

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 438**  
**Asked on 13 March 2007**

MR MICHAEL CHOI MP asked the Minister for Child Safety (MS BOYLE)-

**QUESTION:**

Will she outline any new initiatives her department has initiated to assist hard working child safety officers make more informed decisions in their day-to-day work?

**ANSWER:**

I thank the Member for his question and for his interest in the hard working staff of my department. The Beattie Government has now implemented all 110 recommendations made by the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) for reform of the child protection system in Queensland.

It's been a major achievement for the Government to create a new Department of Child Safety, dedicated entirely to the protection of children, and have it up and running while at the same time implementing all 110 CMC recommendations.

The department's dedicated and hard working child safety officers, who deal directly with clients, have challenging jobs. Decisions that they make in relation to cases they are dealing with have important ramifications for children and their families. A number of the child protection reforms introduced over the past three years have been aimed specifically at assisting child safety officers to make informed casework decisions.

Child safety officers now undergo improved and updated training to prepare them for their roles and responsibilities. The training program is mandatory for all child safety officers starting employment with the department, with ten programs being offered in the first half of 2007. The training programs extend over six months and are available in Brisbane, Townsville and Rockhampton.

The department has developed and implemented a comprehensive Child Safety Practice Manual to provide practice guidelines and procedures to ensure accountable decision-making and to provide support to staff engaged in direct service delivery. The Child Safety Practice Manual is updated twice yearly in order to provide contemporary direction to child safety officers.

The department has also implemented Structured Decision Making (SDM) which contains a range of assessment and case management tools to assist child safety officers to make the best possible decisions at critical points in the child protection system about children and young people who come to their attention.

The department's new Integrated Client Management System (ICMS) went 'live' in March 2007. The system has been designed from the point of view of child protection workers and will provide access to up to date, accurate and complete information on children and young people subject to departmental intervention. The ICMS will facilitate more effective decision-making and case management as well as improving the information available for service delivery and workforce planning. Through ICMS, child protection workers will have access to specialised diaries, the auto-generation of reports, decision-making support tools, service directories and reminders.

In addition to these initiatives, a Practice Development and Support Branch has recently been created within the department with the responsibility for providing the practice setting, guidance and tools that will improve the delivery of child protection services to children and families in Queensland. This branch will bring together a highly-experienced team of child protection experts to support and provide advice to child safety officers across the State. They will research the world's best practices in child protection, assess how they fit with Queensland's policies and how they could be used here. These experts will use that information and work with frontline staff to create the best plan possible for particular children. The branch will also review case plans to identify where things could be improved or where additional training is required.