



News Release

For Immediate Release

July 3, 2019

RCY'S MANDATE EXPANDED TO REACH MORE YOUNG ADULTS

VICTORIA – The Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) can now advocate for more young adults who have aged out of government care following a regulatory change that expands the Office's legal mandate.

Young adults up to their 24th birthdays who have aged out of care and who are on or eligible for an Agreement with Young Adults (AYA), or who are on or eligible for a provincial post-secondary tuition waiver, can now work with RCY advocates if they need help or advice.

Amendments to the Regulation to the *Representative for Children and Youth Act (RCY Act)* – the legislation that governs RCY's work – mean the Office can offer support to an additional estimated 4,400 young adults, ages 19 to 23 inclusive, who have aged out of the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

"I'm thrilled with this expansion of my Office's mandate," said Representative Jennifer Charlesworth. "This crucial change allows my Office to help a particularly vulnerable group of young people through their transition to adulthood. Youth transitioning out of care may not have a parent, caregiver or adult support and, to be successful, often need someone to help navigate their first steps into the adult-serving system. Our advocates can help with that."

RCY's advocates are front-line workers who meet with and take calls from young people, families, social workers, caregivers, teachers, doctors, lawyers and other concerned adults every day. They provide information, assistance, support and advice, teaching young people how to speak up for themselves, and they advocate directly on behalf of children, youth and young adults when necessary.

"Every day, I hear from youth and community groups who tell me that the provision of supports and advocacy to young adults who are transitioning into adulthood after having been in care or receiving services from MCFD is a critical issue," Charlesworth said. "These young people deserve to have the same opportunities for success that other young people have."

Proposed amendments to the *RCY Act* were presented to the Legislature last year by the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth (SSCCY) in its report *Review of the Representative for Children and Youth Act*. Amongst other matters, the Committee's report recommended an expansion of RCY's mandate to provide advocacy services to include young adults, ages 19 to 26 years inclusive, who had previously been in care. The Committee also recommended that RCY advocacy for this population include a broad range of services such as AYA, tuition waivers for post-secondary education, mental health and addictions services, housing and social assistance.

These substantive amendments to the *RCY Act* are expected sometime next year. Today's changes to the Regulation are an initial step in extending RCY advocacy services to this young adult population in the short-term. These changes to the Regulation are a narrower scope than what was recommended by the SSCCY since young adults are currently defined in the *RCY Act* as 19- to 23-year-olds inclusive. As well, through this interim regulatory step, RCY advocacy services will be limited to matters relating to AYAs or tuition waivers for post-secondary education.

This new mandate does not change RCY's function of continuing to also provide advocacy for those young adults eligible to receive Community Living BC (CLBC) services, which was brought into effect in 2013.

Young adults between 19 and their 24th birthdays who are eligible for or on an AYA, eligible for or on a tuition waiver, and those eligible to receive CLBC services can call RCY if they feel they need support or assistance. Others – such as a family member, trusted friend, or support worker – can also call on behalf of the young adult to request advocacy services. **Call RCY toll-free at: 1-800-476-3933.**

Information about the Agreements With Young Adults program can be found here:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/youth-and-family-services/teens-in-foster-care/agreements-with-young-adults>

Information about the tuition waiver program can be found here:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/pay-for-school/provincial-tuition-waiver-program>

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