

## **Successfully Soliciting Client Feedback in Child Welfare to Improve Service Delivery**

Final Report by:

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## **Abstract**

Soliciting client feedback in child welfare is essential in improving service delivery; however, clients rarely submit feedback. The purpose of this research is to look into alternative methods of obtaining feedback from clients who have been involved with the KHCAS. In conducting this research, information was analyzed from: a review of the literature; data collected from interviews with the staff at Kawartha Haliburton Children's Aid Society (KHCAS); and data obtained from a survey sent to 22 child welfare agencies across Ontario. The review of the literature demonstrated that there has been a limited amount of research in the field of soliciting feedback from individuals. However, much of the literature stated that methods of obtaining feedback are moving towards the use of technology. The interviews with the staff at the KHCAS concluded that clients need to be made aware of the feedback survey and that a text-based method of client feedback would work for their clients. The results from the surveys sent to the different agencies all agreed that they would like to see the use of technology-based methodologies for their clients in collecting client feedback. Currently, other agencies are using platforms such as SurveyMonkey and other web-based databases for collecting client feedback. The research that was carried out concluded that further research needs to be done regarding soliciting client feedback in child welfare. It was also found that using technology is considered "best practice" in soliciting client feedback.

## **Introduction & Background**

Children's Aid Societies, located across the province of Ontario, are non-profit agencies that are required by law to protect children under the age of 18 from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect (1). The Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society (KHCAS) was established in the community of Haliburton, Victoria, and Peterborough Counties and the City of Peterborough in 1892. The agency has offices in Peterborough, Lindsay, and Haliburton (1).

The KHCAS is a not for profit agency that is publicly funded by the province of Ontario, so they can provide all the services mandated under the *Child and Family Services Act* (1). The KHCAS also receives funding from the government to provide services legally required to provide to protect children from abuse and neglect (1). Through the provincial government, the funding that the KHCAS receives is filtered through the Ministry of Children, Community, and

Social Services (1). This ministry has a mandate for funding and monitoring children's aid societies (1).

The mission of the KHCAS is "Engaging families and the community to protect children, youth, and young adults." (1). This means that as a community, they want to help families, by working with parents and community partners to address concerns and resolve issues that impact a child's safety and well being. These community partners include hospitals, schools, community service agencies, and police services. They all work together with Ontario's Children's Aid Societies to prevent abuse and neglect by providing opportunities for early help and support for families to better care for their children (1). The vision that this agency has is to see families and communities thrive, through focusing on a child-centered family, engagement in the community, respect, diversity, and encourage learning (1). As of January 2020, the KHCAS has one hundred and thirty-three staff members working for them out of the three offices of Peterborough, Lindsay, and Haliburton (1).

The KHCAS encourages youth, families, and caregivers to provide feedback about their experiences and to share innovative ideas to strengthen the child welfare system through an online survey. This survey is the main method that the KHCAS has used to receive client feedback and is often sent to the clients after a case has been closed. A case is closed once the KHCAS decides that they no longer need to be involved with that family for their specific situation. This is done through a closing letter that has a URL link to the survey at the bottom of the letter. Clients of the KHCAS are individuals who are or have been engaged with the agency and their services such as parents and guardians. The Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society's website also has a tab that allows for clients to fill out a client feedback form as well. Currently, the KHCAS is experiencing issues in terms of having clients fill out these feedback forms. They are having approximately two forms filled out, voluntarily and correctly every four months. This low feedback return rate is attributed to the method currently used to solicit client feedback. They are also experiencing issues of clients misusing the feedback forms as a platform to address complaints according to the KHCAS. The KHCAS has a separate form that can be filled out specifically regarding complaints that their clients might have.

The KHCAS wanted to look into what other organizations are doing to improve this issue and possibly implement a similar version, with a focus on using technology. A focus on

technology means looking at using social media or texting as a platform for feedback surveys that would be convenient and easier for clients. This would then, intern, help the KHCAS in improving their services that their clients receive which can only be done if they know what they need to improve. The community research project was broken into two parts, the first part conducted a literature review on what is considered “best practice” for soliciting client feedback in child welfare. In the second part, I created two separate surveys, one was sent to other child welfare agencies across the province, the other was used to aid in interviewing the staff at KHCAS. These surveys were geared towards finding out what they think would work best for their clients to obtain feedback.

