
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Children and Family Development
Representative for Children and Youth

New protocol ensures voices of children and youth are heard

VICTORIA – Accessing services can be a complicated experience at a time when children and youth are at their most vulnerable. A joint advocacy protocol that will strengthen a shared commitment to promoting and supporting effective advocacy on behalf of B.C. children and youth receiving government services was signed today by the Minister of Children and Family Development Mary McNeil and the Representative for Children and Youth Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond.

The rights of children and youth in care are currently outlined in ministry legislation, including their right to advocacy from the representative's office. Social workers work with families to make sure these rights are upheld.

This protocol ensures that there are no barriers to the representative's advocacy function and clarifies the mechanisms that enable both organizations to continue to work together to achieve the best possible results for children and youth in British Columbia. The protocol also clearly explains the roles of ministry and Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) staff regarding RCY advocacy services.

An RCY advocate provides information, support and advice to children and youth who are receiving or attempting to access government-funded services designated under the Representative for Children and Youth Act. The advocates ensure children's voices are heard, their rights are upheld, their interests are central to decision-making and they are receiving the services they need. This, in turn, contributes to improved well-being and better outcomes for vulnerable children, youth and their families.

Quotes:

Mary McNeil, Minister of Children and Family Development –

- "This protocol agreement helps to ensure children and youth who receive government services have their views heard and considered. As a ministry that works with vulnerable families, it's of critical importance that our clients have full knowledge of the advocacy services available to them through the Representative for Children and Youth."

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, Representative for Children and Youth –

- “The young people who have to navigate through these services often need the support of an advocate to understand the system and help them express their views. Both ministry staff and RCY staff now have a clear roadmap that will help them work together in the most effective and best possible way, and kids will benefit.”

Quick Facts:

- Since April 2007, the RCY has opened 6,113 new advocacy cases, with an average of 143 new cases per month.
- In addition to advocacy services, the RCY conducts reviews and investigations of critical injuries and deaths, monitors designated services, and undertakes research that sheds light on the child-serving system and outcomes for B.C. children and youth.
- Advocacy ensures the rights, interests, voice and well-being of children and youth are respected and protected in relation to the provision of government services.
- The ministry promotes and supports advocacy as an essential part of professional practice.
- Ministry staff, caregivers and service providers all fulfil an advocacy role on behalf of children and youth and recognize that there may be times when external advocacy is required to support the best outcomes for children, youth and families.

Learn More:

For more information on the Representative for Children and Youth advocacy services, visit:

<http://www.rcybc.ca>

For more information about the rights of children and youth in care, view “Know Your Rights”, developed in partnership with the Federation of BC Youth In Care Networks:

http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/foster/pdf/know_your_rights.pdf

To view the protocol, visit:

http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/pdf/rcy_advocacy_protocol.pdf

<http://www.rcybc.ca>

For photos of the signing, visit:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/bcgovphotos/sets/72157626170642161/>

<http://www.rcybc.ca>

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