more comprehensive follow-up services might be necessary if the abuse is substantiated in order to support families in dealing with the long and complex investigative and criminal justice process (Jenson et al. 1996). Researchers also examined child satisfaction in this study, and 64% of children reported high satisfaction with CAC support and services, while 28% reported moderate satisfaction and 8% reported feeling “bad” or “very bad” after visiting the CAC (Jenson et al. 1996). This is one of the earliest studies examining the impact of CACs on the clients they serve.

One hundred and seventeen CAC directors were interviewed by Jackson (2004) to find out about service procedures and the directors' experiences with program evaluation. The research showed that all 117 CACs had adhered to NCA accreditation criteria despite varying in structure and other characteristics (Jackson, 2004). The main NCA accreditation criteria that all CACs adopted included a child-friendly environment, a multidisciplinary team, specially trained interviewers, multiple partners present for interviews, video and/or audio documentation of interviews, access to victim services and access to medical examinations. The interviews demonstrated that there was a lack of formal evaluations of CACs and that a consistent struggle for CACs was whether there should be a designated forensic interviewer or if child welfare and police staff were suitable interviewers (Jackson, 2004). The research indicated that even with differing structures, the processes and standards remained relatively consistent across various CACs.

Newman, Dannenfelser and Pendleton (2005) conducted a survey of key service providing partners from 28 different NCA accredited CACs across the United States. Police and child protection workers who utilized CACs during child abuse case investigations were the service-providing partners who were chosen as participants for the study. Results showed that police and child protection workers utilized CACs for a number of reasons including their child-friendly environments, expert interviewers, access to audio and video equipment, and referrals to follow-up services following the interview (Newman et al. 2005). Depending on their jurisdiction, some service providing partners were mandated to refer child abuse cases to a CAC. The responses from participants who were surveyed showed that service providing partners felt that the main benefit of working with a CAC was the multidisciplinary team (Newman et al. 2005). Some respondents stated that the multidisciplinary team at the CAC they accessed would

meet regularly in order to communicate effectively in the coordination and decision-making involved with the investigative process (Newman et al. 2005). Training was another benefit noted by the service providing partners; this helped with knowledge transfer between the multidisciplinary team and helped with the overall collaboration and coordination between service providers (Newman et al. 2005). Some recommendations for improvement came from this survey such as more flexible hours of operations by CACs, more CAC staff in order to handle more cases, and childcare providers to supervise children while their parents were being interviewed (Newman et al. 2005).

Smith, Witte and Fricker-Elhai (2006) conducted a study using a cross-sectional design to evaluate 55 child protection cases and 21 CAC cases in a rural southern county in the United States. They found that CAC cases were more likely to involve law enforcement than child protection investigations at 70% and 30% respectively (Smith et al. 2006). Fifty percent of CAC cases involved medical exams, compared to 12% of child protection cases (Smith et al. 2006). The increased involvement of law enforcement can be attributed to the fact that child abuse investigations in CAC cases were more likely to be substantiated and lead to prosecution (Smith et al. 2006). CAC referred cases may also provide better follow-up services since 100% of CAC cases resulted in counselling referrals, while only 70% of the child protection investigations did. This study had several limitations including the small sample size and the reliance on self-reporting by caseworkers for data collection.

A study by Wolfeich and Loggins (2007) compared the effectiveness of a Florida CAC to the multidisciplinary team approach of a local child protection agency and a traditional child protection agency. The CAC and the multidisciplinary child protection team had higher rates of substantiated child abuse compared to other child abuse response centres as well as similar

prosecution rates (Wolfteich & Loggins, 2007). The research showed that revictimization rates were consistent through all three models at 17% (Wolfteich & Loggins, 2007). The study did not focus on factors that contributed to revictimization and prosecution rates. The study concluded that, overall, the CAC model and the multidisciplinary team approach provided benefits and increased effectiveness in substantiating accusations of child abuse over a traditional child protection approach.

Walsh, Lippert, Cross, Maurice and Davison (2008) published a study exploring the length of time between when reports of child abuse are made to criminal dispositions and resolved cases. The authors looked at the different processes during the investigative and criminal prosecution process as well the total case-processing time. The sample consisted of 160 cases in three communities served by the Dallas County District Attorney that involved both CACs and non-CAC service providers. The majority of cases (69%) required a minimum of 60 days for the charging decision to be made (Walsh et al. 2008). The CAC-referred cases had a quicker processing time than the non-CAC comparison group (Walsh et al. 2008). In the United States, the American Bar Association sets standards for felonies, and only 20% of the cases were within the 180-day target suggested for child abuse cases (Walsh et al. 2008). The authors stated that with previous research showing that shorter cases led to faster recovery by child victims, it is necessary to shorten the average 2-year case resolution time that was observed in the study (Walsh et al. 2008).

First Coordinated Research Attempt

A series of studies on CACs were consecutively published in 2007 in the journal *Child Abuse & Neglect* (McDonald et al. 2013) by several overlapping teams of researchers in the United States. These studies represent some of the first attempts at a coordinated, quasi-

experimental research design aimed at examining the effectiveness of CACs. Almost a decade later, these studies are regularly cited in nearly all current publications on CACs. All of these studies examined features of the same four long-standing CACs in the United States: the National Children's Advocacy Center in Huntsville, Alabama (established 1985), the Dallas Children's Advocacy Center (1991), the Pittsburgh Children's Hospital Advocacy Center (1988) and the Dee Norton Lowcountry Children's Center in Charleston, South Carolina (1989) (Burnside, 2014). These different centres provide a broad range of CAC models that have all been accredited by the National Children's Alliance.

The main differences among these four CACs are the extent of colocation between service providers, the location of the CAC and the source of leadership of the centre. The CACs in Dallas and Huntsville are similar in that police and child welfare co-locate but they are different in that the CAC in Huntsville is led by the District Attorney, and the one in Dallas is led by police (Cross et al. 2008). The Pittsburgh and Lowcountry CACs are both located in medical facilities, but the Pittsburgh CAC is hospital based and led by medical practitioners while the Lowcountry facility is led by psychologists and focuses on mental health assessment and treatment (Faller & Palusci, 2007). Burnside (2014) explains that all of these CACs focus on dealing with cases of child sexual abuse as the main form of abuse, although cases of serious physical abuse are also referred to the centres. Cases of child abuse handled by these four long-standing CACs were compared with similar cases of child abuse in communities with no CAC, where law enforcement and child welfare handled investigations.

One of the main differences between the CACs and the facilities in communities with no CACs was that CAC facilities were found to be child-friendly (Cross et al. 2008). This finding was not a surprise because the CAC model deliberately focuses on child-friendly environments

as an alternative to more traditional settings such as child welfare offices, hospitals and police stations. Regardless of location, CACs were able to provide comfortable, neutral and child-friendly environments for service recipients (Cross et al. 2008; Faller & Palusci, 2007). The authors examined whether disclosure of abuse had any relation to where services were provided to child victims of abuse. However, it was discovered that age was the most significant factor as to whether children disclosed abuse or not, and both the youngest and oldest categories of children were less likely to disclose than others (Cross et al. 2007). This was an important discovery since disclosure is crucial to child sexual abuse investigations where there is often no witness and no physical evidence of abuse (Cross et al. 2008).

Another important process of CACs is the conducting of forensic interviews, which are seen as specialized professional interviews designed to validate whether there is truth to an allegation of child abuse (Cross et al. 2007). A standard set by the National Children's Alliance and by other child abuse investigative facilities is to minimize the number of interviews that children have to be involved in. The analysis looked specifically at forensic interviews and not initial disclosures of abuse or child welfare risk assessments in order to define the specific types of interviews that are conducted at CACs. The authors found that there was no distinguishable difference between the number of times children were interviewed at CACs and in comparison samples (Cross et al. 2007). The findings were also consistent with previous literature emphasizing that if more than one interview with a child is necessary, it is best practice to use the same interviewer (Cross et al. 2007). It is widely recognized that there is a risk of re-traumatization from repetitive interviewing (Cross et al. 2008). However, using multiple interviewers may do more harm than multiple interviews with a single interviewer because the latter can be viewed as a continuation of the same initial interview (Cross et al. 2007).

Another important study published in the Child Abuse and Neglect series (Walsh, Cross, Jones, Simone & Kolko, 2007) examined the processes involving medical exams and case coordination and how they reflected on client satisfaction. The authors noted that there is very little research on medical examination as part of the CAC model because this is the service that is least likely to be available onsite at a CAC (Walsh et al. 2007). Regardless of the lack of colocation with medical professionals, it was found that about half of the children interviewed at a CAC also had a medical exam, compared to only 21% of children in the comparison sample (Walsh et al. 2007). Walsh and colleagues (2007) also found that coordination between service providers was more likely at a CAC. Colocation played the biggest factor, although the use of two-way mirrors, closed circuit cameras and conducting interviews during regular business hours also increased the likelihood of coordination among service providers (Walsh et al. 2007).

Jones and colleagues (2007) conducted interviews with non-offending caregivers and children about their firsthand experiences with the child abuse investigation at one of the four CACs and compared them to those who had received services at another type of community organization. The interviews, along with a satisfaction scale, showed that caregivers involved with CACs were more likely to express satisfaction with the services than those caregivers in the comparison model, 70% and 54% respectively (Jones et al. 2007). It is interesting to note that there were no significant differences in the satisfaction reported by children who had received services at a CAC and those in the comparison group (Jones et al. 2007). The results showed that around 80% of children expressed satisfaction, while 20% felt scared, confused and worse after the interview; however, it was concluded that the study methods were too limited to draw concrete conclusions (Jones et al. 2007).

A major outcome associated with the CAC model is its role in successfully prosecuting perpetrators of child sexual abuse. There are very few studies that compare criminal justice outcomes of cases involving a CAC and cases without CAC involvement (Faller & Palusci, 2007; Walsh et al. 2007). Compared to numbers of allegations, there is a relatively small percentage of child abuse cases that proceed entirely through the criminal justice system and also result in a perpetrator being criminally charged (Cross et al. 2008; Cross et al. 2003). This lack of prosecution occurs for a number of different reasons including the risk of trauma if a child is discredited in court by a perpetrator (Quas et al. 2005). Different factors that were examined, such as the presence of a medical examination and the location of the forensic interview, had no correlation with prosecution rates (Walsh et al. 2007; Cross et al. 2007). Research did indicate that jail sentences from cases involving CACs were longer than those with no CAC involvement (Faller & Palusci, 2007).

The four collective studies published in 2007 in volume 31 of *Child Abuse & Neglect* as well as the meta-analysis published by Cross and colleagues a year later gathered empirical evidence showing that investigations through CACs could be more thorough, better coordinated and offer a more child-friendly response than previous systems (Cross et al. 2008). The authors also noted that research and advocacy has led to advancements in the investigation of child abuse cases in organizations other than CACs. The authors stated that standards at non-NCA accredited centres were often on par with those of accredited CACs (Cross et al. 2008). The combined studies addressed many aspects of the CAC model such as the child-friendly environment, forensic interviews, disclosures, medical exams, case coordination, client satisfaction and prosecution rates showing that the CAC model is a promising approach to dealing with child

abuse investigations (Cross et al. 2008). The studies all agreed that further research is necessary to better understand the outcomes of CACs and the processes involved.

Recent CAC Studies

A large number of publications regarding CACs have relied on research reviews and commentary on studies that specifically examined CACs or examined child abuse in a broader sense. Tavkar and Hansen (2011) published a meta-analysis examining the effects that child abuse investigations have on child victims and their non-offending caregivers in order to make recommendations for the support services CACs should offer. They found that CACs play an important role in mental health supports for victims of child abuse because they establish a relationship and build rapport with service recipients (Tavkar & Hansen, 2011). This research shows that victims of child abuse and their families are more likely to utilize mental health supports when referrals are made from a familiar source (Tavkar & Hansen, 2011). The authors also noted that because CACs are designed to have a child-friendly environment, onsite mental health services are ideal. The authors recommended that mental health services be provided onsite at all CACs and that collaboration between mental health professionals at CACs and other mental health agencies be strengthened (Tavkar & Hansen, 2011).

There is an increasing amount of research being conducted on CACs internationally. Rasmusson (2010) examined the cooperation and coordination of service providers of CACs in six municipalities in Sweden. The study looked at how police, social services, public prosecutors, forensic medicine, paediatrics and child psychiatry all cooperate during child abuse investigations. In-depth qualitative interviews were carried out with 12 children and 22 parents across the different centres. The results showed that children and parents responded positively to the child-friendly setting, the feeling of safety and the friendliness of CAC staff and service

providing partners (Rasmusson, 2010). The respondents suggested that information from the different professionals was important to them but that processes with the investigation could have been communicated and explained better (Rasmusson, 2010). The author found that applying a child-centred approach is more complex than simply creating a child-friendly environment, and more consideration should go into the development of CACs and their processes to achieve a child-centred focus (Rasmusson, 2010). Of note, the author also stated that evaluations can be conducted even though they are time consuming and deal with sensitive subjects (Rasmusson, 2010). A recommendation from this study was to have more studies like it in order to be able to generalize the results and further the development of the relatively young CAC model (Rasmusson, 2010).

Another study out of Sweden examined whether the quality of forensic interviews in CAC cases affects prosecution rates (Hagborg, Stromwall & Tidefors, 2012). The research was guided by CAC principles emphasizing high quality interviews that produce detailed and vivid descriptions without being suggestive or re-traumatizing the child. Transcripts of 32 interviews were coded based on 12 aspects, such as consistency, length, detail and spontaneity of answers, then summarized in one overall interview quality variable. The cases were also coded based on characteristics such as victims' age and relationship to offender. A logistic regression analysis was performed to determine what, if any, factors had an effect on prosecution rate and interview quality (Hagborg et al. 2012). It was found that none of the examined variables affected prosecution rates significantly (Hagborg et al. 2012). However, age was a predictive factor for the quality of the interview with higher ages resulting in higher quality interviews (Hagborg et al. 2012). Low quality interviews have been used to explain the low prosecution rate for child abuse, but that was not supported in this study. The author explains that often even when a child

provides a coherent and detailed report, prosecutors do not take the case to court for various reasons including avoiding the professional failure of losing a case (Hagborg et al. 2012).

Hartley, Mullings and Marquart (2013) conducted a study examining the impact of victim, offender and case characteristics and how they affect the decision to prosecute cases of child abuse. For over two years data were collected from a southern CAC in the United States that resulted in a final sample of 467 substantiated cases of child abuse (physical, sexual and neglect). A logistic regression analysis was conducted to see which factors affected the decision to prosecute a child abuse case. The researchers found that sexual abuse cases were much more likely to be accepted for prosecution than physical abuse and neglect cases (Hartley et al. 2013). It was also found that cases involving female victims and male offenders were more likely to result in prosecution (Hartley et al. 2013). Victim and offender age were also found to impact the decision to prosecute sexual abuse cases and offender gender and age helped predict the decision to process cases of physical abuse (Hartley et al. 2013). Finally, offender gender and frequency of maltreatment significantly impacted the decision to prosecute in cases of neglect (Hartley et al. 2013). The authors state that due to many factors, such as limited resources and an overburdened criminal justice system, many cases of child abuse are not prosecuted after being substantiated. This is why it is important to understand case characteristics that affect these decisions in order to help inform future decisions about case prosecution (Hartley et al. 2013).

An exploratory study by Walsh, Jones and Swiecicki (2014) used data from one CAC to study 632 cases of child abuse using the *NCAtrak* computerized web-tracking system in order to examine criminal disposition times. National criminal justice data on child abuse cases are often difficult to obtain, and information tracked by CACs can be an important source to examine criminal justice outcomes of child abuse cases (Walsh et al. 2014). The results of the system data

analysis indicate that time frames for criminal disposition in child abuse cases vary significantly (Walsh et al. 2014). About one quarter of physical and sexual abuse cases with adult offenders took over a year before the case was finally settled (Walsh et al. 2014). Eleven percent of child sexual abuse cases involving juvenile offenders took over a year to reach a final disposition (Walsh et al. 2014). The authors encourage CACs to use computer-based data systems and to use this potentially rich source of data to further the knowledge and development of CACs (Walsh et al. 2014).

Hubel, et al. (2014) conducted a case study evaluating a group-based treatment for 97 children and their non-offending caregivers. The participants in this study were internally referred to the group treatment at the CAC where they had been interviewed. The group-based treatment is named Project SAFE (Sexual Abuse Family Education) and follows a cognitive-behaviour model that runs for 12 weeks. Sixty-four percent of the children referred to the program exhibited clinically significant symptoms including depression, anxiety, loneliness and posttraumatic stress (Hubel et al. 2014). The results from the case study showed significant improvements in functioning in all the child participants, with the greatest improvements in children who presented clinically significant symptoms (Hubel et al. 2014). The authors state that, overall, the program was rated favourably on the post-treatment evaluation of social validity and is significant because it presents a relatively new follow-up service option that may improve how CACs provide mental health services.