In reviewing the literature, I looked first into client feedback methods in child welfare services currently being used. I had trouble finding literature regarding the methods used to get people to fill out feedback forms. I found that most of the literature revolved more closely around the questions being asked and whether using a scaling system or an open response method would be “best practice”. Although the questions asked in the survey offered by the KHCAS do need improvement, this research project’s focus is directed more closely towards how to offer the survey to clients of the KHCAS in a way that would result in more filled out forms. The study titled “Family feedback in Child Welfare Services: A systematic review of measures” found the same issues that I did regarding methods used to solicit client feedback in child welfare (2). The study reviewed all of the published measures of family feedback in child welfare services (2). After having reviewed all of the published measures as of 2014 when this paper was written, it concluded that there were limited studies or published findings in validation measures to evaluate family feedback in child welfare services (2). Since 2014 my research also demonstrated there has been limited studies or published findings regarding methods of soliciting client feedback in child welfare. This being the case, I expanded my research to look at other companies and agencies that have researched soliciting client feedback such as, police services and medical surveys.

When conducting research involving clients of the KHCAS, it was important to take into consideration the types of people that are clients. There are several practical and ethical challenges that can be faced when trying to collect feedback from clients who deal with child welfare services (3). The main issues of data collection include: having to account for clients who may be transient,

have low literacy skills, mental health problems, drug and alcohol problems, or no telephone or internet access (3). These factors will be important to take into account when looking at a method that will work for soliciting feedback from child welfare clients as their results can be different from companies with different clients. This means that when I was looking at feedback methods, I narrowed my research to look at agencies that might have similar clients as the KHCAS.

An agency that I felt would be similar to child services in terms of clients who are involved with child welfare services were police departments. I felt this way because both the police and child welfare agencies both often have negative feelings associated with their presence to their clients. Police departments have recently put a large amount of focus into public relations and trying to take in feedback from the public on how they can improve. It is evident in living in any community in Canada that the police attend public places and schools to talk with the public to improve relations. Police are currently trying to overcome a public image issue which has been caused by controversial videos posted of use-of-force or deadly use-of-force, however, this is not as much of a focus for the KHCAS. I found a report put out by a police department in regards to public feedback. The report looked into reviewing and critically assessing the current survey methods used to measure police performance in common law jurisdictions (4). The questions that are often asked on satisfaction surveys, tend to be too general for police, a lot like for the KHCAS (4). The questions also tend to be unstandardized, inconsistent, and at times, have a poor choice of wording on questions and response categories again, like the surveys used by the KHCAS (4). The report also pointed out that in policing, measuring citizens' perceptions of police performance is very important and is not a straightforward task (4). This is due to police work being complex and multi-dimensional and so then is the performance measurement in the eyes of the public (4). This again is very similar to that of the KHCAS because every situation is unique.

In the literature, a method used for soliciting feedback is going to be different depending on the clients the agency is dealing with. I looked at a study that researched the accuracy of client satisfaction procedures used in the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) in Texas USA, more specifically the Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) program (5). In the study, they created a qualitative survey that was then conducted over the phone (5). The surveys used by the DSHS have five questions with a Likert scale with the ratings of one, two, three, four, and five (5). The scale ratings include strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree (5). The study found that this current method of measuring client satisfaction was adequate (5). This

study is relevant to my research in that it uses the same type of survey and survey questions, yet points out that the study would have different results than what has been experienced at the KHCAS. This is because clients involved with the CSHCN program would be more likely to fill out a feedback form than those involved with the KHCAS.

