



Safe Kids & Youth
Coordinated Response

Evaluation Report 2022-2023



BACKGROUND

The SKY Coordinated Response is a collaboration between professionals involved in responding to child maltreatment in the West Kootenay region. The service seeks to improve the experience of children and families with suspected child maltreatment and reduce system trauma induced as a function of participating in the investigative process.

INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

In 2022-2023, SKY introduced a new coordination model in which two 21-hour coordinator positions are employed by SKY (Kootenay Boundary Community Services Co-operative), reporting directly to the SKY Regional Manager. The two new part-time SKY Coordinators began serving the region (SKY North and SKY South) in late June, 2022. SKY Coordinators work with the non-offending family and multi-disciplinary teams up to the stage of the forensic interview (e.g., case review meeting, coordination of interview, communicate with family), at which point SKY Coordinators hand the file over to the local victim services to allow for a clear delineation of complementary services. After the interview, the SKY Coordinators continue to support the MDT as they work to support the family. This new approach was created to close service gaps and allow for greater expertise to develop with a larger number of files per coordinator.

HIGHLIGHTS

In addition to the data captured in the report below, there were several important highlights in SKY's work in 2022-2023.

INCREASE IN REFERRALS

One aim of the transition to a new model with two regional SKY Coordinators was to increase the number of referrals to SKY. Indeed, after receiving no referrals from January to June, 2022 (in part due to the transition to the new model and position vacancies), SKY received 8 new referrals in the initial two months of the new coordinator roles.

INTERVIEW ROOM ENHANCEMENTS

The new energy in the model also contributed to efforts to enhance SKY's three child-friendly interviewing rooms, including technological upgrades. SKY Coordinators then engaged in training of MDT members in equipment use, and received feedback on additional areas for improvement.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM (MDT) TRAINING

In October 2022, 18 MDT members from 5 different communities attended Stepwise Interview Training organized by SKY. Funding was obtained from the British Columbia Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General with the aim of boosting capacity of skilled interviewers in the SKY region.

ACCREDITED FACILITY DOG

SKY submitted a successful application to receive an Accredited Facility Dog through the Lions Foundation of Canada. It is anticipated that the dog will join the SKY team in April 2023.

LINKAGES TO MEDICAL SERVICES

SKY began collaboration with the Kootenay Boundary Division of Family Practice to recruit medical professionals to assist with the development of an enhanced medical response to children involved with SKY. This process is ongoing and will continue to be an important focus in 2023-2024.

REMOTE TESTIMONY ROOM

SKY developed a remote testimony room in one of the region's most remote communities. The development of this room will increase accessibility to SKY supports and to the justice system for children who may be challenged in doing so.

REGIONAL GATHERING

In February 2023, SKY hosted a Regional Gathering focusing on education around online child sexual exploitation. This gathering produced extremely positive feedback (average 4.3/5 rating), including a comment by one attendee: “A wonderful opportunity to meet and share expertise and ideas with our community MDT partners is invaluable. Very interesting content and knowledgeable speakers.”

To complete this evaluation, the following information was reviewed:

- Case data collected for 2022-2023 fiscal year
- CYAC feedback
- Quarterly Coordinator survey
- Quarterly Partner survey

EVALUATION DATA: APRIL 1, 2022-MARCH 31, 2023

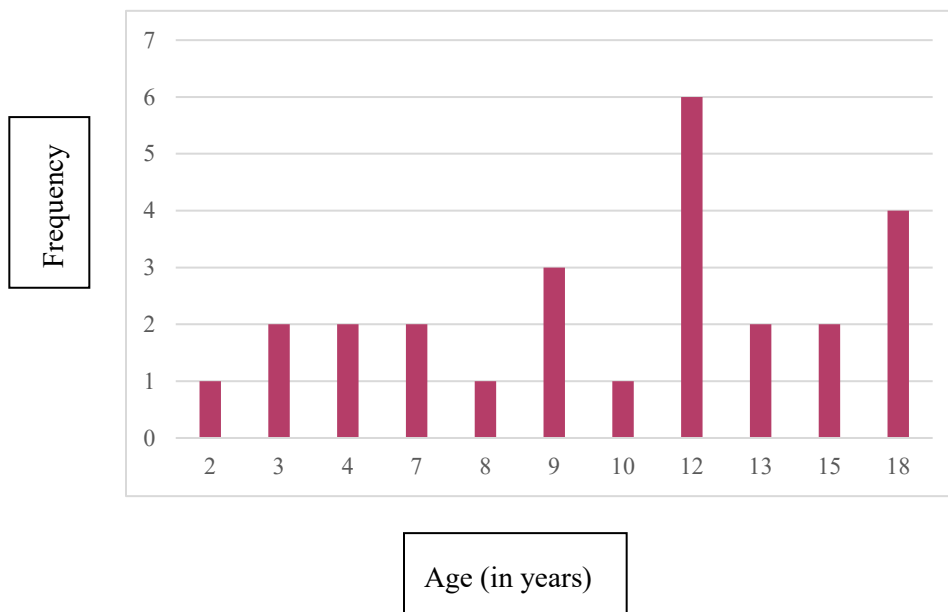
A total of **30** children were served by SKY from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023.