Wherry, Huey and Medford (2015) interviewed CAC directors to gauge mental health services based on perceptions and knowledge of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); criteria for victim treatment referrals; evidence-based treatments for abused children; reliable, valid and normed measures helpful in assessing abused children and training needs for staff. Two hundred

and sixty four CAC directors across the United States responded to the survey, although many did not respond to all questions leaving a large portion of missing data (Wherry et al. 2015). The directors were able to correctly identify about 60% of PTSD symptoms (Wherry et al. 2015). The referral practices of CACs were positive as the results showed that 76% of cases were referred for evidence-based treatment for abuse, and 63% of cases were referred for assessment procedures (Wherry et al. 2015). The directors' responses for the amount of training varied based on the capacity of their communities, with only a third of directors stating that there was an adequate number of people trained in their community (Wherry et al. 2015). Overall the results are positive but the number of unanswered questions suggested that many directors lacked knowledge in some specific areas.

The studies summarized above show that even though there is a lack of research devoted to evaluating the effectiveness of CACs, some insights can be gathered from the existing data. Strong evidence supports CACs as the ideal child-friendly setting for forensic interviews, and that they facilitate improved coordination and communication among service providers (Jenson et al. 1996; Jackson 2004; Smith et al. 2006, Cross et al. 2008). Coordinated experimental research designs expand the capacity of researchers and provide empirical data that can be generalized to the CAC model (MacDonald et al. 2013; Burnside, 2014). Qualitative research can provide detailed insights into the processes of CACs and help researchers examine the experiences of service recipients. It is demonstrated that more research is required to both better understand how CACs operate and the outcomes they produce in order to continue to improve and develop the CAC model. This study seeks to fill some of the gap that exists in the literature by providing both a detailed analysis of Winnipeg's CAC, Snowflake Place, and as a practical framework for evaluating CACs. Understanding how this unique model works and what its

strengths and challenges are can provide insight as to how CACs can optimize their coordination with service providers and improve the experiences of service recipients.

CHAPTER THREE

Program Evaluation Approach

Evaluations and the facilitation of evaluations are often discussed in terms of practicality instead of theory. However, there are many different doctrines in evaluation and evaluation frameworks can vary significantly. Utilization-focused evaluation is an approach to evaluation developed by Michael Patton, who has dedicated much of his professional life to the study, practice and teaching of evaluations that are focused on practicality and use (Patton, 2012). This study employed a utilization-focused evaluation process and can provide insight into the practical and theoretical application of this type of evaluation in a real-life setting.

Utilization-Focused Evaluation

A utilization-focused evaluation was used to systematically collect information about Snowflake Place that will guide future decisions about the program. This evaluation approach is unique in that it creates a personal working relationship between the evaluation facilitators and the primary intended users of the evaluation findings (Patton, 2008/2012). In this study the evaluation co-facilitators were the author and the advisor, from the University of Manitoba, and the primary intended users of the evaluation are Snowflake Place stakeholders. Utilization-focused evaluation follows a systematic approach that can be broken down into specific steps, yet is dynamic and flexible enough to adapt to the individual needs of the primary intended users (Patton, 2008/2012). Utilization-focused evaluation ensures that regardless of the stage in the evaluation process, there is a deliberate focus on the intended use of the evaluation findings. This approach to evaluation ensures input from the stakeholders in all decisions throughout the entire process of the evaluation.

Often evaluations that are tied to funding requirements are seen as being imposed, and those conducting the evaluation simply go through the motions with little thought as to how the findings will be utilized (Patton, 2012). This can lead to evaluation reports whose sole purpose is to exist in order to satisfy a funder's checklist. A utilization-focused evaluation can be used for any type of evaluation purpose but allows the primary intended users to make decisions regarding content, methods, theory and model (Patton, 2012). A utilization-focused evaluation approach can be applied to either a process or outcome evaluation design. All members of the evaluation committee for this study were involved in developing the research questions and evaluation methods, and all members met regularly as the evaluation progressed in order to make decisions and interpret findings. The recommendations outlined in the evaluation report came from participant interviews and subsequent decisions the evaluation committee made during data interpretation meetings.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation committee developed the following Evaluation questions:

1. *How has the introduction of the two forensic interviewers impacted the quality of service at Snowflake Place?*
2. *What is the experience of service recipients at Snowflake Place?*
3. *To what extent is the current referral process allowing Snowflake Place to:*
 - a) *Provide equitable access?*
 - b) *Provide timely access?*
 - c) *Ensure non-duplication of interviews?*
 - d) *Minimize stress and trauma for clients?*

4. *Has Snowflake Place increased the capacity of service providers to coordinate their work regarding child abuse investigations? (How/Why)*

The evaluation committee, made up of multiple stakeholders and the intended users of the evaluation findings, developed these evaluation questions and an evaluation plan (Appendix A) over a series of meetings.

1. *How has the introduction of the two forensic interviewers impacted the quality of service at Snowflake Place?*

This question addressed actual activities that took place and outputs produced by the program, specifically as a result of the incorporation of two forensic interviewers. Forensic interviewers have a key role to play in CACs, and the quality of their work directly affects how the overall quality of service at a CAC is perceived because of the specialized role and the training they receive to work directly with children and youth (Bonach & Heckert, 2012). This question also examined short-term outcomes of the program that are also a result of the two forensic interviewer positions. This question addressed the rationale for the introduction of the two forensic interviewer positions and the outcomes that have occurred as a result.

2. *What is the experience of service recipients at Snowflake Place?*

This question sought to describe the experience of service recipients at Snowflake Place through the perspectives of service providing partners as well as the non-offending caregivers of child service recipients. There is evidence to support the position that children and their families who have received services at a CAC are generally satisfied with the investigative experience and are more likely to state that they were not scared during the forensic interview, compared to families interviewed at police stations or hospitals (Rasmusson, 2011; Jones et al. 2007). Service providers working with Snowflake Place are directly responsible for delivering the outputs of the

program and work directly with service recipients. Data will be gathered from service recipients at Snowflake Place in order to examine their experiences, because no past research in Canada has focused on the experiences of CAC service recipients. (McDonald et al. 2013).

3. How is the current referral process allowing Snowflake Place to: provide equitable access, timely access, non-duplication of interviews and minimize stress/trauma?

This multi-faceted question sought to examine the process and outputs as they relate to Snowflake Place being able to provide equitable access to services, timely access to their services as well as to avoid duplicating interviews with service recipients. The question also examined the outcome of minimizing stress and trauma of service recipients. This evaluation question examined the referral processes at Snowflake Place and how it relates to the services it is able to provide. There is no governing body for CACs in Canada such as the National Children's Alliance (NCA) in the United States, but the processes examined in this question are consistent with the standards necessary for accreditation by the NCA (National Children's Alliance, 2011). Findings can also help determine whether service outcomes have improved in Winnipeg since the opening of a CAC (Smith, Witte, Fricker-Elhai, 2006). In each of the three years Snowflake Place has operated it has experienced growth and changes it has had to adapt to in order to meet the needs of the community.

4. Has Snowflake Place increased the capacity of service providers to coordinate their work with other systems regarding child abuse investigations? (Why or How?)

This question focused on the process and outputs of service providers communicating and coordinating their efforts in child abuse investigations. The question also sought to provide evidence on the outcome of service providers having an increased capacity to coordinate their work as a result of Snowflake Place. Communication among service providers and the

coordination of services during a child abuse investigation are directly linked to the experiences of service recipients and the overall quality of service that a CAC provides (Bonach et al. 2010; Cross et al. 2008; Jones et al. 2007).

Meta-study of Utilization-Focused Evaluation Process

Another aspect of this study was the study of the overall utilization-focused evaluation approach used. This type of evaluation is seen as ideal because it involves the primary intended users of the evaluation findings in all aspects of the evaluation process. The process can be broken down into a checklist of 17 steps, and the overall usefulness of the evaluation findings can be attributed to a facilitator who is familiar with and ready to put this model to practice (Patton, 2012). The data sources for the meta-study were the minutes from the evaluation committee meetings taken by Snowflake Place's Executive Assistant as well as detailed observation and reflection notes recorded by the student evaluation facilitator from the University of Manitoba. The observation notes were key to track the development of the evaluation process and assess its adherence to the utilization-focused evaluation model.

The evaluation committee was comprised of stakeholders and primary intended users of this study and were involved in the development of the evaluation questions and overall evaluation plan. There were regular meetings to involve the group in the data collection decisions as well as the analysis of the data and interpretation of findings. The evaluation facilitator analyzed the observation and self-reflection notes describing the various meetings throughout the entire evaluation process. The overall utilization-focused evaluation approach was examined in order to learn from the process itself. Challenges as well as strengths of this model were identified and recommendations to improve the facilitation of the evaluation process were produced.

Evaluation Design for Snowflake Place

CACs require regular systematic evaluations in order to evaluate their ability to meet the dynamic needs of the communities in which they are situated (Department of Justice Canada, 2013; Cross et al. 2008; Ashcroft et al. 2004). The CAC model, such as that used by Snowflake Place, has certain innate assumptions about the cause and effect relationships the program will have on participants (Hartley, Mullings, & Marquart, 2013). These assumptions can be attributed to the program's validity and are known as the program's theory of change (Mignone, 2015). A mixed methods utilization-focused case study approach was used to evaluate Snowflake Place's effectiveness. The mixed methods approach combined qualitative data from 20 semi-structured interviews with key agency partners and 10 from the non-offending parents or caregivers of children interviewed at Snowflake Place with the quantitative data that included demographic and statistical descriptions of the program processes and service recipients. A mixed methods approach was desirable for the evaluation of this CAC because it allowed for a thorough description of the entire program as well as detailed explanations of specific phenomena that cannot be easily quantified. The evaluation plan was created with several questions that relate to organizational roles, activities, outputs and short-term outcomes. The following description outlines the participatory and collaborative process that was facilitated by the evaluation facilitators with the evaluation committee in order to create the evaluation plan.

The key stakeholders for Winnipeg's child advocacy centre (CAC), Snowflake Place for Children and Youth, formed an evaluation committee from primary intended users and stakeholders that collaboratively developed the following evaluation plan. The stakeholders involved in the evaluation committee that designed this evaluation plan include Snowflake Place's Executive Director, the Executive Assistant, a Board member, a key service provider

partner representing Manitoba Victim Services, a key service provider partner representing the Child and Family Services (CFS) organization All Nations Coordinated Response Network (ANCR), and two evaluation facilitators. The evaluation plan was developed over a period of several months, particularly during several evaluation committee meetings (February 2, March 27, April 9, May 19, May 27 and September 9 2015). During these meetings the evaluation committee discussed the evaluation and made decisions regarding it in order to prioritize and operationalize the evaluation questions and come up with an overall evaluation plan (Appendix A). The evaluation committee then met on January 24, 2016 to decide on the questions for the semi-structured interviews. The final meeting took place June 7, 2016 in order for the evaluation committee to interpret the findings from the semi-structured interviews and decide how the quantitative data would be interpreted. These steps ensured that the evaluation committee was part of every decision during the evaluation process so that the findings would be relevant and utilized to guide the development of the CAC.

Case Study Evaluation

A case study evaluation can be especially useful for examining how a specific program from a larger model is able to achieve its desired outcomes (Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer, 2004). Snowflake Place is a specific program that is part of a larger CAC model, which is why a case study evaluation approach was useful. CACs across Canada operate in different locations to serve different populations and are often unique from each other (McDonald et al. 2013). Understanding the intricacies of specific CACs and what makes them effective can contribute to the overall knowledge of how CACs function and what characteristics allow them to be effective in different circumstances. The outcomes illustrated in the logic model seen in Figure 1 are not

unique to the CAC model but using a case study evaluation approach can determine if and how Snowflake Place meets these outcomes.

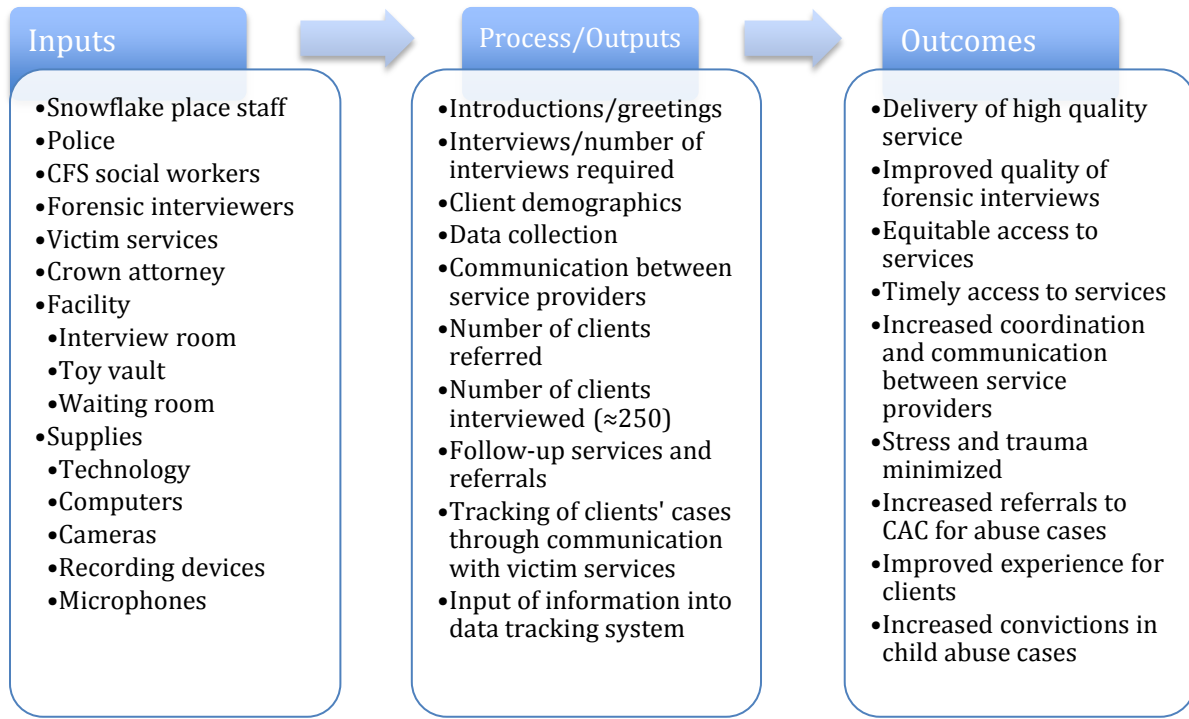


Figure 1 Snowflake Place for Children and Youth Logic Model

Data Sources and Analysis

There were two main types of data that were used for this study. Quantitative data regarding service recipient characteristics and program processes that had already been gathered by Snowflake Place was analyzed in order to get an accurate sense of client demographics and program service numbers. The second main type of data was qualitative and came from semi-structured interviews. The 30 interview participants in this evaluation include 10 adult non-offending caregivers of children who were service recipients at Snowflake Place, as well as 20 individuals employed by Snowflake Place and other partner agencies. The primary intended users of the evaluation findings together determined that representatives from Snowflake Place such as staff, including the forensic interviewers, as well as Winnipeg Police Services, Royal

Canadian Mounted Police, both Child Family Services and All Nations Coordinated Response social workers, Victim Services, and the Crown Attorney would all be interviewed. Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Manitoba Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board and special precautions were taken to ensure confidentiality, safety of participants from re-traumatization and the absence of any type of coercion. All participants provided written consent to be interviewed and have their responses used for this evaluation. The interviews were semi-structured and provided opportunities for open-ended responses from the participants. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim using the online transcription service Rev. All transcribed interviews were sent back to the corresponding interview participants in order to be verified for accuracy and provide the opportunity for participants to change or add anything to their responses. The data were analyzed based on themes from the overall evaluation questions that the evaluation committee chose, as well as any unexpected themes that emerged.

In order to examine the experience of service recipients at Snowflake Place, non-offending caregivers were given a form after all services from Snowflake Place were complete, asking them if they would like to be contacted in the future to be interviewed for an evaluation on the CAC. After several weeks had passed, Snowflake Place's Executive Assistant then followed up with those individuals to see if they were still interested in participating. Those that said "yes" had their contact information forwarded to the evaluation facilitator, who then set up interviews with them. Ten service recipients were interviewed and their responses represent a very wide range of experiences at the CAC, with the majority being characterized as positive. The 10 non-offending caregivers who were interviewed were a diverse group that was representative of the overall service recipients at Snowflake Place. The group included both male and female caregivers, biological parents, stepparents, foster parents, single parents, and

extended family members as caregivers as well as individuals from different ethnicities and various socio-economic levels.