In the DSHS study, the method of using a combination of telephone interviews and in-person interviews to collect client feedback was successful, however, there are several issues associated with using a telephone as a method of collecting client feedback from child welfare clients. I reviewed a study that was conducted to develop a client satisfaction instrument and discuss the information generated from the use of this method (6). According to this study clients in a focus group who had all been involved with child welfare services preferred the method of obtaining feedback through telephone surveys (6). The focus group in the study indicated that they preferred telephone surveys over surveys that are sent through the mail, which included paid postage because they viewed this as offensive and impersonal (6). The study demonstrated that telephone surveys had higher return rates than mailed surveys which is the main method used by the KHCAS (6). The literature demonstrated that clients of child welfare have negative feelings regarding the current mailed survey approach (7). Some clients feel that a mailed survey is unable to capture their feelings about what it was like to have a child in the foster care system and other clients feel that the mailed survey was insulting (7). Clients of child welfare agencies have also expressed that they feel they should not bother to provide information because they did not see the value in it (7). Clients stated that they prefer face-to-face interviews or contact with someone but agreed that this would be difficult to achieve on a large scale (7). Overall clients of child welfare agencies agree that phone surveying is the most personal way of gathering information (7). The phone survey method however, has limitations being: it depends on clients having access to phones as well as the accuracy of phone numbers of clients, and the funding and resources of child welfare agencies to take the time out of their schedules (7). The main issue for child welfare agencies is funding and resources in a time of budget cuts. Due to the cost and resources of telephone surveys, they are not a viable “best practice” method to solicit client feedback.

Technology-based methods of soliciting client feedback are worth looking into as many interactions are commonly done through devices. The way that society has changed has resulted in most people using mobile devices or having access to the internet, this means that people can

access information anytime or anywhere (8). Most people often use their device(s) to write opinions and feedback in many aspects of daily life and interactions (8). In the literature, it was evident that there are advantages and disadvantages of using smartphones as data collection tools for hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups (9). One of the main advantages found was that child welfare clients prefer smartphones, as demonstrated by their higher initial take-up rate and their statements about the convenience of smartphone surveys (9). A disadvantage that was found with using this method to collect client feedback is that some people may not have access to a smartphone or mobile device (9). This issue can be accommodated by still having an alternative written feedback survey (9). It is also important to consider that since there are so few feedback forms already being filled out, using mobile device methods of collecting client feedback would be worth the possibility of losing the feedback from those few clients who do not have access to a mobile device (9). Many online surveys are now being completed using mobile devices as this is an easy way for people often to access the internet (10). Surveys that are offered by the KHCAS need to at least be able to be formatted for the use of smartphones. The increasing ubiquity and simplicity of mobile computing, as well as reduced cost, means that the barriers of using these devices in data collection have been significantly reduced (11).

A system that obtains feedback via text messaging may be preferable for clients of the KHCAS. There currently are message-based feedback systems used by retail companies such as American Eagle or Canadian Tire (12). These systems work by generating a receipt after the sale and identifies the place and goods or services associated with the sale (12). The system then prompts the customers to rate their service or experience through text messages (12). Bringing a system like this one to child welfare agencies might work for clients who do not always have access to the internet, Wi-Fi, or minutes for their mobile phones. The text message method might also be more convenient for most people as it is straight forward and a platform that people are comfortable using.

### **Ethical & Safety Considerations**

The research that will be conducted during the second portion of the project will include working with people including managers, and staff at the KHCAS and staff at other child welfare agencies. During the second portion of the project, surveys will be created and then administered to the managers and staff from other child welfare and social service agencies. The surveys will



ask the staff questions about how they are collecting client satisfaction data and how they are using it to improve service delivery.

An ethical consideration when dealing with the KHCAS would be to ensure that all information gathered as a result of this research project will be used solely for the purpose of the project. In surveying and interviewing staff members who work day to day with clients and children at the KHCAS, it is important to keep in mind information privacy.

The KHCAS does have a Research and Ethics policy GS 28.0 located in the appendix, which states that “All research projects involving people conducted at, in collaboration with, or under the auspices of the KHCAS require prior ethics review and approval by the Ethics Review Committee” (1). The KHCAS has its own procedure for research project requests. To ensure that all ethical issues are addressed, I completed both the Trent ROMEO ethics application which will include my survey questions and submitting them to the KHCAS for review. The KHCAS has four steps in its ethics application. The first is that all research requests are submitted on a standard application form (1). The second step is that all research requests are reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee. The third step will be the committee’s decision and the rationale are communicated to the researcher in writing (1). The final step I will complete is that I will need to sign the Society’s Oath of Confidentiality (1).

