

DATE: 15-March-2013

**APPENDIX A**

**LETTER OF INFORMATION / CONSENT**

**How Agency Restructuring and Amalgamation is Perceived by Workers at North Eastern Ontario Family and Children Services**

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**Investigators:**

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**Purpose of the Study:**

The current restructuring of public sector services is exponentially redefining the service delivery model of social services. One of the outcomes of public sector restructuring has been the popular approach of centralizing services through the amalgamation of several agencies into one central organization. These changes are based on the fundamental concept and theory of New Public Management (NPM). NPM is a current model being applied to the restructuring of public services across Children Aid Societies (CAS) in Ontario. It applies similar administrative structures found in the private sector and seeks to provide a more efficient model than current bureaucratic structures. The purpose of this study is to look at the recent amalgamation of the North Eastern Ontario Child and Family Services (NEOFACS) and determine how its restructuring reflects NPM theory. Furthermore, the aim is to provide an over arching analysis from administrators, managers, and front line individuals working in the agency and provide their perspective of the changes since NEOFACS inception.

**Procedures involved in the Research:**

The participants will be invited for an interview in a neutral setting. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes to allow the participants to answer several open-ended questions aimed at providing sufficient time for the process. This interview will be audio-recorded with your permission, and transcribed at a later date by the student investigator. Please see the attached Interview Guide for a list of questions that will be asked. This provides all participants an opportunity to give feedback to the student investigator and ensure that statements and comments were accurately captured and are appropriately reflective.

*Example of sample questions*

1. Has your caseload and responsibilities changed since the amalgamation?
2. Do you think the current model through the restructuring will benefit the service users of the agency?
3. Where do you see the restructuring taking this agency in the future, do you have any input as to what you would like to see happen or change?

**Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:**

It is anticipated that there will be minimal risks to those agreeing to participate in this study. Should you feel anxious or uncomfortable in answering any of the questions posed, you may advise the student investigator prior to the interview, or during the interview. You are welcome to ask the interviewer to turn off the audio recording at any time during the interview, and any information discussed that is not being recorded, will not be included in the study. Further, participants may withdraw from the study at any time, and all data linked to this participant will be destroyed and not included in the study. When answering questions, please take into consideration that the student is known to the agency in which you are employed and this is a small community. There is a small chance that you could be identified by the stories you tell during the interview. Every precaution will be taken to safeguard your confidentially and I will never reveal your name or details of your identity, but full confidentiality cannot be totally guaranteed.

**Potential Benefits:**

This study provides an opportunity for individuals working in the social service sector to give their perspective in a process that is decided at a level where they have little or no say. Additionally, NEOFACS is an agency situated in a part of Northern Ontario that is not readily accessible to southern Ontario. In short, it will provide a voice for northern Ontarians that work in the social service sector.

**Confidentiality:**

Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy.

I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified.

All participants will be given a randomly selected number for identification purposes within the study.

However, all participants should acknowledge that we are often identifiable through the stories we tell, and that a relatively small sample of participants is being interviewed. Based on this, there is a chance that a statement or story that is used in the final research study may be interpreted as being associated with a participant.

The information/data you provide will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my home office where only I will have access to it. Information kept on a USB drive and computer will be protected by a password. Once the study has been completed, all audio recordings will be destroyed and transcripts of interviews will be destroyed after one year.

The union and NEOFACS will only be provided with a summary of the research paper and data once it has been successfully defended and publically released. They will not have access to any of the personal files or transcripts of the interviews. This is only seen by the researcher and will be destroyed within one year of the thesis being released to the public.

**Legally Required Disclosure:**

Although I will protect your privacy as outlined above, in circumstances where a participant discloses a personal threat to harm either themselves or someone else, including a child, I have a legal obligation to report this disclosure to the appropriate authority.

**Participation and Withdrawal:**

Your participation in this study is voluntary and it is your choice to be part of the study or not. Should you choose to be part of the study, you can withdraw at any point in the research process for whatever reason, up to August 1, 2013. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you.

Steps for withdrawal

1. Contact the researcher and advise you want to withdraw from the research.
2. If you have already provided data through interviews with the researcher. It will be destroyed and not used during the study.
3. Any identifiable information that the researcher has of the participants will be destroyed immediately.
4. The researcher will ask if you have any further concerns and try to minimize all worries.

In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

**Information about the Study Results:**

I expect to have the stories from research participants completed by approximately June 2013. If you would like a brief summary of the final results of this study upon its completion in September 2013, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.

**Questions about the Study:**

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at:

trembsd@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance.

If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

 McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat

 Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142

 c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support

 E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

**CONSENT**

* I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Steven Tremblay of McMaster University.
* I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
* I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until approximately August 1, 2013.
* I have been given a copy of this form.
* I agree to participate in the study.
* I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study’s results.

Please send them to this email address \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Or to this mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study’s results.