The data used in this evaluation were transferred into an Excel spreadsheet by the Executive Assistant at Snowflake Place and were grouped based on fiscal years that run from April 1st to March 31st (2013/14, 2014/15 & 2015/16). The quantitative data from the 20 key service providers will be referenced as SP1-20 and the 10 interviews with service recipients will be referenced as SR1-10. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of how many service-providing partners were interviewed from each profession. Each of the overall evaluation questions was addressed by one or more of the specific interview questions as well as any quantitative data that may help explain it.

20 Total Service Providers
6 Law Enforcement (3 police, 3 RCMP)
3 ANCR Social Workers
2 Ongoing CFS Social Workers
4 Victim Services Workers
1 Crown Attorney
2 Snowflake Place Administrative staff
2 Snowflake Place Forensic Interviewers (FIs)

Figure 2 Service Providing Partners Interviewed

Ethics Considerations

Participation in the study for both the service providers and service recipients was completely voluntary. There were two different opportunities for service providers to opt out of participation, and there were four different opportunities for service recipients to opt out of participation. The participants were also told that they could skip any interview questions (Appendix B, Appendix C) that they did not wish to answer. The Executive Director at Snowflake Place recruited the service providers using purposive sampling and service recipients,

for a period of six months, were all asked if they would like to participate in the study. Upon completion of all services provided by Snowflake Place, the service recipient was given an internal Snowflake Place consent form that asked whether he or she consented to be contacted in the future to speak about his or her experiences receiving services from Snowflake Place in order for the organization to better understand the services they provide and make improvements. If the service recipients gave consent to be contacted, then the Snowflake Place staff called them at least one week after they had completed receiving services at Snowflake Place and provided further information, explaining the University of Manitoba's role in the study and confirming that they would like to be contacted by the researcher. An ethics approval certificate (Appendix D) was obtained from the University of Manitoba. The researcher then called them in order to answer any questions and provide a description of the study, before arranging a time and neutral location for the interview to take place. All participants had the option to opt out of the study while reviewing the consent form (Appendix E, Appendix F) with the researcher. Both service providers and recipients had the opportunity to ask any questions about the consent form, which outlined all major aspects of the research in order to inform their consent. Participants could choose to have their interview responses used in just the internal Snowflake Place evaluation report, the thesis, or both, and all consented to have their data used in both.

There was no use of deception in the study. There was no withholding of any information about the research or purpose of the study, and a detailed description of the research study and its purpose was fully disclosed. Each participant who volunteered in this study was fully informed about the purpose for the tasks that they were asked to perform. The participants were also given a choice of how they would like to be debriefed by the researcher. A summary of the study was provided to the participants on September first, 2016. This study posed minimal risk to

participants. However, a potential risk was the possibility that participants would experience emotional distress during the interview process. Although this did not occur, all participants were provided with contact information for support services resources (Appendix G) they could access. Anonymity could not be fully ensured for the service-providing partner participants who took part in the study due to the small number of individuals who work with Snowflake Place. The service-providing partners come from a small number of organizations that partner with Snowflake Place and their interview responses may make it possible for them to be identified. Confidentiality and anonymity was maintained for service recipients by conducting interviews in third-party neutral locations where participants were unlikely to be associated with Snowflake Place. Compensation was only provided to the Snowflake Place service recipient participants. The compensation was \$30 in order to address any barriers that might prevent the non-offending caregiver of a child abuse victim from attending the interview. The compensation was intended to cover the costs of childcare for one hour as well as parking and gas, or bus fare, so that the participant could attend the interview.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

Data Review

The first forensic interview that was done at Snowflake Place took place in December of 2012, which was a month before the CAC officially opened its doors. Table 1 summarizes the number of cases that have been referred to Snowflake Place in the three years it has been operating. There has been a steady increase in the number of children interviewed at Snowflake Place over their three years of operation. It is interesting to note that SP2 and SP6 both noted in their respective interviews that they are not sure how many more families can be seen per year with the CAC operating at its current size and with its current model. Part of the limitation is the size of the centre, as it has one interview room, one family waiting room and one monitoring room. The other factor that affects how many families can be seen is that the model emphasizes that to maintain confidentiality and best practices, only one family can be served at the centre at one time. This complicates scheduling of multiple families in one day, as it is difficult to estimate how long it may take for the forensic interview and any subsequent witness interviews to take place. Another factor that may limit the number of cases at Snowflake Place is that the centre is open during regular business hours and all of the service-providing partners, except law enforcement, work a standard 8:30-4:30 p.m. day.

Table 1

Number of Forensic Interviews at Snowflake Place Per Year

	<u>2013/14</u>	<u>2014/15</u>	<u>2015/16</u>
<u>Interviews by Year</u>	204	211	258
(N=673)	(30.3)	(31.3)	(38.3)

The average age of children interviewed at Snowflake Place ranges between 8.7 and 10.8 years of age. The average age of children interviewed at Snowflake Place was 9.0, 10.8 and 8.7 years in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 respectively. Over the three years that the CAC has been operating, the average age of all the children seen at Snowflake Place is 9.4 years. This is supported by Table 2, which shows that the 6-12 years of age category has the most reported cases of abuse for both boys and girls. Research shows that children under 6 years of age are less likely to be seen at CACs and interviewed because of their developmental level and lower ability to accurately recall and verbally describe historic events that have occurred (Vanderzee, Pemberton, Conners-Burrow, & Kramer, 2016). Furthermore, studies have found that adolescent children, especially males, are less likely to report cases of physical and sexual abuse (Elmqvist, Shorey, Febres, & Zapor. Klostermann, Schratte, & Stuart, 2015). It is difficult to conclude if the higher numbers of children aged 6-12 seen at Snowflake is because this age group experiences more abuse than those younger and older than them, or because the abuse they experience is more likely to be reported and subsequently referred to a CAC.

The majority of children interviewed at Snowflake Place are girls and this trend appears to have increased over the three years. Girls made up 60%, 62% and 70% of the children interviewed in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 respectively, while males made up 40%, 37% and 30% (Table 2). The youngest age group of 0-5 year old children, were most equally balanced between girls and boys, but as age groups got older the likelihood of children being girls increased. The largest disparity between girls and boys interviewed at Snowflake Place can be seen in adolescents, who were much more likely to be girls than boys. Different research has suggested that adolescent males are the least likely age/gender group to report abuse (Edinburgh,

Pape-Blabolil, Harpin, & Saewyc, 2015; Elmquist et al. 2015). Table 2 shows the number of children interviewed as specified by age group and gender.

Gender	Age (Years)	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Male		82	79	77
	0-5	20	25	19
	6-12	52	38	41
	13-17	9	16	16
	18+	1	0	1
Female		122	131	180
	0-5	26	26	25
	6-12	60	69	90
	13-17	34	34	62
	18+	2	2	3
Transgender		0	1	1
	0-5	-	-	-
	6-12	-	-	-
	13-17	-	1	1
	18+	-	-	-

The highest proportion (%) of children interviewed at Snowflake Place were identified by their caregivers as being of Aboriginal heritage, including those identifying as Metis (Figure 3). This group has been consistently overrepresented in the children seen at Snowflake Place in all the years the CAC has operated. It would be interesting to see what proportion of these children are already in the child welfare system, as this is thought to correspond to a higher likelihood of being victims of abuse (Elmquist, et al. 2015). The next largest ethnic group was comprised of children whose caregivers identified them as Caucasian. This group made up 18% of the children

interviewed in 2013/14, but increased to 28% in 2014/15 and subsequently 37%, in 2015/16. The category of “others” groups together individuals identifying from a variety of ethnicities including different African, Asian, South American and Caribbean groups. It is interesting to note that a significant number of undetermined individuals were measured in the years 2013/14 and 2014/15, at 18% and 28% respectively, although this number dropped to only 7% in 2015/16. Figure 3 details the victim reported ethnicity by year at Snowflake Place by amount and percentage of total.

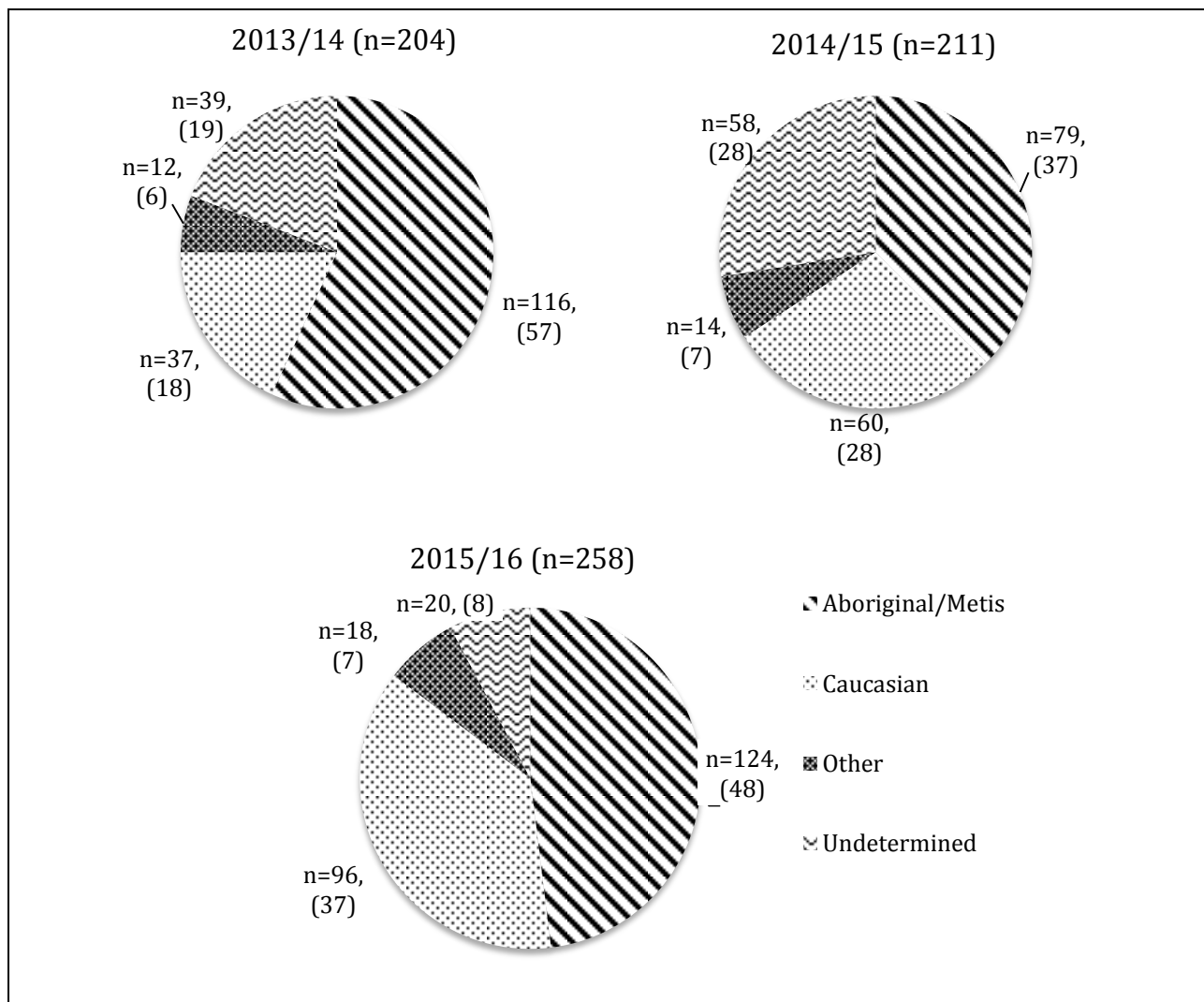


Figure 3 Victim Reported Ethnicity by Year at Snowflake Place

The referral process at Snowflake Place is a single entry referral system, where law enforcement is able to refer specific cases to the CAC. One significant change that occurred near the end of Snowflake Place's second year of operation (2014/15) was that it began accepting referrals from the RCMP, as well as City of Winnipeg Police. This means that the services offered at the CAC have become available to families throughout Manitoba and not just those in Winnipeg. The systems that each of these law enforcement agencies uses to make referrals to Snowflake Place differ considerably. During their interviews, SP2, SP6 and SP14 all described the process for referrals with WPS as a shared online calendar that police are able to access, see when the CAC is available and schedule an interview. SP2, SP6 and SP20 all described the referral process for the RCMP as being less formalized and consisting of a phone call made to the CAC by an RCMP officer in order to book a time for the forensic interview. RCMP are then required to send a referral form to the CAC to provide the forensic interviewers with some background information about the case and the family that will be coming to Snowflake Place.

The number of referrals to Snowflake Place from the Winnipeg Police Service has stayed relatively consistent over the three years that Snowflake Place has operated. The increase in total cases referred to Snowflake Place in the year 2015/16 is a direct result of the additional cases referred to Snowflake Place by the RCMP (Table 3). In interviews with SP6, SP12 and SP18, the service providers all stated that they believed the number of cases referred to Snowflake Place by the RCMP would continue to increase in the following year. As mentioned previously, several of the service providers think that the CAC is near its capacity in terms of the number of cases it can receive in a year, to be able to maintain consistency with the CAC model. An increase in cases referred to the CAC from the RCMP may create more scheduling conflicts at Snowflake Place. This may result in more WPS use of the CAC after-hours to conduct interviews

themselves. Those WPS interviews would still be recorded as cases referred to the CAC, but would not follow the true CAC model of having interviews conducted by forensic interviewers and a multidisciplinary team of service providers present for the interview. A small number of referrals have come from the Independent Investigations Unit of Manitoba as well as the Ontario Provincial Police.

Source	2013/14 (n=204)	2014/15 (n=211)	2015/16 (n=258)	Totals (n=673)
WPS	204 (100)	206 (97.6)	199 (77.1)	609 (90.5)
RCMP	-	4 (1.9)	56 (21.7)	60 (8.9)
IIU	-	1 (0.5)	2 (0.8)	3 (0.45)
OPP	-	-	1 (0.4)	1 (0.15)

The majority of cases referred to Snowflake Place involve incidents of child sexual abuse. Incidents of physical abuse are the second most commonly referred cases to Snowflake Place. There are also a variety of other types of abuse and crimes that include abandonment, violations of court ordered restraining orders, domestic abuse and child pornography that are referred to the CAC, but these do not make up a large proportion of the cases at Snowflake Place. Table 4 shows the breakdown of the types of incidents of abuse that are referred to Snowflake Place by year. Research suggests that cases involving the sexual abuse of children are the least likely to have physical evidence of abuse, which is why the testimony of the victim is so important: It is often the only evidence and also why these cases are most commonly referred to CACs (Edinburgh et al. 2015). When the number of sexual abuse cases per year was broken down by gender it was shown that girls have much higher instances of being the victims of

sexual abuse than boys. The discrepancy between boys and girls being victims of sexual abuse was most noticeable among adolescent females, who experienced much higher instances of sexual abuse than adolescent males. The instances of boys and girls being the victims of physical abuse were similar across all age groups.

Incident	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Totals
	(n=204)	(n=211)	(n=258)	(n=673)
Sexual	130 (63.7)	131 (62.1)	195 (75.6)	456 (67.7)
Physical	57 (27.9)	70 (33.2)	47 (18.2)	174 (25.9)
Other*	15 (7.4)	10 (4.7)	16 (6.2)	41 (6.1)
S & P**	2 (1.0)	-	-	2 (0.3)

*Other includes: Pornography, Court Order Violations & Abandonment
 **S & P represents cases that included both Sexual and Physical

One of the main goals of CACs, such as Snowflake Place, is to decrease the amount of time it takes to get a child in for a forensic interview. This is especially important for younger children because their ability to remember and accurately describe a historic event can be affected by how much time passes. They are also at risk of having their recollection of an event influenced by what others tell them (Vanderzee et al. 2016). Researchers also found that older children were more likely to recant or change their statements as time passed from when they initially made the report of abuse because they became discouraged or frustrated by the process and lack of conclusion (Edinburgh et al. 2015). Snowflake Place currently tracks when a case of abuse is first reported. It is important to note that the abuse may have either been first reported to child welfare or to law enforcement. The number of days between the first date that abuse is reported and the date the forensic interview takes place at Snowflake Place can be measured.

However, this is not an accurate depiction of the services provided by Snowflake Place, but rather of the larger system that responds to child abuse investigations. Historical incidents of abuse also act as outliers that would inflate the average number of days because of the much longer amount of time that had passed before the forensic interview occurred.