## **Methods**

Obtaining information for this research project will be done by two different methods. The first method was done by conducting a literature review regarding client feedback approaches and models. The goal was to find as many relevant papers and reliable sources that fit into the model of this project. I used Trent University’s library portal, the access I had been given through the KHCAS Library Services, and through searching scholarly articles online. I used numerous databases including PubMed and Google Scholar, using a variety of keywords including “child welfare”, “client”, “feedback” and “methods”. When looking for studies I was looking at other fields that might mirror the issues that are found the KHCAS in terms of sometimes having a hostile interaction. In doing this I had decided to look into research that has been done by police departments in their efforts to reach out to the people they have been involved with and in obtaining feedback from them.

The socioeconomic status of the clients at the KHCAS had an impact on the methods that can be used effectively in having clients fill out feedback forms. The client's income level is another factor that can affect the resources available to the clients when looking into technology-based methods of data collection, such as texts and social media-based methods.

It was important to keep in mind during the survey portion of the research that in talking with people who work day to day with their clients that some biases might arise. The biases can come from both the experience level of the staff and from the staff level. There might be biases between front line workers, middle management, and upper management staff in terms of results in the surveys based on biases. These biases can be accounted for by being aware of this and giving equal weighting to the outlined distinctions to get a good cross-section of data. I completed an ethics application through ROMEO research portal on the myTrent home page. The survey questions were submitted along with the ethics application for approval.

The literature review portion of this research project was completed by December 25, 2019 and had twenty articles included into it. These articles revolved around looking into what is considered "best practice" in terms of collecting client feedback information. The aim of this literature review was to give an idea as to what others have researched to date in this field.

The second portion of the research was to conduct an input on what is considered "best practice" in methods of collecting client feedback. The first step that I took was to design my survey questions, which are located in the appendix. I made two separate sets of questions and created the questions based on what I was unable to find in the literature review and in a way that would help answer my research questions. The first set was designed for both the staff and management staff at the KHCAS and the second set were the survey questions for the other child welfare agencies. I focused my questions to try and cover the research question that has been set out to be answered. I used these survey questions to be efficient when talking with these staff members and ensuring that I obtained as much insight from them as possible. The questions were based around: what they currently implement as the method of obtaining feedback; how well it is working for their agency; and what with their personal experience do they believe would be the ideal method of obtaining client feedback from clients once their case has been closed.

The surveys created for the staff and management staff at the KHCAS were used as a guide in speaking with the groups in an informal interview type style on the dates of February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020,

and February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020. These groups were chosen by Jennifer Chenier the project host. I asked the staff as a group the questions and wrote down the responses from those who had answers to the questions. This portion of the research might have resulted in some biases. The staff who work one on one with clients might have personal biases on what they believe is considered “best practice”. This is accounted for by balancing the information obtained from this portion of the project with the information obtained from the literature review. The surveys that were sent to the other child welfare agencies were sent through e-mail. I sent out the survey to twenty-two agencies in Ontario and received seven of them back completed.

After collecting the information from the interviews at the KHCAS and the seven completed surveys from other agencies, I compiled the information into charts. I then took the information from both the literature review and from the child welfare surveys to narrow down a model that would be considered “best practice” for obtaining client feedback. I did this by looking for common answers in the responses such as the use of SurveyMonkey by other child welfare agencies.

## **Results/Major Findings**

### *Summary of Literature Review*

The scope of the literature review looked into both Canadian and American literature. The literature that is based around soliciting client feedback in child welfare consistently stated the benefits that would arise from a “best practice” method however no one method was evident. The article by Huisamen and Weyers (2014) discussed how there has not been much research conducted into meeting the need for client satisfaction surveys on a practical level. The article based this on the appropriate, reliable, and valid measuring instruments, as well as the logistical and ethical problems involved in the use of current feedback methods. Tilbury et al (2009) outlined and identified several issues in practice and ethical challenges that can be faced with clients of children’s aid and social services. These issues of data collection included having to account for clients who may be transient, have low literacy skills, mental health problems, drug and alcohol problems, or no telephone or internet access. A significant portion of the clients required to be surveyed is therefore not captured in the statistical analysis because of these

issues. Therefore, any best practice method for soliciting client feedback needs to take these issues into account. In my review of the literature, no method was found to do this.