Note that data are not available for all children on all variables.

CHILD CHARACTERISTICS

- Children aged 2-to-16 years were served by SKY.
- Children were predominantly female, White or Indigenous, and all spoke English as their primary language.

Average age:
10.27 years



Gender Identity	N
Female	21
Male	5
Trans male	1
Unknown	3

Ethnicity/Cultural Background	N
White	5
Indigenous	4
Métis	1
Unknown	21

Role	N
Victim	29
Witness	0
Unknown	1

Primary/Preferred Language	N
English	29
Unknown	1

- Some children had one or more reported complex characteristics, including:

Complex Characteristics	N
Developmental Delays	2
Anxiety	1
Autism	1

FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

- Most children were served by SKY for the first time and their past experience with domestic violence was unknown.

Previous contact with SKY	N
No	19

Known domestic violence within the family	N
No	2
Yes	3
Unknown	12

NATURE OF THE ALLEGATION

- Most children served by SKY reported sexual abuse.

Type of abuse (at referral)	N
Sexual abuse	21
Physical abuse	4
Witness domestic violence	3
Physical Abuse & Neglect	1
Other	1

Abuse frequency	N
Single	9
Repeated	7
Unknown	13

ALLEGED OFFENDER

- Most allegations involved a single male adult (18+ years) offender. Relationships between the alleged offender and the child were varied, but the large majority were well-known to the child.

Gender Identity	N
Male	24

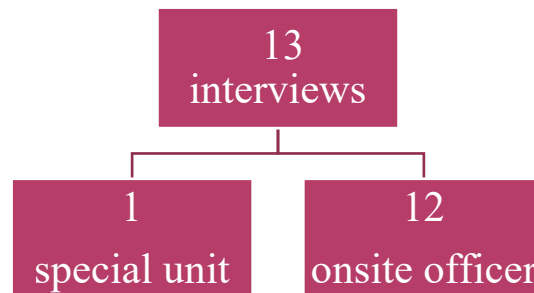
Age	N
12-17 years	6
18+ years	20

Relationship to child	N
Mother's boyfriend/ partner	5
Father	4
Family friend/acquaintance	4
Peer	3
Other relative	5
Unfamiliar stranger	1
Other	1

CYAC EXPERIENCE

INTERVIEWS

- 13 interviews were conducted.
- 12 interviews were conducted in SKY-friendly interview rooms, 1 at a police detachment:
 - 5 interviews at Castlegar MCFD, 2 at Castlegar RCMP
 - 4 interviews at Trail FAIR, 1 interview at Trail RCMP
 - 1 interview at Nelson RCMP Soft Room



ALL interviewers were trained in child interviewing

ALL children were interviewed only once

Children's experiences

- 11 children served by SKY were connected to services, including:

Service	N
PBVS	8
SAIP	3
CVS	3
PEACE	1
CBVS	1
ICAT	1
Victim Services	1

- 1 Wellness/General Health Exam was conducted.
- Charges were approved in 4 cases.
- 2 children testified in court and received:
 - Court preparation from Crown counsel.
 - Court accompaniment from Victim Services.

CYAC FEEDBACK

- The fiscal year 2022-2023, was the second full year of the new BC Provincial CYAC Network Evaluation process. This process involved a coordinated strategy for evaluation data, in addition to five surveys designed to elicit CYAC model feedback:
 - 1) Multidisciplinary Team Feedback: Brief
 - 2) Multidisciplinary Team Feedback: Long
 - 3) Caregiver Feedback
 - 4) Child Feedback
 - 5) Youth Feedback
- This year was a transition year to the new coordination model. As a result, the focus was on achieving a successful transition, with the acknowledgment that feedback may be more difficult to collect during the transition. As a result, only 3 *Multidisciplinary Team Feedback: Brief surveys* were received from all of the possible surveys. Because this is a small number of responses that might provide identifying information, a short summary of responses is provided rather than a detailed report of all responses.
- The 3 responses to the MDT Brief survey all:
 - Rated working relationships as effective or very effective;
 - Reported either neutral or positive effects of the CYAC model on the case.