Another way to analyze the amount of time it took to get children interviewed, without the outlier effect of historical cases, is by determining the number and proportion of cases where a child was interviewed within two weeks of their initial report of abuse and where a child was interviewed within 30 days of the initial report. There were 144 (73%) cases in 2013/14 where a child was interviewed within two weeks of the abuse being reported. The number of cases where a child was interviewed within two weeks of the first report of abuse in 2014/15 and 2015/16 was 129 (65%) and 143 (61%) respectively. The number of cases where a child was interviewed within 30 days of the first report of abuse was 176 (91%) in 2013/14, 163 (82%) in 2014/15 and 192 (82%) in 2015/16. These numbers indicate that the overwhelming majority of cases referred to Snowflake Place have an interview take place shortly after the abuse is first reported.

Furthermore, in the interviews with service providers, many stated that the main factor that affects when a family is scheduled to come to Snowflake Place to be interviewed is the availability of that family. Some of the interviews that take place over 30 days from when abuse is first reported may still be historic cases. Snowflake Place should measure the number of days it takes for a child to be forensic interviewed after the referral is made to it in order to better depict the services it provides.

The data in Table 5 shows that in cases referred to Snowflake Place, those accused of abuse are much more likely to be men than women. Over the three years that the CAC has been operating, in 562 (84%) of the cases, the accused individual has been a man. When examining

the relationship of the accused to the victim, only 8% of those accused were unknown to the victim, whereas 92% of the accused were known to the victim (2013/14). In the following year (2014/15), 6% of those accused were not known to the victim, whereas 94% were individuals with whom the victim was familiar. Most commonly, the accused was a parent of the victim (25%) and extended family (17%) was the next most common relationship between the accused and the victim. Overall, the data show that those most commonly accused of child abuse are men who are either related to or known to the child.

Gender	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Totals
	(n=204)	(n=211)	(n=258)	(n=673)
Male	162 (79.4)	181 (85.8)	219 (84.9)	562 (83.5)
Female	42 (20.6)	28 (13.3)	31 (12.0)	101 (15.0)
Both (M&F)	-	-	7 (2.7)	7 (1.05)
Transgender	-	1 (0.45)	-	1 (0.15)
Undetermined	-	1 (0.45)	1 (0.4)	2 (0.3)

One recommendation from Snowflake Place’s first evaluation was to hire specialized forensic interviewers to do the interviewing at the CAC. In Snowflake Place’s first year of operation, the WPS utilized the facility to conduct their forensic interviews of child abuse victims. Many times the police would use the facility after hours and there would not be any service providers from the multidisciplinary team present. Table 6 illustrates the dramatic shift in the number of interviews that police conducted at Snowflake Place over three years. SP15, SP18 and SP19 all stated in their interviews that they believe the forensic interviewers are able to conduct the highest quality interviews and that having the forensic interviewers at Snowflake Place has improved the overall services families receive. SP19 stated that they were able to learn

very much about conducting child forensic interviews from watching the forensic interviewers. However, SP19 also mentioned that it is important for law enforcement to continue to do some forensic interviews to stay familiar with the process and confident in their skills. All of the interviews from cases referred by RCMP have had the Snowflake Place forensic interviewers conduct the interviews and this trend of forensic interviewers conducting more and more interviews is likely to increase as service providers become more familiar with the CAC model. By 2015/16, forensic interviewers were conducting 157 of the interviews out of the 192 (82%) cases referred to Snowflake by the WPS.

Interviewer	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Totals
	(n=204)	(n=211)	(n=258)	(n=673)
WPS	204 (100)	178 (84.3)	36 (14.0)	418 (62.1)
SPFIs	-	33 (15.7)	213 (82.5)	246 (36.6)
IS*	-	-	9 (3.5)	9 (1.3)

*IS represents interviews that were scheduled but had not occurred at time of data collection

One of the main goals of CACs such as Snowflake Place is to minimize the number of times child victims need to be interviewed. Research has shown that children can be re-traumatized and have their mental health negatively affected when they unnecessarily need to recall abuse that occurred to them (Edinburgh et al. 2015). Table 7 shows the number of times a victim is forensically interviewed at Snowflake Place. There are several reasons why a victim would need to be interviewed more than once, such as further allegations being made, identifying a second perpetrator or a direct request from the Crown Attorney. The goal of Snowflake Place is to ensure that the interviews are complete and of highest quality so that children do not need to

be re-interviewed unnecessarily. SP10 and SP14 both stated that the interviews conducted by the Snowflake Place forensic interviewers hold up better in court, not only because of the detail and quality of the interview, but also because they are seen as a neutral third party in the criminal investigation and legal process. It is clear from the data that there are very few cases at Snowflake Place where a child is interviewed multiple times.

No.	2013/14 (n=204)	2014/15 (n=211)	2015/16 (n=258)	Totals (n=673)
1	200 (98.0)	205 (97.1)	257 (99.6)	662 (98.35)
2	4 (2.0)	5 (2.4)	1 (0.4)	10 (1.5)
3	-	1 (0.5)	-	1 (0.15)

A feature of many CACs is their relationship to medical service providers. Some CACs are hospital based or based out of mental health facilities, while others collocate with healthcare providers. Snowflake Place has a relatively unique model, in that the CAC is not based out of a facility where it is collocating with one of their service-providing partners. This stand-alone model can create an obstacle for gathering data from partners about services such as medical exams and auxiliary services such as counselling. Table 8 displays the number of medical exams for the child victims that have been referred to Snowflake Place. Research shows that the timely administration of a sexual abuse kit is the best way to determine that an assault has occurred (Edinburgh et al. 2015). However, this exam must be done in a relatively short time frame after the sexual abuse has occurred in order for there to be conclusive evidence that can be used to aid the criminal investigation. The data from Snowflake Place show that 20% of all child victims of abuse who are referred to Snowflake Place received a medical exam. In a large number of

referred cases, it is undetermined if the child received a medical exam or not. This may indicate that there is some room for improved communication and information sharing between Snowflake Place and healthcare facilities that would be conducting the victim medical exams.

Exam	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Totals
	(n=204)	(n=211)	(n=258)	(n=673)
Yes	49 (24.0)	36 (17.1)	48 (18.6)	133 (19.8)
No	12 (5.9)	54 (25.6)	178 (69.0)	244 (36.2)
Undetermined	143 (70.1)	121 (57.3)	32 (12.4)	296 (44.0)

One of the main objectives of CACs such as Snowflake Place is to conduct high quality detailed interviews that will aid law enforcement officials in their criminal investigation so that charges may be brought against perpetrators of child abuse. SP20 stated that the goal of the forensic interviewers is to get as detailed and clear an interview as possible in order to determine whether an incident of child abuse occurred or not. SP1 and SP2 both affirmed that the goal of the forensic interview is not to look for evidence that abuse occurred, but to determine exactly what happened to the child on the incident in question. This is crucial in order for law enforcement to be able to confidently determine whether charges should be brought forward or not. Table 9 shows the number of charges that were laid in cases that had been referred to Snowflake Place. Of the total number of the charges that were laid, 56% (180) were sexual abuse charges. Ninety percent of the cases had multiple charges laid against an offender and the most common criminal charges relating to sexual abuse were sexual interference (88%, 158) and sexual assault (85%, 153). Of the charges laid, 29% (80) were physical abuse charges, with assault (78%, 62) and assault with a weapon (25%, 38) being the most common charges laid.

Other types of charges made up only 4% (14) of the charges brought forward from all cases referred to Snowflake Place. There were 15% (48) cases where charges were still pending and cannot be determined until a later date.

Charges	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Totals
	(n=204)	(n=211)	(n=258)	(n=673)
Yes	120 (58.8)	107 (50.7)	97 (37.6)	324 (48.2)
No	84 (41.2)	103 (48.8)	114 (44.2)	301 (44.7)
Pending	-	1 (0.5)	47 (18.2)	48 (7.1)

In summary, 673 children were referred to Snowflake Place between April 1, 2013 and March 31, 2016. The average age of children seen at Snowflake Place was 9.4 years of age and 71% of all the children interviewed at the centre were under 13 years of age. Sixty four percent of the children seen were girls and adolescents were the age group where girls most outnumbered boys. Children identified as being Aboriginal/Metis by their non-offending caregivers made up the largest ethnic group seen at Snowflake Place. Referrals from the WPS to Snowflake Place have remained consistent over the three years (~200) but the RCMP have started to make referrals, which has increased the number of cases referred to Snowflake Place (258 in 2015/16). Sixty eight percent of all cases referred to Snowflake Place involved incidents of sexual abuse and girls were more likely than boys to be victims of sexual abuse. Seventy nine percent of all children are interviewed in 30 days or less after they initially report abuse. Ninety six percent of all the children seen at Snowflake Place had only a single forensic interview, and there was a trend away from the WPS doing their own forensic interviews as the Snowflake Place forensic interviewers are doing 82% of the WPS referred cases and 100% of those from RCMP. Charges

were brought forward by law enforcement personnel in 48% of all the cases referred to Snowflake Place.

Interview Data

The 30 interview participants included 10 adult non-offending caregivers of children who were service recipients at Snowflake Place, as well as 20 individuals employed by Snowflake Place and other partner agencies. The primary intended users of the evaluation findings together determined that representatives from Snowflake Place such as staff, including the forensic interviewers, as well as the WPS, the RCMP, the CFS and ANCR social workers, Victim Services, and the Crown Attorney would be interviewed. There was purposeful sampling in order to ensure that each service-providing partner was represented and that the individuals interviewed were familiar with Snowflake Place.

Question 1: Forensic Interviewers

One of the main recommendations that emerged from Snowflake Place's first evaluation was the need to hire forensic interviewers. An important focus of the evaluation was on exploring how the introduction of the two forensic interviewers has impacted the quality of service at Snowflake Place. All of the service providers who were interviewed agreed that both forensic interviewers at Snowflake Place conducted consistent, high quality interviews. There were, however, different levels of understanding amongst service providing partners regarding the forensic interviewing process itself. Those service providers who observe interviews as well as conduct child interviews themselves showed greater knowledge and understanding of the process at Snowflake Place. SP12 described a technique one of the forensic interviewers used as "so simple, yet brilliant," explaining that in the interview you have to establish with the child that

if they don't understand a question then they should not feel obligated to state an answer or say, "I don't know," and should simply say, "I don't understand the question."

The forensic interviewer asked the child if she knew what her ocular pigmentation was, when the child said she didn't know, the forensic interviewer asked her if she knew what her eye colour was, and of course she answered immediately. The forensic interviewer then explained to the child that the first question they asked meant the same thing as asking what her eye colour was, which she knew the answer to. The forensic interviewer was able to make her understand that if she did not understand a question, it did not necessarily mean that she did not know the answer to it and that she should simply state she did not understand the question.

The service providers whose jobs required them to interview children themselves demonstrated a deeper understanding and appreciation of the blend of interviewing techniques and nuances in the way the forensic interviewers asked questions and conducted the interviews. SP12, SP14 and SP18 all mentioned in their interviews how the forensic interviewers asked questions in such meaningful ways, so as not to lead the child towards an answer but also to keep him or her talking about the specific incident that was being addressed. SP18 explained, "when a child starts opening up about what you are looking for them to say, it's hard not to get too eager and want them to jump to the point, you have to keep them focused on the topic, but still speaking on their own". Only one of the service providers interviewed felt that the quality of interviews from the forensic interviewers was no different than any other service providers who interviewed children, although this individual later stated that they had only observed two interviews at Snowflake Place and did notice the forensic interviewers used a different approach to how they themselves conducted interviews. The rest of the service providers interviewed all believed that the Snowflake Place forensic interviewers were experts in their field for a number

of reasons. Many of the service providers noted the years of experience both forensic interviewers had prior to being hired at Snowflake Place as well as the level of comfort they have developed simply because of the number of interviews they conduct, which result in the highest standards of child forensic interviewing.

Most of the service providers who were interviewed mentioned having some knowledge of the specialized training to which the forensic interviewers had access. SP14, SP15 and SP19 all mentioned that the Snowflake Place forensic interviewers attended the professional development seminar that their agency hosted and were subsequently invited to attend a training session where Snowflake Place brought in an expert in child forensic interviewing. The model at Snowflake Place puts a lot of emphasis on the continued professional development of the forensic interviewers, in order to ensure they are up-to-date on the most current and best practices for child forensic interviewing. An unexpected finding that emerged from the interviews with the service providers was the amount of informal knowledge sharing and cross-training that has occurred since Snowflake Place hired their forensic interviewers. The service providers explained that this benefit has come as a result of the service providers becoming familiar with the forensic interviewers and building a trusting working relationship that promotes communication. SP8 and SP20 both stated that they have learned more about child forensic interviewing because they are able to see the forensic interviewers use certain techniques and later ask them why they said and did certain things in the interview. The service providers also mentioned that since the forensic interviewers started working at Snowflake Place, there have been more informal debriefing meetings and team huddles that gave them the opportunity to bring up specific aspects of the interview. Many of the service providers expressed interest in attending more training along with the Snowflake Place forensic interviewers.

Another aspect that was explored in the service provider interviews was the ways that the forensic interviewers have changed the services provided at Snowflake Place. As mentioned previously, consistency in technique, style and thoroughness, as well as interviews that did not have any leading questions were all stated as ways the forensic interviews had impacted the quality of service provided at Snowflake Place. An unexpected outcome that emerged from the interviews with the service providers was how the forensic interviewers were seen to facilitate a lot of the communication and collaboration among the multidisciplinary team. SP14 and SP15 both described how in the first year the CAC opened, the WPS utilized the facility, as it was seen as a resource, but officers did not fully understand or appreciate the CAC model. All of the service providers who had experience with the CAC, both prior to and after the hiring of the forensic interviewers, stated that there was a marked difference in the amount of in-person communication between service providers. SP9 and SP16 explained that although formal mechanisms for communication and collaboration were in place prior to the forensic interviewers being hired, there was a lack of a working relationship between service providers and communication suffered as a consequence.

Each of the different service providers is bound by privacy and confidentiality policies and organizational procedures and sometimes these can create a hurdle for communication with the multidisciplinary team. The fact that the forensic interviewers are able to create avenues promoting interpersonal communication that is less formal has led to more team unity and better coordination of services. SP3, SP5 and SP9 all recalled a time when service providers weighed whether they should say something to another member of the multidisciplinary team or not, for fear that it was breaking confidentiality, compromising an investigation or simply overstepping what their role was at the CAC. SP17 pointed out that the forensic interviewers act as a point of

reference and familiarity for all service providers and that they help service providers who have never met before feel like they are on a team working towards the same goal. Prior to there being forensic interviewers at Snowflake Place, there was some communication between certain service providers, such as the All Nations Coordinated Response network (ANCR) abuse investigators and the WPS child abuse unit, but ongoing CFS and Victim Services were often not present. One of the roles of the forensic interviewers has been to coordinate with the service providers from the entire multidisciplinary team in order to try to have as many present as possible for the forensic interviews. This has had an impact beyond the working relationship of the service providers as service providers are able to establish an in-person connection with families earlier than with the previous system.

In summary, the introduction of the forensic interviewers appears to have achieved significant changes to the services at Snowflake Place, and although some of the impacts have been unexpected, they have been beneficial. The specialized training and expertise of the forensic interviewers benefits the children and families and also the service providers who are able to learn from observing interviewing techniques. Several service providers (SP8, SP15, & SP19) anticipate that the entire investigation will benefit from the presence of forensic interviewers as they are viewed as more neutral third party interviewers than law enforcement personnel. SP19 stated, “the role of the forensic interviewers begins and ends with conducting a quality interview”. The forensic interviewers are recognized as being experts in child forensic interviewing, and this is creating more awareness within service providing agencies as well as with the public. For a newly established CAC, such as Snowflake Place, this type of increased awareness is crucial for improving advocacy as well as gaining public and professional support.

Question 2: Service Recipients

The service providers at Snowflake Place can sometimes gauge how family members feel about their experience at the CAC by their mood and demeanour, as well as by the nature of their interactions. The positive interactions at Snowflake Place were supported in the interviews by service providers, which described the broad range of interactions between families and service providers. To date, Snowflake Place had never asked service recipients about their experiences at the CAC. The single most important factor that was mentioned as determining whether a family had a positive experience at Snowflake Place or not was the amount of information it was provided ahead of time about the process. At the most extreme end of this, a child's caregiver was not aware if they were the ones being investigated or not and were confused, frightened and terrified of having the children apprehended during the visit to Snowflake Place. SR1 explained,

We had no idea what they (accused individual) had said about us and were worried the whole time that they (service providers) would take the kids away. When the person came to take the kids to the toy vault, I thought, that's it, they're taking them.