Many of the traditional methods such as phone, mail, and in-person interviews were discussed. Phone calls were considered by Kapp and Propp (2002) to be the most personal and preferred methods by clients of gaining information. The same article also outlines that this could have its limitations when telephone numbers are inaccurate or out-of-date. In looking into new technologies as a means of obtaining feedback from clients, interesting ideas have been proposed such as texting and e-mail surveys. Many companies and agencies have turned to technologies such as text messages as a means of obtaining feedback from their clients. The Canadian Mental Health Association (2017) looked into using the internet and social media platforms to engage clients of health service providers in gaining client feedback. The study found that using social networking sites as a means to collect client feedback, led to receiving higher quantities of comments about experiences. Increase in the use of smartphones and the simplicity of mobile computing, as well as reduced cost, means that the barriers of using technology in data collection have been significantly reduced.

After reviewing relevant literature, it was found that no one method has been considered “best practice” in terms of soliciting feedback from clients who have been involved in child welfare. The limitations and issues faced with data collection have been identified yet all articles and studies stated that further research in this area needed to be done. In my research, most articles or studies pre-date technological advances in client survey methods for use in obtaining feedback from clients involved with child welfare. However, based on the increased use of technology along with its easy accessibility for most, technology-based feedback methods are becoming the focus for companies and agencies as a means of obtaining client feedback.

#### *Results from KHCAS Staff*

The interviews that I had with both the staff and management staff resulted in similar responses. I first was surprised at the general staff meeting, to learn that many of the staff members either did not know we had a feedback survey or did not know where it was located on the KHCAS website. During the interviews/meetings, the staff were able to see the survey questions. At this point, the staff pointed out that the way the questions were worded, the language used, and the survey, in general, would not be very clear to their clients. However, the

survey currently used by the KHCAS is not the main focus of this research but does need to be looked into in further development of improving feedback from clients. Both the staff and management staff stated their concern that there should be different surveys available for people to fill out depending on the business the client has had with the KHCAS. Different surveys can be made available for clients who are parents, grandparent guardians, and parents who have had their child removed from home etc. When asked about what they thought would be the best way to solicit feedback from their clients, both meetings of the staff agreed that a text-based system that could be texted to their clients would be “best practice”. They discussed that most of their clients have very straight forward mobile devices that often have texting plans rather than minutes for calling. It was also suggested that perhaps having an incentive such as a coffee card for people who filled out feedback forms may also help with client completion rates.

*Results from Surveys from Other Agencies*

I had sent out 22 surveys to separate child welfare agencies throughout Ontario. Of these twenty-two surveys I received seven completed surveys back. These completed surveys, came from CAS London; CAS Ottawa, Kenora-Rainy River Districts Child & Family Services; Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions; Family Children's Services of Lanark; Leeds and Grenville; and Valoris for Children and Adults of Prescott-Russell, Highland Shores CAS. Although these surveys were completed some of the agencies that replied had very little information about client feedback methods such as Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions. In this case, I focused on their recommendations and what they felt would work for their clients. Every survey I received back stated that they believed using technology as a method of collecting client feedback would work best for their clients. It was pointed out in two of the survey responses that a shared service would be beneficial. In this way, the cost of an enterprise license for a survey software platform could be shared by a number of agencies.