A SAMPLE SKY SUCCESS STORY

“Were called to a high-risk domestic file in the Slocan Lake Detachment area where there had been significant domestic history between the two of them. During the investigation it was discovered that there was significant violence against one child and witnessed from an even younger sibling (6). After summarizing the first part of the investigation it was determined that the child witness had to be interviewed. Because of our involvement in SKY we had a portable equipment that we could use to attend the residence allowing both kids to be comfortable and focused on what needed to be completed from an investigative aspect. The comfort felt by the youngest child allowed her to provide a very detailed account of what she recalled over time. This information was instrumental on creating a very strong/complete investigation. This allowed the Crown Counsel to be very prepared which in turn allowed an appropriate punishment to be agreed to between Crown/Defence avoiding both children from having to testify in court.”

SKY QUARTERLY SURVEYS

Coordinators described activities from the prior year and both Coordinators and MDT partners were asked to describe successes and challenges after each quarter of the fiscal year. Below, common themes are highlighted, with sample supporting quotations. Responses are reproduced verbatim.¹

ACTIVITIES

Because the SKY Coordinators were new to their positions in June 2022, many activities related to connections with the MDT.

“We worked a few files this quarter! so that was how I really met the key players and built rapport.”

“Worked to have more one on one conversations with MDT members. This was done through phone calls and some video conferences.”

“Attempted to meet and introduce myself to all stakeholders. Also tried to visit most agencies' sites in-person, as well as hold brief meetings on Zoom to get to know people. An effort was made to educate multiple people about what a SKY file is, as there is a bit of hesitancy region-wide to involve SKY with some files. Reached out to Schools and IHA to involve them in SKY.”

SKY Coordinators again reported engaging in many outreach activities and attended many community meetings (e.g., COINS TRC Learning Circle, Schools, RCMP, MCFD, IHA).

“On October 11th, I presented about the SKY Model alongside Trail FAIR and MCFD at JL Crowe Highschool.”

¹ A table of acronyms is available at the end of the report.

“SCRS hosted myself and other community groups such as health care, the library, and schools for a lunch to share about SKY and introduce the program to the community, and the community to me. It was lovely.”

“I also presented the SKY model to The Salmo Secondary School staff at a Staff Meeting, and [SKY Partner Agency] co-presented to talk about district policy and procedure.”

“...worked on developing relationships at school and health.”

“I had the opportunity to informally meet with [SKY Team Member] from VS on multiple occasions, as well as with [SKY Team Member] who is SD8's safe school coordinators. I had a private meeting with [SKY Team Member] who is the PEACE counsellor via zoom. I also have been invited to a larger community meeting in [community] the morning of our next MDT meeting, and look forward to creating more relationships in the town of [community].”

“I forged great partnerships with Trail FAIR staff, especially [SKY Team Member], who is working in the local SD20 Schools as a community resource counsellor. We are planning to present SKY to select school staff in the next few months.

“We were able to work with [SKY Partner Agency] from IH to develop relationships with staff at the Kaslo health clinic. We also joined the Kaslo Child and Youth Committee and are hoping this helps raise awareness about SKY.”

Coordinators described efforts to ensure CYAC interview room technology was efficient and predictable for partner use.

“...worked on SKY recording equipment at interview room and checked in on progress with use of room for remote testimony.”

“We also have had some issues with the interview equipment, so we've been working on getting everything running smooth.”

“I have been working closely with RCMP on the interview room at MCFD. We've been actively trouble shooting the recording equipment.”

“I also worked hard with [SKY Team Member] to ensure that the interview room's equipment was working, and that the room had all the components it needed. We were able to train all the MCFD new hires how to use the recording equipment, and we had practice interview recordings.”

“Also worked on SKY furniture and recording equipment at interview room. Investigated possible relocation and decided to relocate interview room to back rooms at RCMP Nelson.”

CHALLENGES

Coordinators recognized the difficulty in staffing and scheduling that many partner agencies were experiencing.

