Re: Your request for access to information under Part II of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act CSSD-06-2018

On March 23, 2018, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development (CSSD) received your request for access to the following records/information:

- *I would to know how many foster homes in the province were investigated going back 5 years to 2013. I would also like to know how many closed due to the investigations conducted.*

I am pleased to inform you that a decision has been made by the Deputy Minister for Children Seniors and Social Development to provide access to the requested information for April 1, 2017-March 31, 2018.

As discussed on April 11, 2018 by telephone, the ATIPP Coordinator became aware of records on April 10, 2018, that were responsive to your request. The information covers the period of April 1, 2017- March 31, 2018 and includes the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSSD Regional Offices</th>
<th>Metro</th>
<th>Central-West</th>
<th>Labrador</th>
<th>Province Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Foster home investigations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Foster home closures as a result of an investigation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The information provided here was collected manually from each regional area of CSSD. The numbers include homes that are or were “active foster home” investigations as of April 1, 2017. Conceivably, those investigations may have been initiated in 2016 and completed in 2017.*
The remaining records pertaining to 2013-2016 are unavailable as the data management system CSSD used up until March 2018 did not have the capacity to collect data on the number of foster home investigations, or foster homes that may close following an investigation. CSSD collects data on its programs and services from a variety of sources including its case management system and manual reporting of data to provincial office by social work staff across the Province. Data monitoring has historically focused on basic client data (e.g., number of clients, types of placement and whether services are delivered in accordance with policy standards.

In an effort to improve the quality of the information CSSD collects, on March 19, 2018, CSSD implemented a new case management system – the Integrated Service Management System, in an effort to improve client services and enhance data monitoring. This system tracks a larger volume of data than the previous system, and will enhance CSSD’s ability to aggregate data, such a foster home investigations, as additional information is added to the system.

CSSD has well established policies and procedures to respond to allegations of maltreatment of children and youth placed in foster homes, including procedures for ensuring their safety while the investigations are being completed. All referrals regarding the quality of care provided or the maltreatment of children or youth placed in a foster home, are assessed on the same day of receiving the information to determine: 1) what action is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of the child or youth; and 2) whether a foster home investigation is required. All allegations of physical or sexual abuse are also immediately referred to the police so they can determine if they need to proceed with a criminal investigation. In situations where the police are also investigating, the Department collaborates with the police to conduct a joint investigation.

The investigating social worker, in consultation with the clinical program supervisor, completes the investigation. This includes: their clinical assessment, analysis of the information gathered, whether the referral was verified, and their conclusions and recommendations regarding continued approval or closure of the foster home. The zone manager responsible for the foster home makes the final determination regarding the continued approval or closure of the foster home. Social workers and managers document the outcome of the Foster Home Investigation on both the foster home file and the child or youth’s in care file.

To ensure quality care is provided to children and youth, the department has well established polices for the approval and monitoring of foster homes. Foster parents go through an intensive home assessment process, which includes a thorough home study as well as reference checks, child protection clearance checks, criminal and vulnerable sector checks, medicals, and a home inspection. If approved, the monitoring process includes monthly in person visits with the foster parents and, for regular foster homes, an annual review of their approval. In addition, children and youth in care who are placed in a foster home are also interviewed or observed on a monthly basis and a progress report is completed on each child or youth in care every six months.
Please be advised that you may ask the Information and Privacy Commissioner to review the processing of your access request, as set out in section 42 of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (the Act). A request to the Commissioner must be made in writing within 15 business days of the date of this letter or within a longer period that may be allowed by the Commissioner.

The address and contact information of the Information and Privacy Commissioner is as follows:

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner  
2 Canada Drive  
P. O. Box 13004, Stn. A  
St. John’s, NL A1B 3V8  

Telephone: (709) 729-6309  
Toll-Free: 1-877-729-6309  
Facsimile: (709) 729-6500  

You may also appeal directly to the Supreme Court Trial Division within 15 business days after you receive the decision of the public body, pursuant to section 52 of the Act.

**For Government Departments:**  
Please be advised that responsive records will be published following a 72 hour period after the response is sent electronically to you or five business days in the case where records are mailed to you. It is the goal to have the responsive records posted to the Completed Access to Information Requests website within one business day following the applicable period of time. Please note that requests for personal information will not be posted online.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me by telephone at (709) 729-6370 or by e-mail at michellemurray@gov.nl.ca.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Michelle Murray B.A., B.S.W., M.S.W.  
Program & Policy Development Specialist/ATIPP Coordinator  
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