

MAPC Proposed Resolution
April 23, 2010
Recognition of Alternative Caregivers in Manitoba's Education System

Background

Every year in Manitoba, thousands of school aged children are put in care of systems and individuals who are not the biological parent of the children in question. These systems and individuals range between alternative family members (i.e. grandparents, aunts, cousins) to foster care parents.

In addition to the stresses that life has provided these children, the alternative caregivers are not legally recognized as the "parent" of the child, unless formal arrangements for custody have been made. An example of this might include a child being sent by their parent to live with a grandparent because they are unable to care for them due to a number of life changing circumstances. This might also include a child being removed from their home and placed in the foster care system where the province of Manitoba (Social Services) then becomes the child's "parent".

Introduction Statement

In these instances, the alternative caregiver is often not given the opportunity to speak on behalf of the child in their care, relating to their education. In these examples, care must be legally relinquished or the parent must be present, in order for a relative or alternative caregiver to be involved with any decisions relating to the child's education. The child's social worker is the only individual with the legal right to be involved with any decisions relating to the child's education.

These educational matters range from enrolment of the child at a new school, to being involved in any meetings with the education team regarding programming for the child in question. The education of the child may suffer as the caregiver is powerless to access the system and act on behalf of the child.

Action Requests

While it is recognized that such measures are often put in place to protect the child, Manitoba Association of Parent Councils requests the Government of Manitoba Interdepartmental Protocol be reviewed to develop a case review procedure which is open and respectful of both the child's rights and the alternative caregiver's responsibilities. This process must ensure that the child's education, health and safety are not compromised and that the role of the alternative caregiver is both respected and recognized during these deliberations.

Submitted by Manitoba Association of Parent Councils Board of Directors for consideration at the 2010 Annual General Meeting.