“Short-staffing at different agencies remains a challenge. MCFD is especially busy and short on personnel. This affects their availability for meetings and results in last-minute cancellations. The MDT is well aware of the challenge and continues to communicate as well as possible.”

“The [community] team is cooperative, but it remains a challenge to bring everyone together in meetings due to very busy schedules and short-staffing problems.”

“MCFD is very understaffed and it has been a challenge to fully engage them in all three communities. I continue to call and communicate with them.”

“RCMP in [community] is very busy and perhaps short-staffed. It is challenging for them to attend SKY meetings.”

“It has been challenging to fully engage MCFD as they are understaffed and busy. We continue to communicate with them and engage them as much as possible.”

“The biggest challenge is finding a time when folks can all be in room together.”

Coordinators described some difficulties in information sharing with partners and expressed concern that eligible files were not referred to SKY.

“When I check in with partners about files, they say there are none.”

“...I sometimes wonder if [SKY Partner Agency] are not contacting me about the files that meet the SKY mandate? It seems odd that they have no files this quarter...”

“Not all stakeholders, particularly MCFD and CVS, are fully open to contacting SKY for all files. CVS is hesitant to use SKY process.”

“Partners, especially [SKY Partner Agency], don’t want to share name of victims or parents, or contact info with me as the SKY coordinator.”

“[SKY Team Member] is worried about breaking privacy and info sharing rules.”

“They seem to share info with each other, but not always with me.”

However, in other instances, Coordinators indicated that information sharing went smoothly.

“The team is sharing information at MDT meetings and is willing to work together.”

“The team is communicative and shares information as much as possible.”

In Partner feedback surveys, Partners provided some information about why SKY was not contacted for every child/youth file.

“Felt SKY wasn’t needed for every file.”

“I have many clients and files that would not need SKY involvement. The SKY coordinator was contacted if our agency knew it was part of the protocol for the specific situation and an interview might occur.”

“With the recent changes and messaging regarding SKY, members are getting confused as to what is a sky file and when the sky coordinator should be contacted.”

“Hesitancy from VS and MCFD in [community] to call SKY for some files, especially if they do not involve both MCFD and Police or if an interview is not required. Education is needed in this area. I have shared our referral criteria and explained it in all three quarterly MDT meetings. However, this continues to be a need and I will need to continue addressing it.”

There was, however, evidence that with relationship-building and the development of the new model, referrals improved.

“We faced the original challenge of files not being referred to SKY, but I think we've made great strides in that department late in the quarter :)”

“... in that meeting it was determined that there were potential files that made the criteria! that kind of in-real-life "aha moment" was really team building for the group, and produced another file late in the quarter for a total of three.”

SUCSESSES

SKY's successes, as reported by SKY Coordinators were primarily focused around relationships and communications with individuals. Person-to-person contact was a focus of considerable time and attention for SKY Coordinators and seemed to pay off as the new Coordinators continued in their positions.

SKY Coordinators noted that motivated and interested MDT members and community partners made a substantial difference in the success of SKY.

“I've really appreciated working closely with [SKY Team Member] at VS on some of our shared files from last quarter. [SKY Team Member] is very responsive and easy to connect with.”

“We also recruited an SD20 Teacher, [SKY Team Member], who is the indigenous resource teacher. Excited to have her join our MDT and share her perspective.”

“Another big success is having [SKY Team Member] from Trail FAIR working in the schools with students, this has strengthened our MDT's relationship with school partners immensely in the past quarter.”

“We were able to have successful meetings with IHA personnel, and one of them (to involve them in the Shared Care project). [SKY Team Member] expressed interest in the project.”

“Held productive meetings with new MCFD personnel to develop good working relationships. [SKY Team Member] and [SKY Team Member] are new MCFD members and seem interested in working with and involving SKY in all child and youth files.”

“Now that [SKY Team Member] is back, Trail has been interviewing a lot. When she was gone MCFD and Police weren't always coordinating with each other effectively, and now that she is back it has eased the tension between the two groups around their competing priorities.”

“I also really felt grateful to [SKY Team Member], who is the Police Based VS worker and former SKY coordinator, for showing me the ropes in Trail!”

“Securing a passionate and cool new VS worker :)”

Considerable positivity was expressed by Coordinators about improved communication about SKY and SKY files among community partners and MDT members.

“Team seems to be coming together and expresses more interest to involve SKY. One team member said ‘These conversations are so helpful because they help me keep SKY at the top of my mind to call’.”

