Figure 11.8a. COSTS OF POOR QUALITY AND PRODUCTIVITY: Service Industries

EM9033a: The Globe and Mail, May 1, 1990, page A16

Quality control 'not something big in social services'

Monitoring of children appears to have gaps

BY SEAN FINE
The Globe and Mail

Mom was a cocaine addict and her two children were under 10. Concerned for the children's welfare, staff at the area's children's aid society referred the case to the agency's protection branch.

Yet it took two months for a social worker to visit them – and their file shows only that single visit for an entire year. There was no other entry to tell what happened to the family.

The case is one of several cited as showing violation of government policies and exposure of children to danger in a shocking 1988 report on the Children's Aid Society of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry in Eastern Ontario. The report, stamped confidential, was obtained by the Globe and Mail under Ontario's freedom-of-information law.

"Once you start to upturn every rock, you're going to find things", said Lenore Jones, a program supervisor with the Ottawa branch of the Community and Social Services Ministry who is helping monitor improvements undertaken by the agency since the report was made.

But how many such rocks are being turned over for children in the care or supervision of the state? Who keeps an eye on the substitute parent when that parent is the state itself?

While the answer varies from province to province, gaps appear to exist in the patchwork of attempts to monitor the quality of service provided to children in state care. Where monitoring is done, it is usually not independent of the government.

- In Ontario, a four-member government review team checks the files of the 4,500 Crown wards (children in permanent care until 18) every two years. The team works for the same department that finances the child-welfare system. For most children in temporary care, numbering about 5,500, no systematic review is carried out.

Ontario has an independent body that conducts mandatory reviews of children in institutions.

"The argument has always been that the money we put into reviewing non-Crown-ward kids is money that could be going into service", said Suzanne Herbert, a senior government official. Ontario Auditor Douglas Archer has called for reviews of children in temporary care.

> **Case 9079**
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> *This was a case of alleged physical abuse of a 2-year-old boy by the child's father. The child had a broken arm. The child was seen 3 days after the referral. The mother denied the allegation indicating that the child fell down the stairs while in the care of the father. She herself was not present at the time. The mother indicated that the 5-year-old daughter witnessed the accident. The investigator accepted the statement of the mother and that of the 5-year-old child and did not pursue the investigation further as outlined in the Ministry Standards and Guidelines for the Management of Child Abuse Cases. The police were not involved, the attending physician was not contacted, and the father was not interviewed. No further action appears to have taken place until seven months later when a niece complained of physical abuse by the same alleged perpetrator. This child had significant bruising on her legs. She indicated that the five-year-old daughter had also been abused by her father. The case worker examined the five-year-old who had extensive bruising on her arms, buttocks and both thighs. The child indicated that she did not know how the injuries to herself occurred. Given the extent of the injuries and the background to this case, the child's statement could not reasonably resolve the abuse allegation. However no further action was taken at that time. A follow-up visit was made 3 days later but again no further investigative action was taken. The case received no further contact until 4 months later when the social worker visited in order to close the case.*
>
> **Example #3**

Excerpt from Ontario Government Report on the Children's Aid Society of Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry

- In Nova Scotia, social workers must file annual reports to the government on each child in permanent care, but just one employee reviews these reports. "We may not be aware of every violation", said Trevor Townsend, director of the government's child and adolescent services. "We have over 1,000 children in permanent care and custody. There's only 365 days in the year. It's literally impossible to keep track of each kid from head office." The government recognizes that extra resources are needed and will probably add them, said Martha Crowe, an administrative officer with the Department of Community Services.

- In Saskatchewan, no regular review of the care of Crown wards is conducted, but the government has begun auditing a sampling of the files of all children in care. Over the next two to three years, it expects to audit all six regional offices through which the government provides care.

- In Alberta, a new quality-assurance program will begin in September. A team of six social work supervisors borrowed from government offices (the teams will change every six months) will audit samplings of files, working their way through all 52 government offices that provide child-welfare services.

"We're not looking to blame people when things are going wrong. We want to know why things are going wrong," said John McDermott, director of the program.

Mr. McDermott said Alberta looked across Canada and in the United States for a review model, but "we weren't able to find one. Quality assurance isn't something that's big in social services."

One model being considered by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies is accreditation, in which the performance of all 54 societies in the province would be measured against certain standards for service.

Mary McConville, the association's executive director, said Ontario currently has no such standards, although it has many provisions setting out how cases are to be managed.

Ms. Herbert said that "if we're talking about quality standards, the measurement of what's effective, what helps grow healthy kids, I would agree with her. That's something that

(*continued overleaf*)

no social service system, at least to my knowledge, has been good at doing."

