

**BENEFITS OF BLOCK FUNDING**

Moving to block funding will create improvements for Manitoba children and families, child welfare agencies, authorities and the province.

**Children and Families**

The current funding model is focused, sometimes exclusively, to serving the needs of children in care, which means that preventative and supportive programs can be unavailable or under-resourced when children or families need them. In some cases, parents have had to voluntarily place their child in care to access the supports they need.

A move to block funding will encourage and improve access to support and services from Manitoba Child and Family Services (CFS) agencies across the province, without the requirement to enter the child welfare system. With a shift in focus to accessible and culturally appropriate prevention services such as respite, family supports and financial assistance for household, health and wellness expenses, vulnerable families and children will have more resources to help maintain stability, family unity and support for their needs as they change over time.

**Agencies**

There are 24 child welfare agencies in Manitoba, responsible for providing direct services to children, youth and families. The current funding model is based on the number of children in care, which limits the ability of agencies to invest in prevention and early intervention, and incentivizes apprehensions in order to provide services.

Block funding will allow agencies to proactively implement programs to meet the needs of children and families, with a focus on family preservation and reunification whenever possible. Agencies will benefit from the ability to align decisions on case planning and service delivery more closely with the financial budget and funding provided to them from their authority. Predictable funding from authorities over the next three years, in comparison to receiving funds from the province on a remittance basis, reduces red tape and administrative burdens. This helps to focus resources to making better decisions on front-line services, where it is needed the most

## **Authorities**

Agencies operate under the oversight of one of four authorities in Manitoba – the First Nations of Manitoba CFS Authority, the General Authority, the Métis CFS Authority and the Southern First Nation Network of Care. The Child and Family Services Authorities Act, enacted in 2003, created these authorities to be responsible for the overall leadership and management of all child welfare agencies, including funds allocated to them by government, but to date, that has not been fully realized.

Authorities currently manage their operational and staffing budgets, but have not been given the opportunity to manage the budget for services provided directly to children and families. Instead, agencies currently invoice the province for services they provide or receive for children independent of their authority and budget. Block funding will strengthen financial accountability by putting this control and decision-making with the authorities, in alignment with government policy and objectives. Predictable three-year funding with flexibility and regular agency funding reviews will help authorities create efficiencies and direct funding when and where it is needed the most, reducing red tape and other administrative burdens. This model supports a closer relationship between authorities, agencies and the communities they serve.

## **Manitoba Families**

The province's child and family services division is part of Manitoba Families. It provides funding and oversight to the child welfare system, as well as other services and supports. Moving to block funding will delegate autonomy and governance as intended in legislation. It shifts the current government practice from processing invoices to functions that better support authorities and agencies' efforts to align services with shared objectives of prevention, intervention and reunification.

By focusing on accountability, financial oversight, provincial policies, guidelines and other broader initiatives, Manitoba Families will support authorities and help to deliver better results and outcomes for children, youth and families.