<b>CAS London</b>	<b>Simcoe Muskoka</b>	<b>Highland Shores CAS</b>	<b>Valoris</b>
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<p>- collected feedback via phone interviews.</p> <p><b>-Recommend:</b> A feedback app but with cost will be limited to online surveys. Survey Monkey is formatted for both SmartPhone and computer access.</p> <p>- If the province really wanted to do this right, it would be an excellent case for a shared service.</p>	<p>- unfortunately, have only a hyperlink on our web-site.</p> <p><b>-Recommend:</b> Perhaps application on cellphone for those who have it and a hyperlink on the external agency web-site.</p>	<p>-contact by phone and have standard scaling questions.</p> <p>-Find it works- internal MSW placement staff member conducts interviews.</p> <p>-Similar closing letter to KHCAS.</p> <p><b>-Recommend:</b> Use of link to a survey that can be sent via text message; bringing a tablet to home visit and having client complete during visit</p>	<p>-Ongoing formal client feedback that is monitored from session to session.</p> <p>-tool used for ongoing client is administered at the end of every session and measures the client’s perspective on 4 components.</p> <p>-We use a web-based database (MyOutcomes) in which the clients fill out the outcome and alliance tools.</p> <p><b>-Recommend:</b> Cell phone apps, tablets, feedback forms that are short to administer. Although have alternatives.</p>
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<b>Lanark, Leeds and Grenville</b>	<b>Kenora-Rainy River</b>	<b>CAS Ottawa</b>
<p>-We use a link to a website with a code attached to limit each user to one survey. We</p>	<p>-surveys on SurveyMonkey is given directly to clients in documentation such as</p>	<p>-believe that face to face interviews would be best practice, this is beyond the</p>

<p>provide the option for a written survey, which we would then enter into the website.</p> <p>-many of our clients and youth have access to technology such as a computer or smart phone, but we are also offering written options for those who don't.</p> <p>-We are in the early stages of implementing a consistent annual survey (2<sup>nd</sup> year), so we will need to do an analysis following this year's survey.</p>	<p>business cards, appointment cards, closing letters.</p> <p>-some success with having the survey links to SurveyMonkey- requires constant attention.</p> <p>-recipients have cell phones and can complete the survey directly from their cell phones.</p>	<p>capacity of our agencies at this time.</p> <p>-use electronic when cases close. This is issued by email and / or text message. Clients are offered a \$5 coffee gift card for completing the survey.</p> <p><b>-Recommend:</b> A shared service. In this way, the cost of an enterprise license for a survey software platform could be shared by a number of purchasers.</p>
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**Discussion and Conclusions**

My research has been an introduction to what is considered “best practice” regarding client feedback in child welfare in order to improve service delivery. After my literature review concluded that more research needed to be conducted, I looked at my interviews and surveys for results. The interviews with both the staff and full management team at the KHCAS concluded, that both clients and staff need to be made aware of the feedback survey and that a text-based method of client feedback would work for their clients. The results from the surveys sent to different agencies all agreed that using technology-based methodologies would work for collecting client feedback. Currently, the more advanced agencies are using platforms such as SurveyMonkey and other web-based databases for collecting client feedback and are finding they are having more surveys being filled out.

The staff at the KHCAS felt strongly about using text-base software for gaining feedback from their clients. This method follows the recommendations made by the other agencies in that a method for people's mobile devices whether an application or SMS (short message service) would be the best practice. It became evident in the literature and the survey/interview results that child welfare agencies have very limited extra time and budget for a feedback method. This means that although through much of the literature telephone surveys seemed to result in high success rates, it is not an option for the KHCAS (6). The use of shared service between child welfare agencies can aid in lowering the cost for a survey software platform during budget cuts. The limitation of the clients having limited recourses such as no access to the internet or mobile devices means that the feedback method used has to be compatible with who might only have basic text plans.

In this study, I collected data from a literature review, interviews with the KHCAs, and the surveys I received back from the other agencies. I started reviewing text surveys that are available for companies and agencies and I came across two options that are widely used, one being Trumpia SMS Surveys and the other being SMS surveys offered by SurveyMonkey (13,14). Trumpia SMS Surveys advertise to have a response rate of 7.5x times higher than email (13). The surveys offered by Trumpia's SMS Surveys come with real automation built-in. This means they let you lead respondents to different paths based on their answers (13). This service also offers an intelligent Text Bot, which can be used to have interactions with clients based on how they respond to messages (13). The cost of using Trumpia SMS surveys ranged from \$200-4000 a month depending on the package (13). The other service offered by SurveyMonkey sends surveys at the ideal time to gather a more accurate response (14). SurveyMonkey is a well-known survey company that I personally have used in the past. SurveyMonkey was noted by both CAS London and Kenora-Rainy River Districts Child & Family Services as being a survey service they used. The option SurveyMonkey has of being available to send surveys over text makes it a viable option for KHCAS to use. The costs associated with this feature on SurveyMonkey was not on their website and would need to be personalized depending on the need of the client.