The Metro Toronto Children's Aid Society is one of several Canadian agencies that belong to the Child Welfare League of America, which has a rigorous accreditation and review process.

"Human nature is such that you tend to feel that what you're doing is probably best unless you're exposed to something different," said Bruce Rivers, the society's executive director.

Vaughan Dowie, president of Quebec's Youth Protection Committee, a government body, said, "A case might be made for a Canadian accreditation body that's able to function in both languages."

Some child-welfare experts say government monitoring, while important, should be supplemented by outside reviews. They say the purpose of reviews should be to measure the quality of care against the highest standards – not against what is possible given the limits of government funds.

"It's just important to have another point of view because a lot of these kids do not have – outside of the system – any adult who is looking in on them," said Dick Barnhorst, executive director of the Child, Youth and Family Policy Research Centre, a Toronto-based nonprofit group.

"It's easy for kids to get lost in the system."

Spurred by such incidents as the 1984 suicide of Richard Cardinal, who hanged himself from a tree while living in his 16th home in 13 years of Alberta state care, a variety of new checks and balances have been created. Children's rights have been strengthened, complaint processes have been set up, native child-welfare groups financed and children's advocates or ombudsmen established.

Provinces generally require that each child's plan of care be updated every 90 days. As well, children in temporary care are taken back to court if their wardship is to be renewed.

But reviews conducted in Ontario show that gaps can still exist between policy and practice.

For example, the Ontario government policy requires that each child's plan be updated every 90 days and that social workers discuss each plan with a supervisor every 90 days. However, a review in 1989 found more than 1,000 violations of these requirements in 1,361 files.

The review of the child protection policies of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry CAS, which was conducted after a court case drew attention to the agency, found "a very casual approach to the management of high-risk cases .... which could in time lead to a tragedy."

Some child-welfare professionals say it is difficult to know how many societies in Ontario are making the same mistakes.

"I have no way of knowing, and I don't think the government does, as to whether it's rampant across the system or it's related to the one agency," said Ross Dawson, director of the Toronto-based Institute for the Prevention of Child Abuse and coauthor of the report on the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry CAS.

Tom O'Brien, executive director of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry CAS, said he supports the monitoring of his and other agencies. "You have to be sure that what you say you're doing, in fact, you are doing"

Last in a series

1 What definition(s) of quality, as it applies in the area of child-welfare services, are given in the article EM9033a reprinted overleaf on page 11.39 and above? Identify explicitly the information in the article that you use as the basis of your answer.
- What methods of *promoting* and of *assessing* the delivery of high-quality services are mentioned in the article? Deal separately with the two aspects and, again, identify your source(s) explicitly.
  - Outline the likely consequences of poor-quality service(s) in the area of child welfare.

2 Quality is often difficult to *measure* – measuring the quality of child-welfare services is a case in point. Identify explicitly the places in the article EM9033a, reprinted overleaf on page 11.39 and above, where the measurement of quality is mentioned; make it clear for each case which *aspect* of quality is involved.
- Compare and contrast the difficulties associated with the measurement of quality in child-welfare services and in automotive assembly processes (*e.g.*, as described on page 11.25 in the middle column of Figure 11.5b).

3 Outline the *barriers* to improving the quality of child-welfare services mentioned in the article EM9033a reprinted overleaf on page 11.39 and above.

4 In the description of measures taken to assess the child-welfare services in Saskatchewan and Alberta (in the middle and right-hand columns overleaf on page 11.39), reference is made to .... *sampling(s) of (the) files* .... ; 5uggest briefly why *sampling* was used in these situations.
- If you were a consultant to the two provincial governments and were asked to design a proper selecting process for the files, indicate briefly the matters you would take into consideration in your design.

EM9033b: Ontario to examine abuse safeguards

The Globe and Mail

Reacting to recent reports of abuse of children in training schools during the early 1960s, Ontario will examine the safeguards currently in place to protect such children.

Joanne Campbell, chairwoman of the Social Assistance Review Board, will conduct the examination and is scheduled to report before the end of October, Community and Social Services Minister Charles Beer told the Legislature yesterday.

Mr. Beer said that in the past 30 years, many changes have been made in the system of residential care that are designed "to ensure that children and youth are better protected against abuse and assault."

.But the government cannot be complacent, he said. Therefore, it has asked Ms. Campbell "to determine the effectiveness and adequacy of the safeguards which are intended to protect children in residential facilities against physical, sexual and emotional abuse and assault."

Her review will cover all residential programs provided to children under the Child and Family Services Act and the placement of young offenders under the Ministry of Correctional Services.