A simple explanation to that caregiver could have had a profound impact on how the caregiver perceived their experience at Snowflake Place. That case was the most extreme example of how an individual may assume the worst when not provided with enough information about the process that is taking place. The rest of the service recipients interviewed did not have stories nearly that extreme, but it was clear, that there is no amount of information that you can provide a caregiver that is too much information. Most service recipients reported being quite anxious and under stress when coming to Snowflake Place and any interactions and conversations with staff while at the CAC felt like some kind of reassurance.

Considering the nature of the incidents that bring families to Snowflake Place, it is no wonder that caregivers are already fearful and on edge when bringing their children in for the interview. Interestingly, all the service recipients interviewed, even those that described their own experience as being negative, stated that the experience of their child(ren) was positive overall. The experience for service recipients began with how they were greeted at Snowflake Place and the CAC was described as having a very open and inviting atmosphere. SR3 described the staff at Snowflake Place as very gentle and caring; they said, “you could tell they genuinely care about what happens to children there”. Some service recipients mentioned that they felt the reception area felt a little clinical but recognized that children and youth of all ages were seen at the CAC. SR4 explained “The waiting area felt a little bit like an office, I was just glad it wasn’t a police station, and we didn’t have to sit there for long, so no one could see us”. Several of the service recipients described past negative experiences with law enforcement and CFS and were glad to hear they were going to somewhere that was more neutral. SR5, in contrast, did not share this sentiment, stating, “it doesn’t matter if they’re not cops or CFS, they’re all the same and you can’t really trust them, especially with your kids”. This response seems to speak more to the diversity of the individuals receiving services at Snowflake Place, than to something that can be improved upon by Snowflake. Some families come to Snowflake Place with negative past experiences of law enforcement and child services in mind, that can result in attitudes of cautiousness and mistrust.

However, this attitude was not the opinion of most service recipients, as they described their experiences as welcoming and warm. SR2 described the caring nature of the staff as the staff member held their infant for them, while the caregiver left to speak to their child that was interviewed. The service recipient also mentioned that the forensic interviewer also walked them

to their car after and helped by holding the children's hands while crossing the busy street. All of the service recipients recognized the efforts of the service providers towards their child(ren). All service recipients interviewed expressed that they were thankful that the experience was positive for their children. SR7 said "I don't think they (child) was aware they were even being interviewed, for them they got to go somewhere and play and then got a toy in the end". All of the service recipients stated that the toy vault was significant in shaping how their child perceived the experience. SR3 said "the gift at the end was very genuine and important for my child to feel good about the experience. They added, "it wasn't like a bribe but more acknowledging that what they (child) did was really hard and they were brave to do so" (SR3). One service recipient explained that their experience with the Snowflake Place staff was positive but the officer the service recipient spoke to and was subsequently interviewed by seemed to make light of the incident that brought them to the CAC.

Service providers at Snowflake Place mentioned noticing a stark difference in the demeanour of many service recipients from when they arrive at the CAC to when they are about to leave. The responses from service recipients supported this observation, as many described not knowing what to expect coming the CAC but leaving on a positive note. A common theme that emerged was that service recipients who had received more information about Snowflake Place and the process they were about to be part of, came in more optimistic and even reported leaving on a more positive note, confident with how it went, compared to service recipients given little information. It is very important for staff at CACs such as Snowflake Place to be aware of the apprehension that families come in with. SP10 described as being "caught in the moment going in there (Snowflake Place), on autopilot from all the emotions". Some service recipients stated that the speed at which they were informed they would be going to Snowflake Place had to do

with their emotional state. SR8 stated, “I was an emotional mess because it all happened so fast, we went there two days after we made the police report.” It is usually CFS or law enforcement that will talk with the family to schedule the interview at Snowflake Place, so the CAC cannot be sure how informed the family is about the process that will take place when arriving to the centre. If this potential gap in communication is recognized and addressed by service providers once the family arrives at the CAC, it can potentially lead to a more positive experience for those families coming to Snowflake Place.

The responses as to what service recipients liked and disliked about Snowflake Place were quite consistent and most did not come as a surprise to the evaluation committee. All service recipients, except one, stated that the parking situation is difficult at Snowflake Place because the street parking is paid and becomes unavailable during rush hour traffic. SR7 explained that, “even though they told us where to park and gave us a voucher for it, the parkade was sketchy and made us even more nervous when we came there”. Other service providers mentioned that the central location of the CAC, in downtown Winnipeg, had too much hustle and bustle. Service providers realize that many RCMP-referred families are travelling to Winnipeg for the forensic interview and the area of the city that Snowflake Place is in may be difficult to navigate and find parking for someone from out-of-town. SR3 and SR4 both mentioned that the initial reception area is not as warm and welcoming as the rest of the CAC but that is where the first impression is made. Some of the things that service recipients would like to see changed about Snowflake Place are not possible in the short term and require significant funding (e.g., change of location) but other important measures, such as communicating the process, can be taken to ensure service recipients’ experiences are positive.

In summary, the responses from service recipients suggested that Snowflake Place and the service providers who work there are able to make families feel warm and welcomed, and most importantly, create an atmosphere so that the child being interviewed has a positive experience. SR2 explained, “We came in because of something awful, but my child walked out a princess, literally, with a dress they gave her from that movie”. The impact that the experience of coming to Snowflake Place has on children is very important as it is directly tied to minimizing the risk of re-traumatizing the child. It is important that service providers keep in mind each family’s personal history and the past experiences that can affect how they perceive their time at Snowflake Place. There is a need to standardize the process by which families are communicated with, in regards to the process and what to expect at Snowflake Place. Responses from the service recipients suggested that although service providers may speak in hushed tones out of respect for privacy and the seriousness of the incident that brought the family there, it can also propagate fear from a lack of transparency and open communication. Overall, Snowflake Place appears to be successful in creating a positive experience for most families and their children, and can still work to continue to improve the process, as well as to how it communicates to those involved.

Question 3: Referral Process

One of the objectives of this evaluation was to determine if the current referral process at Snowflake Place was allowing service recipients to provide timely, equitable access and minimize the stress and trauma for clients, including non-duplication of interviews. The current referral process at Snowflake Place actually differs for the two service providers that make direct referrals (WPS and RCMP). The WPS uses an online, shared calendar to automatically book timeslots for families to come in to be interviewed. RCMP officers call the centre to discuss

possible convenient times and make the referral over the phone. Both referral processes have their advantages and disadvantages. The WPS are able to book and confirm their interview time immediately and conveniently. However, this system does not always lend itself to adequate time for communication with other service providers that should be present for the interview in order to maintain fidelity to the CAC model. RCMP officers work in smaller communities with fewer social workers and tend to have closer working relationships with these social workers due to the fact that they work with the same few people more frequently. The RCMP officer usually coordinates with the social worker on a time that is convenient then calls Snowflake Place to book the interview. Although the referral process for the RCMP is more successful at ensuring the multiple service providers are present for the interview, it may not be practical for the WPS, who refer four times as many cases to Snowflake Place as the RCMP.

Most of the service providers stated in their interviews that they thought the current referral process was adequate. SP11 and SP13 both mentioned that it might be more convenient for All Nations Coordinated Response social workers to also be able to make referrals directly rather than refer to police only to have them then refer the family to Snowflake Place. SP18 noted that it does make sense to have law enforcement making the referrals since their schedules are the busiest and really they are the main service provider that must be present at the CAC for the interview. When service providers were asked about what types of cases get referred to Snowflake Place, the answers were consistent that physical abuse and sexual abuse are the two main types of incidents that are referred to the CAC. Service providers explained that all reports of sexual abuse, if substantiated, are considered criminal offences, whereas some reports of physical abuse do not qualify as criminal offences and are then dealt with by CFS instead of being referred to Snowflake Place. All service providers stated that the severity of sexual abuse

is not a factor when deciding to refer cases to Snowflake Place. SP2 says, “there have been cases that range from showing pornography and over the clothes touching all the way to violent sexual assaults seen at Snowflake Place”. Service providers explained that referrals are more likely to be made to Snowflake Place from the WPS if the interview does not have to occur immediately and in the evening or at night. The RCMP is likely to make referrals to Snowflake Place due to the lack of a specialized child abuse unit and the desire to learn from individuals who are considered experts in forensic interviewing.

Equitable and timely access, are the two main factors that were considered when evaluating the referral process at Snowflake Place. The quantitative data showed that over 80% of all cases referred to the CAC have the forensic interview done within 30 days of when the abuse is first reported. When examining 2015/16 data by whether service recipients identified as Aboriginal/Metis or Caucasian, the average number of days between when abuse was first reported and when the interview occurred was 26.1 and 24 days, respectively. These two ethnic groups made up 85% of all the service recipients in that year and the average number of days between the first report of abuse and the forensic interview indicate equitable access to services for both regardless of ethnicity. In terms of providing timely service at Snowflake Place, there was anticipation that the service provider making the referral has the greatest impact on this factor. However, service providers indicated that availability of the family always comes first, and even if law enforcement or CFS provides transportation, families are not always able or willing to come to Snowflake Place immediately. Some families are brought in as soon as the same day they make the report of abuse, and in historical cases of abuse, where there is no imminent threat to a child, it may take much longer.

One way that CACs are seen to reduce the trauma associated with investigations of child abuse is by ensuring that children do not have to unnecessarily be interviewed multiple times. This is achieved at Snowflake Place through high quality interviews that are clear, concise and complete. These interviews are devoid of leading questions and are conducted in a manner that is appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child. Winnipeg is unique in that it has a branch of CFS, called the All Nations Coordinated Response (ANCR), which is directly responsible for investigating all child abuse cases in the city. The ANCR abuse investigators are obligated to interview children upon getting reports of potential abuse that may have occurred. The ANCR abuse investigators are also trained in forensic interviewing and will often interview a child prior to the child being referred to Snowflake Place. This means that the majority of children being referred to the CAC from ANCR will be interviewed a minimum of two times. Further examination of the interview practices of ANCR, as described in the interviews with service providers, does show that there are notable differences in the type of interviews ANCR workers conduct compared to Snowflake Place's forensic interviewers. SP1, SP16 and SP18 all explained that ANCR social workers conduct what is considered a more global interview, in order to find out about the incident reported as well as any other potential incidents or children that may be at risk. They use this interview to assess whether a child is in imminent danger and whether the child's domestic arrangement is safe or not. SP2 and SP19 clarify that CAC forensic interviews focus on a single incident that took place and try to gather as many details about that incident as evidence to support a criminal investigation.

The distinction between the two types of interviews is not a factor in most cases referred by RCMP, as the officers and social workers will decide together if an interview is necessary before the case is referred to Snowflake Place. The belief is that the interview done by

Snowflake Place forensic interviewers will be more thorough, meaning that there is less of a chance the child needs to be re-interviewed. The more coordinated referral process also allows for the service providers to discuss the allegations, either in person or over the phone, in order to make the best decision for the child and family. However, this process may not be possible for the WPS and ANCR considering the number of cases referred to these two agencies every year. The mandates of individual agencies can create obstacles as well, since ANCR workers are required to interview when investigating abuse allegations and cannot make direct referrals to Snowflake Place themselves.

Question 4: Coordinated Response

The experiences of service providers who have worked with Snowflake Place have been overwhelmingly positive. SP14 and SP19 stated that since working with Snowflake Place, their overall understanding and skill level of forensic interviewing has increased. SP6 stated that coordination improved since the CAC opened in Winnipeg, meaning that services had improved for families. An area that has been emphasized by many service providers is the increase in training opportunities, both formal and informal, since Snowflake Place opened. The forensic interviewers also are constantly attending training and professional development courses to stay up to date with best practices for child forensic interviewing. The forensic interviewers also regularly perform peer-review evaluations on each other. Time is devoted to watch interviews that the other forensic interviewer has completed and to be as critical as possible in order to breakdown every nuance and every decision made on how the interview is conducted. Other service providers have stated they would like to be part of the process, or something similar, in order to develop their own forensic interviewing skills. SP19 stated that although the forensic interviewers are doing the majority of the interviews and conduct them with the highest quality,

other service providers must continue to do some in order to continue to develop their own skills, familiarity and knowledge.

The important roles that the forensic interviewers play in facilitating informal communication with the other service providers cannot be understated. The process for sharing information, tracking cases and also reviewing them is completely on the onus of the individual who is seeking the information. Each service provider knows who to call for what piece of information, and the forensic interviewers often act as brokers for that communication. Service providers stated that the process for communication is less formal, but more open than previously, before Snowflake Place. Regular team huddle meetings occur and service providers are given an environment where they can feel comfortable to ask for details of the investigation or case. The more that service providers build working relationships with each other and develop trust, the more there is a sense that everyone is working on the same investigation. SP16 stated, “service providers are more open to sharing information and details about cases and less worried about what they can say and to whom”. SP 15 adds “things have come a long way with how it used to be with police just going in there and doing their thing, but I think it can still get better in terms of working together”. Snowflake Place has a flow chart of the ideal process for how service is delivered, now there must be an increased effort in making the understanding of this flowchart universal to all service providers.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

The evaluation has shown that Snowflake Place has established high quality services that maintain fidelity to the CAC model. Although some of the results were unexpected, the impacts that Snowflake Place has had on service providers dealing with child abuse investigations has been overwhelmingly positive. It was not expected that the importance of the forensic interviewers extended beyond them providing the high quality up-to-date forensic interviewing practices as a neutral third party. The deeply ingrained practices of service providers, dealing with child abuse investigations, withholding certain information to families as a protective factor and speaking in whispers and hushed tones in front of service recipients was also questioned.

Major Findings

The results suggest that in models, such as Snowflake Place, where the colocation of all service providing partners is not possible, the role that the forensic interviewers have extends beyond simply conducting the interviews of child victims. The forensic interviewers at Snowflake Place are able to liaise with CFS workers, law enforcement and Victim Services in order to facilitate communication and increase cooperation as service providing partners. This secondary role should not be understated, as it can increase both formal and informal cross training between the service providers, which can result in a higher standard of service and more consistency for service recipients. The service providers who were interviewed described the forensic interviewers as providing a constant and familiar presence that improved the fluidity of the service process at Snowflake Place. The forensic interviewers were valued for more than their expertise in child forensic interviewing and helped unite the team of various service providers who work together at Snowflake Place.

There may be other CACs, in Canada and throughout the world, that either because of resources, facility size or geographical location cannot follow a true collocation model. It has been suggested that having forensic interviewers can mitigate the logistical challenges of not being collocated with other service providers due to the dynamic roles they play. In the case of Snowflake Place, these findings can be used to provide a comparison with the findings of the large, multi-site federal evaluation that is currently being conducted at CACs across Canada. It will be important to examine whether the forensic interviewers play such an important role in CACs where collocation does exist. For CACs where cooperation and communication between service providing partners is identified as being a challenge, expanding the roles of the forensic interviewers may also be seen as an option in order to improve this potential gap in how service providers work together. There is strong evidence supporting the numerous benefits to Snowflake Place that have been a direct impact of the forensic interviewers.

Snowflake Place has also been able to establish a high standard for service recipients in terms of their overall experience at the CAC and the ability to mitigate the trauma for children after they have been abused. It has been suggested that the single most important factor that determines whether a family perceives their experience at Snowflake Place as positive or not is the amount of communication they have received regarding information explaining the process and what to expect at the CAC. Findings from the interviews suggests that there are inconsistencies with how families are communicated with in regards to the services they will receive at Snowflake Place because of the variety of service providers and the inconsistency with service recipients' familiarity with different service providers and what they do. There is also evidence supporting that service providers should place more of an emphasis on understanding the trauma and negative experiences that families have gone through prior to coming to

Snowflake Place. This is important because it will help service providers understand how the past experiences of service recipients may affect these families and the types of interactions they have with service providers at Snowflake Place.

It was discovered that communication to service recipients often lacked because service providers were not certain how much information should be, or necessarily be, communicated to families. When speaking in front of families at Snowflake Place, service providers often used hushed tones out of respect for the seriousness of the situation, but this only added to the anxiety experienced by service recipients. Service recipients who received more information about what to expect at Snowflake Place or were more willing to ask questions and reported having a more positive experience compared to service recipients that received little information. This finding may change the approach at Snowflake Place towards a more open dialogue with families who are service recipients. It is important to understand what factors can increase the chance that service recipients perceive their experiences at a CAC as being positive in order to increase the likelihood that a positive experience occurs and decrease the possibility of retraumatizing families. The experiences of past service recipients at Snowflake Place demonstrate that their involvement in the child abuse investigation process is unfamiliar territory for most families and should be a consideration service providers make in all their interactions with families.