In concluding this research project, I have three main recommendations for the KHCAS to move forward with. The first recommendation is that the staff needs to be informed of the



feedback survey and that they need to mention it to their clients and tell them that their feedback matters and helps improve service delivery. The second recommendation is to use a service provided by either Trumpia SMS Surveys or SMS surveys offered by SurveyMonkey, as these survey methods have been considered “best practice”. The third recommendation that I have is to accommodate the cost of adopting one of the survey methods, this would mean using a shared service between the child welfare agencies in Ontario.

## **Appendix**

### **Research and Ethics policy GS 28.0**

#### Cross Reference:

Society Mission, Vision and Values, Human Resources Policy Confidentiality, Provincial Best Practice Guidelines for Research Involving CAS's March, 2009

#### Preamble:

The Society is committed to improving practice through research, while at the same time ensuring that client confidentiality and ethical practices remain paramount.

#### Application:

All employees, Board members, contract personnel, resource providers, volunteers and students are subject to this policy.

#### Definitions:

The Provincial Best Practice Guidelines for Research Involving CASs defines "research" as follows:

*Research is considered more than the systematic collection of data with the sole intent of summarizing and describing some aspect of a child welfare population or program. Research is viewed in this document as any procedure or activity designed to advance knowledge that is not part of regular accountability systems and routines within the Society. It includes the clinical and non-clinical gathering of data from clients of the agency, children in care, agency records, foster parents and staff. It also includes the analysis, presentation and/or publication of findings.*

The Society routinely participates in "Program Evaluation" activities, which support the systematic evaluation of the quality of its services as part of a continuous improvement process. Program evaluation and periodic audits carried out by the Ministry, that are consistent with the legislated accountability, are not included in this definition of research.

#### Purpose:

To review all research requests/activities, both internal and external, that involve the Society determining the ethical acceptability of the research, through consideration of the foreseeable risks, the potential benefits and the ethical implications (respect for persons, concern for welfare, justice) of the proposed research project.

#### **Policy:**

**All research projects involving people conducted at, in collaboration with, or under the auspices of the KHCAS require prior ethics review and approval by the Ethics Review Committee.**

#### Procedures:

1. All research requests (internal or external) are submitted on a standard application form.

2. All research requests are reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee.
3. The committee's decision and the rationale are communicated to the researcher in writing.
4. Before research proceeds, the researcher must sign the Society's Oath of Confidentiality.

### **Survey Questions**

#### **For staff at KHCAS**

1. All responses are anonymous. Do you consent to continue the survey?
2. Do you consider the current method of client feedback collection to be working effectively and if so why?
3. What method of client feedback collection do you think would most appeal to your clients?
4. Considering the methods that would appeal to your clients, which one of them would create the least amount of additional work for people at the agency?
5. Do you believe that using technology-based methodologies for collecting client feedback is a possibility in child welfare?
6. What technology-based options do you believe, having worked with clients, would work best in order to collect client feedback?
7. What do you believe would be the greatest challenges faced by your clients in using technology-based collection methods and how do you believe these could be overcome to achieve the highest result in participation feedback?
8. What is your recommendation for implementing an enhanced way for collecting client feedback? (i.e outsourcing, utilizing existing resources, expansion of existing resources etc.)

#### **For Other Agencies**

1. All responses are anonymous. Do you consent to continue the survey?
2. What does your agency believe to be "best practice" in terms of client feedback collection?
3. In what ways does your agency solicit client feedback that is different from having clients fill out a feedback form linked to your website?

4. Do you feel that the way your agency is collecting client feedback is successful?
5. Does your agency use social media platforms or other technology-based methodologies to collect client feedback?
6. Do you believe that using technology-based methodologies for collecting client feedback is a possibility in child welfare?
7. What technology-based options do you believe, having worked with clients, would work best in order to collect client feedback?
8. What do you believe would be the greatest challenges faced by your clients in using technology-based collection methods and how do you believe these could be overcome to achieve the highest result in participation feedback?
9. What is your recommendation for implementing an enhanced way for collecting client feedback? (i.e outsourcing, utilizing existing resources, expansion of existing resources etc.)

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