“Conversation was opened with school counsellors and principal. This is hopefully leading to presentations and awareness of SKY among teachers.”

“I would say that my biggest success was meeting with the new MCFD Hires. They often work cases in Salmo and Castlegar, so I think spending quite a bit of time with them was really valuable.”

“It was also good to introduce and remind other community groups about SKY.”

“We all met and became familiar with each other. Nelson Police, RCMP and MCFD have been calling SKY for assistance, as has VS in Nakusp and NK LCS and RCMP in Kaslo. Communication seems to be flowing quite well.”

“Good communication, especially regarding one SKY file. RCMP came together with VS and counselors with the clear goal of helping a young victim. The team felt united in it's goal of helping the victim and family.”

The overall success of the SKY model was observed in one partner's feedback:

***“SKY is doing a great job
of creating a mobile model to
support the Kootenays.”***

RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2022-2023, SKY took the important and challenging step of moving to a new model of practice. The transition was complete with the hire of two new Regional Coordinators in late June, 2022. As expected, establishment of these Coordinators in their positions took some time, but much progress was made in figuring out the logistics of the new roles and in the establishment and assessment of critical concrete resources (e.g., interview rooms).

Because 2022-2023 was a year of considerable change for SKY, evaluation of the effectiveness of the model was not a top priority. As 2023-2024 will be a full year of the new model's implementation, this is a critical time for evaluation. Catching challenges and capitalizing on successes early will help to ensure the longevity of the model. Consistent guidelines for when and to whom these feedback surveys are delivered are important components of a reliable evaluation process.

Recommendation 1:

SKY should regularly use the tools developed by the BC CYAC Network to evaluate the implementation of the new SKY model. In addition to these established tools, SKY should establish a regular information sharing procedure between SKY Coordinators to enhance consistency in SKY's service provision and facilitate learning across Coordinator experiences.

SKY also made tremendous progress on one of the recommendations made in last year's Evaluation Report: building capacity in expert investigative interviewing. The organization of the well-attended Stepwise interview training builds critical skills in the community which resulted in a real improvement in the number of children who were interviewed by trained interviewers. This training provided professionals with a critical professional development opportunity and resulted in a network of regional colleagues on whom they can rely for collaborative discussions and additional skill enhancement. This training is an outstanding contribution that will directly benefit children in the region and enhance the professional skills and expertise of those who work with them.

Recommendation 2:

SKY should continue to seek additional training opportunities to continue to build capacity and professional networks within the region. Consider consultation with MDT members about desired topics and formats.

SKY also made important steps towards two additional services that many CYACs in Canada are working towards: access to health services and a facility dog. Movement towards obtaining these resources for children in the SKY Region provides clear evidence of SKY's awareness and engagement with the larger CYAC community and SKY's motivation to provide evidence-based, accessible services for the children with whom they work.

Recommendation 3:

SKY should work to ensure that momentum is maintained on these two exciting areas of practice: access to health services and a facility dog. Continue to consider how to evaluate the outcome of the introduction of these two services.

Finally, it is clear in the Coordinator reports that awareness, understanding, and use of SKY by partners continues to pose challenges. Coordinators reported engaging in many conversations, attending many meetings, and participating in many one-on-one conversations about SKY and its role. This work will inevitably be continuous as new people take on roles related to SKY and as changes to services are made.

Recommendation 4:

SKY Coordinators should continue to work to promote SKY and communicate broadly about SKY with community groups. Consider development of a staged plan to ensure community groups have regular check-ins and communication from SKY to keep SKY's service top of mind.

CONCLUSION

SKY continues to critically evaluate its service delivery model and this year made a substantial change in practice. This change emerged from careful examination of past successes and challenges and will position SKY well for stability into the future. Continuing on SKY's current path of service, education, and communication will meet the needs of children and professionals in the SKY region and bring greater wellness to the broader communities.

TABLE OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definition
COINS TRC Learning Circle	Circle of Indigenous Nations Society Truth and Reconciliation Learning Circle
CVS	Community-Based Victim Services
CYAC	Child and Youth Advocacy Centre
IHA	Interior Health Authority
MCFD	Ministry of Children and Family Development
MDT	Multi-Disciplinary Team
NKLCS	North Kootenay Lake Community Services Society
PEACE	Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling, and Empowerment
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SD20	School District 20
Trail FAIR	Trail Family and Individual Resource Society
VS	Victim Services