Evaluation Recommendations

The evaluation facilitator (researcher) has not created the recommendations listed below, these are all recommendations made by the service providers and service recipients in their interviews. When reviewing the interview data with the evaluation committee, the group determined that these were relevant and important recommendations and should be included in the evaluation report. Some of these recommendations have already begun to be planned for and

implemented by Snowflake Place staff and other primary intended users of the evaluation findings. The recommendations are:

- Examine the internal process at Snowflake Place for reviewing certain cases as they can benefit from the attendance of other frontline service providers.
- Host a local conference, as service providers would like those who work with Snowflake Place to get together, discuss and develop procedures, roles and consistent guidelines for services.
- Increase awareness and educate different service providers and their supervisors about the CAC model and about Snowflake Place. Many service providers stated there are still individuals and teams within their agencies that have never heard of Snowflake Place.
- Provide more information to service recipients about the process and what to expect when they arrive at Snowflake Place. More communication is necessary with service recipients at all stages of the process in order to have more positive experiences for families.
- Explore ways to make the referral process more efficient. The increase in RCMP referrals may create an added challenge that should be addressed systematically.
- Review the data collection system and start tracking the date of referral to Snowflake Place by law enforcement in order to assess the timeliness of services at Snowflake Place.

Study of the Utilization-Focused Evaluation Process

The utilization-focused evaluation approach used has had a significant impact on how the study was carried out as well as what evaluation questions were asked. The main tenet of utilization-focused evaluation is having all decisions pertinent to the evaluation design made by a group of key stakeholders that will be the primary users of the evaluation findings (Patton,

2012). The first challenge of employing this type of evaluation is educating the organization and potential primary users of the evaluation findings about the model itself. Program evaluation is becoming more and more important for non-profit organizations but the experiences of individuals within organizations is often limited in regards to different types of evaluation styles and ideologies. Evaluation is often perceived as being synonymous with consultation and many times the expectation is that a professional or expert comes into an organization and simply lays out all the things that can be improved on or are working well. Utilization-focused evaluation can be broken down into 17 specific steps; however, because this model provides the flexibility to adapt to any evaluation goal, there is an aspect of abstractness that must be overcome for those who are not yet familiar with this type of evaluation process.

The first two steps of the utilization-focused evaluation are to assess the readiness of the program for evaluation and to assess the competence of the evaluator to undertake a utilization-focused evaluation. These initial steps are often less formally examined, as the need for an evaluation and the logistics of finding a willing evaluator are a primary focus. In the case of this evaluation, the organization needed an evaluation to satisfy a funding requirement and the evaluator who had agreed to take on the project had been trained and experienced in utilization-focused evaluation. It can be argued that any organization is ready for utilization-focused evaluation, which has willing and committed stakeholders who are adequately open-minded about learning. This is because utilization-focused evaluation is not so much a specific type of evaluation as it is an approach to evaluation that may result in an eventual evaluation that satisfies whatever goals the organization has for itself.

It was necessary to convincingly explain why a utilization-focused evaluation would be the most desirable model to evaluate Snowflake Place, because there were many pre-prescribed

examples of how to evaluate a CAC available to choose from. It was important to explain to the evaluation committee that although the evaluation plan may eventually resemble one of the pre-designed models, it is important to be intentional in every decision regarding the evaluation plan in order to maximize the use of the findings. In this study, the main use of the evaluation findings was to provide an evaluation report to satisfy the funding requirements from the federal government. However, the stakeholders for Snowflake Place were quickly able to recognize that there was further potential than to simply carry out an imposed evaluation in order to provide a large evaluation report to their funder. The majority of meetings with the stakeholders took place at the front-end of the evaluation process as the focus of the evaluation had to be determined. There were specific meetings that were used to develop the overall evaluation questions, followed by an evaluation plan.

It was established from early on in the evaluation process that a full evaluation report would be produced because of the importance that funding agencies place on large, detailed documents. However long-form evaluation reports are not always the best way of conveying the findings of an evaluation, and they often require significant time and resources to produce, but do not guarantee that they will be read (Patton, 2012). The evaluation committee decided that an executive summary report (Appendix H) would be more likely to be read by stakeholders such as board members, service providing partners and potential funders. The researchers also disseminated the findings to the board of directors of Snowflake Place and a service delivery group representing multiple partners for the organization with formal presentations followed by an opportunity to answer any questions from the stakeholders. This was an important step to establish accountability that goes beyond producing a final report and disassociating with the study. This was also an important opportunity to answer any questions about the evaluation

design and include some background on utilization-focused evaluations to the key stakeholders of Snowflake Place.

The initial responses to the evaluation findings have been positive and reflect a shared attitude among key stakeholders that suggest there is genuine camaraderie between service providing partners who work with child victims of abuse and their families. The openness and willingness of these individuals was evident throughout the evaluation process as the key stakeholders who made up the evaluation committee devoted their time and energy to form a working group that saw the evaluation through its nearly two-year process. The group met six times over an eight-month span to initially create the evaluation plan and operationalize it. Despite the unfamiliarity with the utilization-focused evaluation model, there was little scepticism from the evaluation committee when members were told that they would be doing the main work of decision-making for the evaluation. Surprisingly, there was little tension and few contentious debates among evaluation committee members, considering they represented different service providers that had at times been challenged in coordinating their work together with the CAC. However, it was necessary to reassure the evaluation committee members to voice any concerns or needs for clarification they may have, as addressing the concerns would only strengthen the evaluation by ensuring it was accurate and relevant to those who would be using the findings.

There were two additional meetings that took place with the evaluation committee that were longer and required substantial input from the group. The first was a meeting to formulate the interview questions for both the service recipients and service providers and the second was to interpret the findings, once the interviews had been completed and transcribed. The latter meeting proved to require considerable time, and even though the researchers compiled and

conducted some preliminary coding and grouping, the data from well over 15 hours of interviewing took several hours for the group to examine. There was an emphasis placed on this step, as it is crucial for the evaluation committee to be involved in the interpretation of the findings. Some of the data produced simply reinforced ideas that had been discussed since Snowflake Place began operating, while other findings were surprising and needed to be discussed in order to determine their significance. Involving the intended users of the findings in interpreting the findings also takes the guesswork away from the researcher and avoids the chance that a finding may be overlooked, overemphasized or completely misinterpreted.

The utilization-focused evaluation presented two challenges only in that the model must be explained to the key stakeholders in order for it to be understood and accepted. Second, because the process is completely participatory, it can often take more time, than more basic evaluations, to complete due to the necessity to meet several times with multiple individuals of the evaluation committee. This logistical challenge was addressed by strategically creating the evaluation committee with enough stakeholders that if all could not be present for a meeting, there would be enough of a collective voice to represent the group, but not so many individuals that coordination and deliberation would be too complicated. In the end, email communication filled the gaps when individuals were not able to attend meetings, and adequate opportunities were provided to have the intended users of the findings voice their ideas and opinions throughout the different steps of the evaluation process. Ultimately, employing a utilization-focused evaluation provided an opportunity for learning and growth for those who were involved throughout the process. The involvement of the primary intended users of the findings also added to the validity of the findings for those who did not have direct involvement.

Challenges and Limitations

One limitation of this study was that it did not explore the component of cultural competency at Snowflake Place. Cultural competency is one of the main aspects of the CAC model and it would have been important to see what Snowflake Place has developed in this regard. One challenge of using the utilization-focused evaluation is that areas that are not identified or focused on by the key stakeholders are often overlooked. This was the case with examining the cultural competency of Snowflake Place. In order to be pragmatic other areas that were of more relevance to the evaluation committee were examined instead of cultural competency. The client demographics as well as the interviews with service recipients showed that there was cultural diversity among those that have received services at Snowflake Place. It may have been useful to examine this further to see if certain responses or points of view were consistent among those with similar cultural backgrounds. The practicality of working within time and resource constraints is always challenging when conducting research. This is especially true of participatory research such as that used in the utilization-focused evaluation framework and decisions had to be made about what to include in the evaluation and what to exclude.

Conclusion

Snowflake Place has maintained consistent growth in the services that they provide over the three years they have been operating. The trend indicates that the number of cases Snowflake Place receives will continue to increase until it has reached its capacity. The growth and changes seen in the first three years that Snowflake Place has been operating are significant. However, three years is not a long period of time considering how prolonged a criminal investigation and the subsequent legal processes can take. The overall impact Snowflake Place has had on the whole child abuse response system in Winnipeg and Manitoba is just beginning to be

understood. Further growth, monitoring and evaluation is necessary in order to develop Snowflake Place to a level where all children who have been abused in Manitoba can receive the same high quality level of services.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Snowflake Place for Children and Youth Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Committee

Cheryl Martinez (Executive Director)
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Diva Faria (Board Member)
Jennifer Short (Victim Services)
Laura Friesen (Child and Family Services)
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Introduction

The key stakeholders for Winnipeg’s child advocacy centre (CAC), Snowflake Place for Children and Youth (Snowflake Place), formed an evaluation committee that collaboratively developed the following evaluation plan. Snowflake Place is a non-profit charitable organization. Snowflake Place receives funding from the Province of Manitoba and Department of Justice Canada. This evaluation is a requirement of the funding agreements that Snowflake Place has with Manitoba and Justice Canada. The stakeholders involved in the evaluation committee that designed this evaluation plan include Snowflake Place’s Executive Director, the Executive Assistant, a Board member, a key service provider partner representing Victim Services, a key service provider partner representing the Child and Family Services (CFS) organization All Nations Coordinated Response Network (ANCR), and two evaluation facilitators. The evaluation plan was developed over a period of several months, particularly during several evaluation committee meetings (February 2, March 27, April 9, May 19 and May 27, 2015). During these meetings the evaluation committee discussed the evaluation and made decisions regarding it in order to prioritize and operationalize the evaluation questions and come up with an overall evaluation plan.

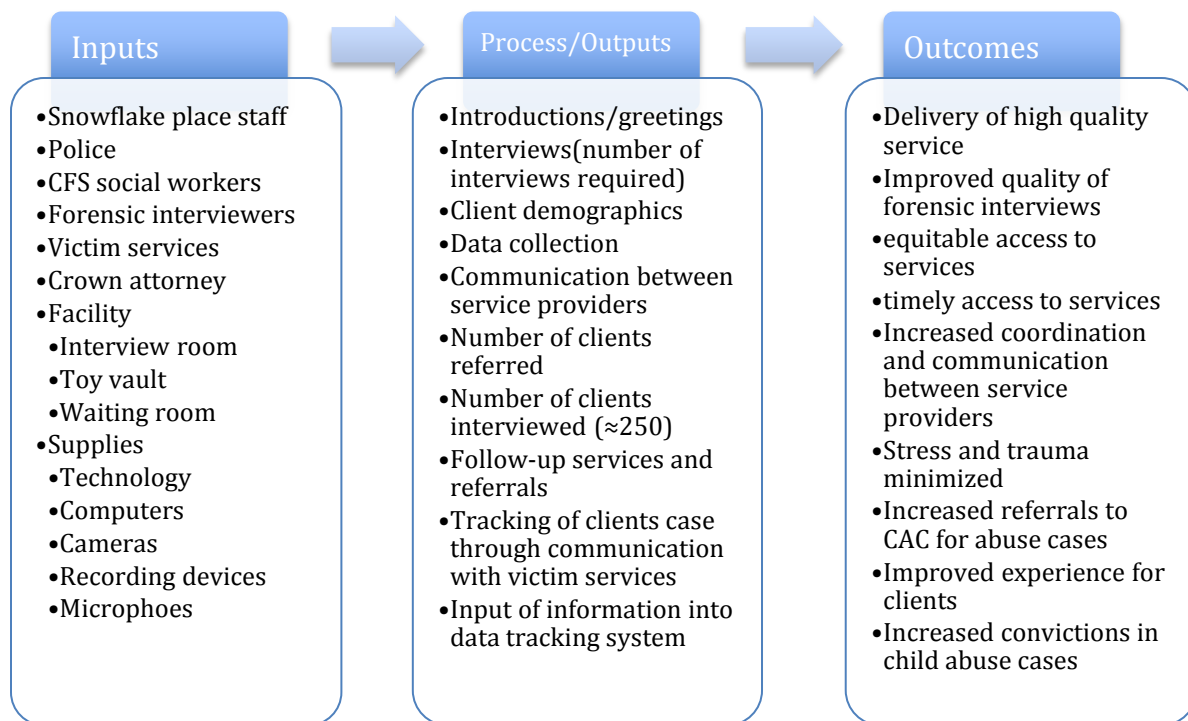
Snowflake Place for Children and Youth is a CAC that delivers a service model designed to provide a professional, culturally sensitive, child-oriented setting that brings together a multidisciplinary team to respond to allegations of child abuse (Burnside 2014; Newman, Dannenfelser & Pendleton, 2005). This model first originated in the United States in the mid 1980’s in order to reduce the trauma and stress on children that results from having to provide multiple interviews after allegations of abuse are made (Burnside, 2014; McDonald, Scrim, & Rooney, 2013; Faller & Palusci, 2007). CACs such as Snowflake Place accomplish this by improving the coordination of all service providers that are required to make contact with the child and their family during the investigative process. The multidisciplinary team that works at Snowflake Place includes law enforcement, social workers, victim service personnel and forensic interviewers (forensic interviewers are employees of Snowflake Place). The logic model on the subsequent page outlines the main elements of the program. The evaluation will address several questions that relate to roles, activities, outputs and short-term outcomes as they relate to Snowflake Place.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation will provide evidence to address four main evaluation questions:

- 1. How has the introduction of the two forensic interviewers impacted the quality of service at Snowflake Place?*
- 2. What is the experience of service recipients at Snowflake Place?*
- 3. How is the current referral process allowing Snowflake Place to:*
 - a. Provide equitable access?*
 - b. Provide timely access?*
 - c. Ensure non-duplication of interviews?*
 - d. Minimize stress and trauma for clients?*
- 4. Has Snowflake Place increased the capacity of service providers to coordinate their work regarding child abuse investigations? (How/Why)*

Snowflake Place Logic Model



Data Sources and Analysis

1. How has the introduction of the two forensic interviewers impacted the quality of service at Snowflake Place?

This question addresses actual activities that take place and outputs produced by the program, specifically as a result of the two forensic interviewers. This question also examines short-term outcomes of the program that are also a result of the two forensic interviewer positions. It will compare evidence from individuals who have over one year of experience with Snowflake Place and therefore have worked with the program prior to as well as after the introduction of the two

forensic interviewers. This question will address the rationale for the introduction of the two forensic interviewer positions that occurred and the outcomes that have come as a result.

Data sources

- Interviews with service providers
 - CFS social workers
 - Crown attorney
 - Snowflake Place staff
 - Victim services
 - Police

Analysis

- Qualitative data (written transcriptions of audiotaped interviews and/or notes taken during interviews) describing process, outputs and outcomes will be produced
- Data analysis will be conducted to examine whether any patterns and themes emerge regarding process, outputs and short-term outcomes that can be attributed directly to the introduction of the two forensic interviewers
- Data analysis will be conducted from forensic interview peer review results in order to examine whether there are any emerging trends in the forensic interviews following the introduction of the forensic interviewers

2. What is the experience of service recipients at Snowflake Place?

This question seeks to describe the experience of service recipients at Snowflake Place through the perspectives of service providing partners as well as client families themselves, specifically the parents/caregivers of children seen at the centre. Service providers working with Snowflake Place are directly responsible for delivering the outputs of the program and work directly with service recipients. Service recipients can speak directly of their perceived outcomes as a result of their experiences at Snowflake Place.

Data sources

- Interviews with service providers
 - CFS social workers
 - Victim Services
 - Police
 - Snowflake Place staff
 - Forensic interviewers
- Interviews with service recipients (caregivers/parents of children seen at Snowflake Place)
- Questionnaire that Snowflake Place may chose to implement with service recipients

Analysis

- Qualitative data describing outputs and outcomes as the relate to the experience of service recipients will be produced
- Statistics describing service recipients that have been interviewed will be produced
- Data analysis will examine patterns and themes describing the experience of service recipients from the view of service providers and service recipients themselves

- Demographic data describing service recipients will be used in conjunction to qualitative data to examine whether there are patterns or themes that can be used to explain the differences in the experiences of service recipients

3. To what extent is the current referral process allowing Snowflake Place to: provide equitable access, timely access, non-duplication of interviews and minimize stress/trauma?

This multi-faceted question will address process and outputs as they relate to Snowflake Place being able to provide equitable access to services, timely access to their services as well as to non-duplicate interviews with service recipients. The question will also look to examine the outcome of minimizing stress and trauma of service recipients.

Data sources

- Interviews with service providers
 - CFS social workers
 - Victim Services
 - Police
 - Snowflake Place staff
 - Forensic interviewers
- Interviews with service recipients (caregivers/parents of children seen at Snowflake Place)
- Existing data being collected
 - Demographic info
 - Service providers in attendance
 - Charges/types of abuse
 - Relationship (abuser/victim)
 - Number of victim interviews
 - Medical exam
 - Family of client in attendance

Analysis

- *Timely access*: examining data regarding the dates of when the referral was made to Snowflake Place to when the interview occurred at Snowflake Place to when charges are laid
- Statistics assessing how long this process takes and if it is delayed by Snowflake Place
- *Equitable access*: examining data from interviews with police on criteria for police referral to Snowflake Place
- Statistics describing single entry system will be produced
- Narratives describing actual practice of referral by police will be used to provide context to statistics
- *Non-duplication of interviews*: Statistics describing how many interviews clients & families have had will be produced
- Narratives from service recipients will be used to provide context for statistical results
- *Minimize stress/trauma*: qualitative data will be produced from interviews with clients; victims services; police; social workers
- Data will be analyzed for patterns and themes that provide evidence that stress and trauma is minimized as a result of Snowflake Place

4. Has Snowflake Place increased the capacity of service providers to coordinate their work with other systems regarding child abuse investigations? (Why or How?)

This question looks at the process and outputs of service providers communicating and coordinating their efforts in child abuse investigations. The question will also provide evidence on the outcome of service providers having an increased capacity to coordinate their work as a result of Snowflake Place.

Sources of data

- Interviews with service providers
 - CFS social workers
 - Victim Services
 - Police
 - Snowflake Place staff
 - Forensic interviewers

Analysis

- Statistics describing how many service providers are present for each interview will be produced
- Narratives from interviews with service providers will provide context to statistical results

Interview Specifics

20 Families	21 Service Providers
Neighbourhood (income level)	6 Police
Ethnicity (Aboriginal, newcomer, non-Aboriginal)	6 Social workers (ANCR/ongoing CFS)
Family structure (single parent, two parent, mixed)	4 Victim Services
Age of victim (preschool, school-aged, adolescent)	1 Crown attorney
Form of abuse (sexual, physical, other)	2 Snowflake Place staff
Relationship of victim to abuser	2 forensic interviewers
Charges brought forward or not	

Timeline

- Feedback from committee on evaluation plan → June 22nd 2015
- Evaluation plan complete → August 31st 2015
- Data collection → November 1st 2015
- Evaluation committee meeting → November 15th 2015
- Data collection complete → January 25th 2016
- Evaluation committee meeting → January 25th 2016
- Conduct data analysis → February & March 2016
- Evaluation committee meeting → March 15th 2016
- Evaluation committee meeting → April 15th 2016
- Evaluation report complete → May 15th 2016

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Service Providing Partners

Questions:

1. Please explain your role and responsibilities regarding your work with Snowflake Place for Children and Youth.
2. Please describe the forensic interviewing process as you have observed it at Snowflake Place.
3. What type of special training/supports have the forensic interviewers received for the specific roles?
4. In what ways have the services provided at Snowflake Place changed with the introduction of the forensic interviewer positions?
5. What changes and impact, if any, have you seen since the introduction of the forensic interviewers?
6. Please describe the current referral process at Snowflake Place.
7. What types of cases tend to be referred to Snowflake Place?
8. How much time does it take to get a family to Snowflake Place once they have been referred? (What factors/circumstances come into play to affect this?)
9. How many times is the child being interviewed when being referred to Snowflake Place?
10. Are there a reduced number of interviews as a result of being referred to Snowflake Place?
11. What, if anything, can be done to improve the current referral system?
12. Please describe your experiences working with Snowflake Place.
13. What is the process for sharing information/tracking/reviewing cases?
14. How has the communication and information sharing changed between service providers since Snowflake Place?
15. How has the coordination of services with service-providing partners changed since Snowflake Place?
16. Describe the benefits of working with Snowflake Place.
17. Describe the challenges you face(d) working with Snowflake Place.

Appendix C: Interview Questions for Non-Offending Caregiver Clients

Questions:

1. How did you feel coming to Snowflake Place? (How was the atmosphere/surroundings?)
2. How would you describe your experience at Snowflake Place?
3. Describe your experiences/interactions with the people at Snowflake Place.
4. How were you feeling before you came to Snowflake Place and how were you feeling when you left?
5. What did you like about Snowflake Place?
6. What did you not like about Snowflake Place?
7. How have the experiences at Snowflake Place impacted you and your family?
8. What, if anything, would you like to see changed or done differently at Snowflake Place?

Appendix D: Ethics Consent Letter



Research Ethics and Compliance
Office of the Vice-President (Research and International)

Human Ethics
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB
Canada R3T 2N2
Phone +204-474-7122
Fax +204-269-7173

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

January 26, 2016

TO: Marko Gjuric (Supervisor: Javier Mignone)
Principal Investigator

FROM: Lorna Guse, Chair
Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)

Re: Protocol #J2015:135
"Utilization-Focused Evaluation from Theory to Practice: A Case Study Evaluation of Winnipeg's Child Advocacy Centre, Snowflake Place for Children and Youth"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2). **This approval is valid for one year only and will expire on January 26, 2017.**

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- If you have funds pending human ethics approval, please mail/e-mail/fax (261-0325) a copy of this Approval (identifying the related UM Project Number) to the Research Grants Officer in ORS in order to initiate fund setup. (How to find your UM Project Number: <http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/mrt-faq.html#pr0>)
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Quality Management Office may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/orec/ethics/human_ethics_REB_forms_guidelines.html) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.

Appendix E: Information and Consent Form Key Service Providing Partners



UNIVERSITY **Department of Community Health Sciences**
OF MANITOBA Faculty of Health Sciences, College of Medicine

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION & CONSENT FORM

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by principal investigator, Marko Gjuric, a graduate student in the department of Community Health Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, College of Medicine at the University of Manitoba.

You are free to end your participation in this study at any time without consequence by telling the principal investigator in person, over the phone or by email. Should you withdraw from the project all your data will be destroyed and not used in the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. If you have any further concerns or questions, you can contact directly the graduate student's supervisor (contact information below) at any time and without the student's knowledge.

STUDY DETAILS

Study title: A Case Study Evaluation of Winnipeg's Child Advocacy Centre, Snowflake Place for Children and Youth

Principal Investigator: Marko Gjuric (umgjuric@myumanitoba.ca)

Research Supervisor: Dr. Javier Mignone (javier.mignone@umanitoba.ca)

Human Ethics Coordinator: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of Snowflake Place by conducting a mixed methods case study evaluation using the utilization-focused evaluation model. You will be asked about one or more of the following questions:

- *How has the introduction of the two forensic interviewers impacted the quality of service at Snowflake Place?*
- *What is the experience of service recipients at Snowflake Place?*

- *How is the current referral process allowing Snowflake Place to:*
 - *Provide equitable access?*
 - *Provide timely access?*
 - *Ensure non-duplication of interviews?*
 - *Minimize stress and trauma for clients?*
- *Has Snowflake Place increased the capacity of service providers to coordinate their work regarding child abuse investigations? (How/Why)*

Interview process: You will be asked to participate in one interview, with an expected length of 1-1.5 hours. If you consent, I will audiotape the interview so that I can accurately transcribe what you say, and to make sure I don't miss anything you say during the interview. You will have the opportunity to examine your transcribed interview in order to validate its accuracy.

Confidentiality: The principal investigator will remove any personal identifiers from the data. The specific information and data collected during the interview process will remain confidential. Personal identifiers will not be associated with the information that will be collected. Use of pseudonyms and random number assignment will be used to ensure all names, organizations, and agencies will be removed from association with the participants. Participants will not be referred to by name during the interview process to ensure anonymity on the interview audio recording. Due to the small number of agencies that partner with Snowflake Place it may be possible for participants to be identified from their responses. The data will be stored for five years by the principal investigator. Only the principal investigator and his supervisor will have access to the data, which will be securely stored in a locked office.

Potential risks and discomforts: a potential risk that may occur during the interview process may involve emotional distress. This emotional distress may occur due to the discussion of an emotionally sensitive topic them. If this does occur you have the option of not answering the question. You will also not be penalized for any unanswered questions and you can withdraw from the study all together at any time without penalty. We have provided contact information of resources to seek out support services if you experience any discomfort.

Potential benefits to participants and/or to society: Benefits of this study include contributing to the knowledge and understanding of how different child advocacy centres across Canada operate. This can improve the services provided to children and families.

Use of data: The data gathered from this interview will be used to write an internal evaluation report for Snowflake Place and will also be used for a master's thesis. If you accept your data to be used for the thesis, there is the possibility that the findings will be published in a peer-reviewed journal.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You are free to end your participation in this study without consequence at any time by telling the principal investigator in person, over the phone or by email. Should you withdraw from the project all your data will be destroyed and not used in the study. You may exercise the option of removing any of your data from the study. You may also choose not to answer any questions you

don't want to answer and still remain in the study. You may also choose to have your data omitted from the thesis and just used for the evaluation report. All data will be destroyed/erased permanently by 09/2021.

I have read all the information listed above. I confirm that the purpose of the research, study procedures, possible risks and discomforts as well as benefits have been explained to me. All my questions have been answered. By signing this form I express my willingness to participate in this study.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

The University of Manitoba Fort Garry Campus Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 474- 7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Print first name (do not include last name): _____

Middle name initial: _____

Phone: (____)_____ Email: _____

Please circle 'Y' (yes) or 'N' (no):

Do you agree to have your data used in the thesis report? Y/N

Do you agree to have your data used in the evaluation report? Y/N

Do you agree to be audiotaped? Y /N

I have received a copy of the Information and Consent Form? Y / N

I have received the contact information for support services? Y / N

I agree to be contacted in the future if further information is required after the interview? Y/N

I would like me to receive a 1-page summary of findings by 10/16? Y/N

How do you wish to receive the summary? () Email () Surface mail

Address: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F: Information and Consent Form Non-Offending Caregivers of Child Victims



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Department of Community Health Sciences
Faculty of Health Sciences, College of Medicine

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION & CONSENT FORM

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by principal investigator, Marko Gjuric, a graduate student in the department of Community Health Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, College of Medicine at the University of Manitoba.

You are free to end your participation in this study at any time without consequence by telling the principal investigator in person, over the phone or by email. Should you withdraw from the project all your data will be destroyed and not used in the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. If you have any further concerns or questions, you can contact directly the graduate student's supervisor (contact information below) at any time and without the student's knowledge.

STUDY DETAILS

Study title: A Case Study Evaluation of Winnipeg's Child Advocacy Centre, Snowflake Place for Children and Youth

Principal Investigator: Marko Gjuric (umgjuric@myumanitoba.ca)

Research Supervisor: Dr. Javier Mignone (javier.mignone@umanitoba.ca)

Human Ethics Coordinator: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of Snowflake Place by conducting a mixed methods case study evaluation using the utilization-focused evaluation model. You will be asked a series of questions that relate to one or more of the following evaluation questions:

- *How has the introduction of the two forensic interviewers impacted the quality of service at Snowflake Place?*

- *What is the experience of service recipients at Snowflake Place?*
- *How is the current referral process allowing Snowflake Place to:*
 - *Provide equitable access?*
 - *Provide timely access?*
 - *Ensure non-duplication of interviews?*
 - *Minimize stress and trauma for clients?*
- *Has Snowflake Place increased the capacity of service providers to coordinate their work regarding child abuse investigations? (How/Why)*

Compensation for participation: You will be compensated \$30 in order cover the costs of childcare for one hour as well as parking and gas, or bus costs so that you may attend the interview.

Interview process: You will be asked to participate in one interview, with an expected length of 1-1.5 hours. If you consent, I will audiotape the interview so that I can accurately transcribe what you say, and to make sure I don't miss anything you say during the interview. You will have the opportunity to examine your transcribed interview in order to validate its accuracy.

Confidentiality: The principal investigator will remove any personal identifiers from the data. The specific information and data collected during the interview process will remain confidential. Personal identifiers will not be associated with the information that will be collected. Participants will not be referred to by name during the interview process to ensure anonymity on the interview audio recording. The data will be stored for five years by the principal investigator. Only the principal investigator and his supervisor will have access to the data, which will be securely stored in a locked office.

Potential risks and discomforts: a potential risk that may occur during the interview process may involve emotional distress. This emotional distress may occur due to the discussion of an emotionally sensitive topic them. If this does occur you have the option of not answering the question. You will also not be penalized for any unanswered questions and you can withdraw from the study all together at any time without penalty. We have provided contact information of resources to seek out support services if you experience any discomfort.

Potential benefits to participants and/or to society: Benefits of this study include contributing to the knowledge and understanding of how different child advocacy centres across Canada operate. This can improve the services provided to children and families.

Use of data: The data gathered from this interview will be used to write an internal evaluation report for Snowflake Place and will also be used for a master's thesis. If you accept your data to be used for the thesis, there is the possibility that the findings will be published in a peer-reviewed journal.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You are free to end your participation in this study without consequence at any time by telling the principal investigator in person, over the phone or by email. Should you withdraw from the

project all your data will be destroyed and not used in the study. You may exercise the option of removing any of your data from the study. You may also choose not to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. You may also choose to have your data omitted from the thesis and just used for the evaluation report. All data will be destroyed/erased permanently by 09/2021.

I have read all the information listed above. I confirm that the purpose of the research, study procedures, possible risks and discomforts as well as benefits have been explained to me. All my questions have been answered. By signing this form I express my willingness to participate in this study.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

The University of Manitoba Fort Garry Campus Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 474- 7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Print first name (do not include last name): _____
Middle name initial: _____
Phone: (____) _____ Email: _____

Please circle 'Y' (yes) or 'N' (no):

Do you agree to have your data used in the thesis report? Y/N

Do you agree to have your data used in the evaluation report? Y/N

Do you agree to be audiotaped? Y /N

I have received a copy of the Information and Consent Form? Y / N

I have received the contact information for support services? Y / N

I agree to be contacted in the future if further information is required after the interview? Y/N

I would like me to receive a 1-page summary of findings by 10/16? Y/N

How do you wish to receive the summary? () Email () Surface mail

Address: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix G: List of Support Services for Participants

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Mobile Crisis Service

Phone: (204) 940-1781

Family Dynamics

401-393 Portage Avenue (Portage Place)

Winnipeg, MB, R3B 3H6

Phone: (204) 947-1401

Email: info@familydynamics.ca

Klinik Community Health

870 Portage Avenue

Winnipeg, MB, R3G 0P1

Phone: (204) 784-4090

www.supportline.ca

Mount Carmel Clinic

886 Main Street

Winnipeg, MB, R2W 5L4

Phone: (204) 582-2311

Email: info@mountcarmel.ca

New Directions for Children, Youth Adults and Families

500-717 Portage Ave.

Winnipeg, MB, R3G 0M8

Phone: (204) 786-7051

Women's Health Clinic

419 Graham Avenue, Unit A

Winnipeg, MB, R3C 0M3

Phone: (204) 947-1517

Toll-free: 1-866-947-1517

TTY: 204-956-0385

Email: whc@womenshealthclinic.org

Appendix H: Snowflake Place Evaluation Executive Summary 2016



SNOWFLAKE PLACE EVALUATION 2016 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared by: Marko Gjuric September, 2016

About Snowflake Place

Intro

Every year there are over 500 allegations of child abuse made in Winnipeg, and about half of these cases are referred to Winnipeg's child advocacy centre (CAC), Snowflake Place for Children and Youth. Operational since 2013, Snowflake Place for Children and Youth (Snowflake Place) follows the CAC model that originated in Huntsville, Alabama in 1984, in order to respond to allegations of child abuse (Faller & Palusci, 2007). The model uses a multidisciplinary team of law enforcement, social workers, forensic interviewers and victim services personnel in order to consistently respond to allegations of child abuse in a comprehensive, culturally competent and child-focused manner (Newman, Dannenfelser & Pendleton, 2005). The main goal of CACs such as Snowflake Place is to minimize the trauma to child victims/witnesses as well as their families by handling allegations of abuse with a systematic and coordinated response (Walsh, Jones & Swiecicki, 2014).

History

The formation of Winnipeg's CAC began in 2005 with a feasibility study initiated by the Manitoba Government. Soon after, a working group was created, comprised of representatives from key stakeholder groups such as police, child and family services (CFS), victim services and multiple levels of government. This group met from 2006 to 2012 in order to

develop the delivery model and secure funding (Burnside, 2014). In 2010 the federal government increased funding to support victims through the creation and enhancement of CACs across Canada (\$5.25 million over five years) and announced additional funding resources in 2012 (\$5 million over five years) (McDonald et al. 2013). With both provincial and federal funding approved in 2012, the Winnipeg Child Advocacy Centre was established in January 2013 and officially opened its doors.

Model

Snowflake Place currently operates under a single entry referral system, where law enforcement is able to refer specific cases to the organization. There will generally be an allegation made to a third party (non-offending caregiver, teacher, social worker, etc.) that is serious enough to warrant notifying the police. The police will then determine whether there is enough evidence, or the possibility of gathering enough evidence, to proceed with the investigation. Snowflake Place does not have the capacity to handle all of the child abuse cases in Winnipeg but when cases are referred to it, it attempts to get the child and family in for the forensic interview as soon as possible. Snowflake Place has also started accepting referrals from rural Manitoba.

Snowflake Place Evaluation 2016

Background

There has been limited research on CACs and even fewer experimental or quasi-experimental studies to find empirical evidence that supports the CAC model. CACs in Canada are funded by their respective province as well as federally through Justice Canada and are required to complete regular evaluations. Following its first year of operation, Snowflake Place employed a program monitoring or process evaluation, consistent with guidelines developed by The National Institute of Justice in the United States. Linda Burnside, the evaluator, summarized the data regarding children and families seen at Snowflake Place and conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with individuals from partner agencies. The purpose of this program monitoring evaluation was to examine the CAC's strengths and challenges following its first year of operation. Recommendations from the evaluation, such as the establishment of forensic interviewers, have since been put in place at Snowflake Place, and the organization required a second evaluation to examine their outcomes in terms of goal attainment and conformity to CAC standards (Burnside, 2014). By using a utilization-focused evaluation that involved the primary intended users of the findings making decisions about the entire evaluation process, it is more likely that the findings will be used for more than just to satisfy a funding requirement.

Relevance

This is a unique study because it used a utilization-focused evaluation that was completely participatory and collaborative for the key stakeholders of the organization. This was not simply an evaluation but a study that used an evaluation research approach. No formal research on CACs in Canada has been conducted and published, and Canadian CACs have relied on information from research conducted in the United States and other countries such as Sweden (McDonald et al. 2013; Rasmussen, 2011). Currently there is a national multi-site study being conducted by Proactive Information Services Inc. through the Department of Justice Canada to better understand how CACs across Canada are (Department of Justice Canada, 2015). The national multi-site study will be completed in 2017. This evaluation report can be used to complement the data from the national multi-site study and for comparative purposes. In Canada there is no governing body such as the United States National Children's Alliance (NCA), which is why all Canadian CACs operate uniquely. Research suggests that it is important to understand how each CAC operates because there is no single best model and understanding how each organization developed to suit the unique needs of their communities (Faller & Palusci, 2007). By increasing the understanding of the unique CAC model in Winnipeg, it will add to the collective knowledge of CACs across Canada.

Evaluation Methods

Design

A utilization-focused evaluation was used to systematically collect information about Snowflake Place that will guide future decisions about the program. This evaluation approach creates a personal working relationship between the evaluation facilitators and the primary intended users of the evaluation findings (Patton, 2012). In this study the evaluation co-facilitators, the author and advisor, from the University of Manitoba, and the primary intended users of the evaluation were the stakeholders that were part of the evaluation committee. Utilization-focused evaluation follows a systematic approach that can be broken down into specific steps, yet it is dynamic and flexible enough to adapt to the individual needs of the primary intended users (Patton, 2012). Utilization-focused evaluation ensures that regardless of the stage in the evaluation process, there is a deliberate focus on the intended use of the evaluation findings. This system of evaluation ensures input from the stakeholders in all decisions throughout the entire process of the evaluation.

Methods

The CAC model, such as that of Snowflake Place, has certain innate assumptions about the cause and effect relationships the program will have on service recipients (Hartley, Mullings, & Marquart, 2013). These assumptions can be attributed to the program's validity and are known as the program's theory of

change (Mignone, 2015). A mixed methods utilization-focused case study approach has been used to evaluate Snowflake Place's effectiveness. The mixed methods approach combined qualitative data from 20 semi-structured interviews with key agency partners and 10 from the parents/caregivers of children seen at Snowflake Place with the quantitative data used to gather demographic and statistical descriptions of the program processes and service recipients.

Process

The evaluation plan was developed over a period of several months, particularly during several evaluation committee meetings (February 2, March 27, April 9, May 19, May 27 and September 9 2015). During these meetings the evaluation committee discussed the evaluation and made decisions regarding it in order to prioritize and operationalize the evaluation questions and come up with an overall evaluation plan. The evaluation committee then met January 24, 2016 to decide on the questions for the semi-structured interviews. The final meeting took place June 7, 2016 in order for the evaluation committee to interpret the findings from the semi-structured interviews and decide how the quantitative data would be interpreted. These steps ensured that the evaluation committee was part of every decision during the evaluation process so that the findings are relevant and utilized to guide the development of the CAC.

Evaluation Committee/Questions

Evaluation Committee

Cheryl Martinez (Executive Director)
Marni Carlson (Executive Assistant)
Diva Faria (Board Member)
Jennifer Short (Victim Services)
Laura Friesen (Child and Family Services)
Marko Gjuric (University of Manitoba)
Javier Mignone (University of Manitoba)

This evaluation committee comprised of stakeholders that are also the primary intended users of the evaluation findings made all decisions regarding the evaluation design and process.

Evaluation Questions

1. *How has the introduction of the two forensic interviewers impacted the quality of service at Snowflake Place?*
2. *What is the experience of service recipients at Snowflake Place?*
3. *How is the current referral process allowing Snowflake Place to:*
 - a. *Provide equitable access?*
 - b. *Provide timely access?*
 - c. *Ensure non-duplication of interviews?*
 - d. *Minimize stress and trauma for clients?*
4. *Has Snowflake Place increased the capacity of service providers to coordinate their work regarding child abuse investigations? (How/Why)*

Data Gathering

This evaluation for Snowflake Place was conducted between February 2015 and June 2016. The evaluation consisted of a review of the demographic and case data for all three years that the CAC has been in operation (April 1, 2013-March 31, 2016). The data also came from semi-structured interviews with 20 key service-providers (SP1-20) of Snowflake Place and 10 interviews with service recipients (SR1-10), which are the non-offending caregivers of children that have been Snowflake Place. Each of the overall evaluation questions was addressed by one or more of the specific interview questions as well as any quantitative data that may help explain it.

Findings: Data

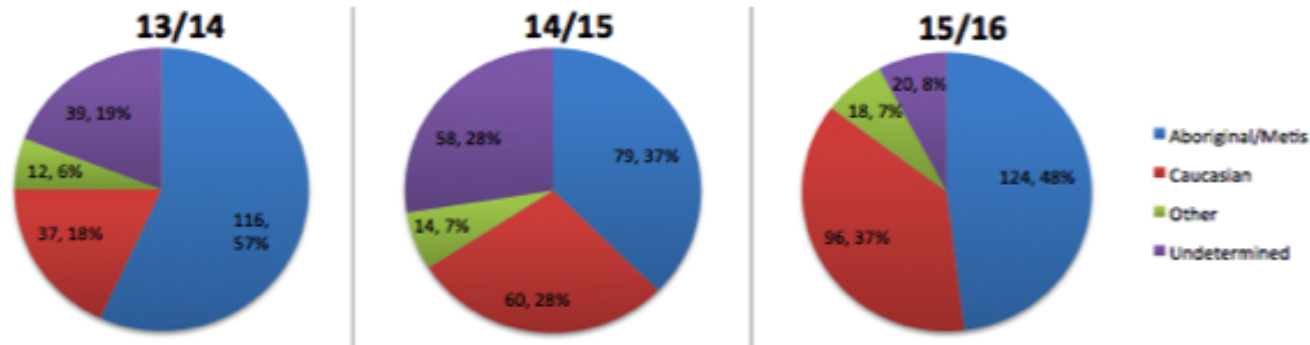
Snowflake Place was able to see an increase in the number of cases that were referred to them over their three years of operation. The average age of children interviewed at the CAC is 9.4 years. Snowflake Place has consistently received just over 200 referrals from Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) annually. The increase in referrals in 15/16 is a direct result of RCMP

Number of Child Interviews at Snowflake Place per Year	
Years	Total
13/14	204
14/15	211
15/16	258
3 Year Total	673

Victim Interview Conducted by	
Year	Total
13/14	204
WPS	204
14/15	211
SPFIs	33
WPS	178
15/16	258
SPFIs	213
WPS	36
Interview Scheduled	9
3 Year Totals	673

Although, the number of families referred to Snowflake by WPS has stayed consistent, the number of interviews conducted by WPS has drastically decreased since the introduction of the forensic interviewers at Snowflake Place. All RCMP referred cases are interviewed by the Forensic interviewers.

Victim Reported Ethnicity by Year at Snowflake Place



Findings: Data Continued

Aboriginal/Metis and Caucasian are the two most represented groups among children interviewed at Snowflake Place. Girls are more likely to be interviewed at Snowflake Place and this is most noticeable in the 13+ age group. In the three years of operation, only seven out of 673 children have had more than one forensic interview at Snowflake Place.

Year	Age (Years)	Male	Female	Transgender
13/14	Total	82	122	0
	0-5 years	20	26	
	6-12 years	52	60	
	13-17 years	9	34	
	18+	1	2	
14/15	Total	79	131	1
	0-5 years	25	26	
	6-12 years	38	69	
	13-17 years	16	34	1
	18+	0	2	
15/16	Total	77	180	1
	0-5 years	19	25	
	6-12 years	41	90	
	13-17 years	16	62	1
	18+	1	3	

Those accused of child abuse are more likely to be men that are either family of, or known to the victims. Sexual abuse is the most prevalent type of incident referred to Snowflake Place. Annually, slightly over 50% of all cases referred to Snowflake Place have charges laid against the accused. About 20% of children seen at Snowflake receive a medical exam.

Nature of Incident by Year	
Year	Total
13/14	204
Sexual	130
Physical	57
Other	15
Sexual & Physical	2
14/15	211
Sexual	131
Physical	70
Other	10
15/16	258
Sexual	195
Physical	47
Other	16
Total Number of Incidents	673

Findings: Question 1 & 2

Question 1: Forensic Interviewers

A recommendation that emerged from Snowflake Place's first evaluation, was hiring forensic interviewers (Burnside, 2014). An important focus of the present evaluation has been to explore how the introduction of the two forensic interviewers has impacted the quality of service at Snowflake Place. All of the service providers who were interviewed agreed that both forensic interviewers at Snowflake Place conducted high quality interviews. Consistency in technique, style, neutrality, thoroughness, as well as interviews that did not have any leading questions were all stated as how the forensic interviews had impacted the quality of service provided at Snowflake Place. An unexpected outcome that emerged from the interviews with the service providers was how the forensic interviewers were seen to facilitate a lot of the communication and collaboration amongst the multi-disciplinary team. The fact that the forensic interviewers are able to create avenues promoting interpersonal communication that is less formal, has led to more team unity and better coordination of services. One of the roles of the forensic interviewers has been to coordinate with the service providers from the entire multi-disciplinary team in order to try to have as many present for the forensic interviews. This has had an impact beyond just the working relationship of the service providers as service providers are able to establish an in-person connection with families earlier than with the previous system.

Question 2: Service Recipients

The service providers at Snowflake Place can sometimes gauge how a family feels about their experience at the CAC by their mood and demeanour, as well as by the nature of their interactions. To date, Snowflake Place had never asked service recipients about their experiences at the CAC. The single most important factor mentioned by service recipients as determining whether a family had a positive experience at Snowflake Place or not was the amount of information they were provided ahead of time about the process. Most service recipients reported being quite anxious and under stress when coming to Snowflake Place and anything said to them felt like some kind of reassurance. Considering the nature of the incidents that bring families to Snowflake Place, it is no wonder that caregivers are already fearful and on edge when bringing their children in for the interview. Interestingly, all the service recipients interviewed, even those that described their own experience as being negative, stated that the experience of their child(ren) was an overall positive one. It is important that service providers keep in mind each family's personal history and past experiences that may affect how they perceive their time at Snowflake Place. There is a need to standardize the process by which families are communicated with, in regards to the process and what to expect at Snowflake Place. Overall, Snowflake Place is successful in creating a positive experience for most families and their children, and can still work to continue to improve the process, as well how it is communicated to those involved.

Findings: Question 3 & 4

Question 3: Referral Process

The current referral process at Snowflake Place actually differs for the two service providers that make direct referrals (WPS/RCMP). WPS use an online, shared calendar to automatically book timeslots for families to come in to be interviewed. RCMP officers call the centre to discuss what a convenient time is and make the referral over the phone. WPS are able to book and confirm their interview time immediately and conveniently. However, this system does not always lend itself for adequate time to communicate with other service providers that should be present for the interview in order to maintain fidelity to the CAC model. RCMP officers work in smaller communities with fewer social workers, so have closer working relationships due to working together frequently. Equitable and timely access, are the two main factors that are considered when evaluating the referral process at Snowflake Place. The quantitative data showed that over 80% of all cases referred to the CAC have the forensic interview done within 30 days of when the abuse is first reported. When looking at year 15/16 data between service recipients identifying as Aboriginal/Metis and Caucasian, the average number of days between when abuse was first reported and when the interview occurred were 26.1 and 24 respectively. It is necessary for the forensic interviewers to conduct high quality interviews that are clear, concise and complete, so that children do not need to be unnecessarily interviewed multiple times. These interviews are devoid of leading questions and are conducted in a manner that is appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child.

Question 4: Coordinated Response

The experiences of service providers who have worked with Snowflake Place have been overwhelmingly positive. An area that has been emphasized by many service providers is the increase in training opportunities, both formal and informal, since Snowflake Place opened. The forensic interviewers also are constantly attending training and professional development courses to stay updated with best practices for child forensic interviewing. The forensic interviewers also regularly perform peer-review evaluations on each other. The important roles that the forensic interviewers play in facilitating informal communication with the other service providers cannot be understated. The process for sharing information, tracking cases and also reviewing them is completely on the onus of the individual that is seeking the information. Each service provider knows who to call for what piece of information and the forensic interviewers often act as brokers for that communication. Service providers stated that the process for communication is less formal, but more open than previously, before Snowflake Place. Regular team huddle meetings occur and service providers are given an environment where they can feel comfortable to ask for details of the investigation or case. Snowflake Place has a flow chart of the ideal process for how service is delivered, although there an increased effort is needed to make this flowchart universally shared with service providers. The more that service providers build working relationships with each other and develop trust, the more there is a sense that everyone is working together on the same investigation.

Recommendations & Discussion

Recommendations:

The evaluation facilitator has not created the recommendations listed below, these are all recommendations made by service providers and service recipients in their interviews. When reviewing the interview data with the evaluation committee, the group determined that these were relevant and important and should be included in the evaluation report.

- The internal process at Snowflake Place for reviewing certain cases can benefit from attendance of other frontline service providers.
- Service providers would like to see a local conference of those who work with Snowflake Place, to get together and discuss procedures, roles and develop consistent guidelines for services.
- Raise awareness and educate different service providers and their supervisors about the CAC model and about Snowflake Place. Many service providers stated there are still individuals and teams within their agencies that have never heard of Snowflake Place.
- Provide more information to service recipients once they arrive at Snowflake Place about the process and what to expect. More communication is necessary with service recipients at all stages of the process in order to have more positive experiences for families.
- Explore ways to make the referral process more efficient. The increase in RCMP referrals may create an added challenge that should be addressed systematically.
- Review the data collection system and start tracking the date of referral to Snowflake Place by law enforcement in order to assess the timeliness of services at Snowflake Place.

Discussion:

The evaluation has shown that Snowflake Place has established a high quality of services that maintain fidelity to the CAC model. Although some of the results were unexpected, the impacts that Snowflake Place has had on service providers dealing with child abuse investigations has been overwhelmingly positive. Snowflake Place has also been able to establish a high standard for service recipients in terms of their overall experience at the CAC and the ability to mitigate the trauma for children after they have been abused. Snowflake Place has maintained consistent growth in the services that they provided, over the three years they have been operating. The trend indicates that Snowflake Place will continue to increase in the number of cases they receive until they have reached their capacity. The growth and changes seen in the first three years that Snowflake Place has been operating are significant. However, three years is not a long period of time considering how lengthy a criminal investigation and the subsequent legal processes can take. The overall impact Snowflake Place has had on the whole child abuse response system in Winnipeg and Manitoba is just beginning to be understood. Further growth, monitoring and evaluation is necessary in order to develop Snowflake Place to a level where all children that have been abused in Manitoba can receive the same high quality level of services.

***For full evaluation report please email:
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