



Statement

June 1, 2020
For Immediate Release

Well, this is certainly not the 10th annual Child and Youth in Care Week we were expecting. COVID-19 has thrown a wrench into many celebrations this year, and it is affecting this very special week as well.

But you know what? Just because it's different doesn't mean we can't still honour and celebrate the amazing children and youth who, through no fault of their own, find themselves involved with the care system. If you are a child or youth in care, from care, or receiving government services, I believe celebration is more necessary this year than ever. And young people and those who care about them are stepping up and getting really creative. Where normally we would see in-person events around the province, this year we are seeing virtual events. Check out the BC Child and Youth Care week celebrations here: <https://www.bcchildandyouthincareweek.com> for some ideas.

COVID-19 and the isolation that goes with it has been tough, especially on children and youth in care. It's a big deal when you can't see your parents, family members and friends, and it hurts. Sometimes it's hard to understand why these types of rules are imposed, and it's easy to feel alone and alienated. But I want to remind you that this is not forever. And there are things we can do to help you cope during this challenging time.

If you are missing your family, stay in touch virtually as much as you can. You can use Skype, Zoom or Facetime. You can use private social media groups. You can even go old-school and use the phone to stay in touch. I know it's not the same as being together in person, but it is something and it does help.

It's the same with your friends. Even though you need to be physically distant, that doesn't mean you can't socialize. Connect through Skype or Houseparty or Zoom or Facetime, or whatever app or social media works for you. You can still be together, even while physically apart.

One concern that we have heard repeatedly in my Office since COVID-19 started is that children and youth in care or receiving government services, such as an Agreement with Young Adults, a Youth Agreement or a Tuition Waiver, don't always have access to the technology they need – like a laptop

or a phone or an iPad – which makes staying in touch virtually very difficult. That's where we can help!

Your social worker or AYA worker should be working with you to connect you with the technology you need. If that's not happening, call us at 1-800-476-3933. It's a free call from anywhere in the province and we can help you get the support you need.

Did you also know that supports for youth receiving government services or who have recently left care, including housing and financial supports, have been extended during COVID-19? Again here, we can help get you connected with the supports you need. Don't hesitate to call. You have a right to be heard and it's our job to make sure that you are. We're open during COVID-19 and we want to help. If you prefer, you can email us at rcy@rcybc.ca.

You can also follow us on social media to stay updated on supports for young people. We're on Facebook (@rcybc and @rcybcyouth), Instagram (@rcybcyouth) and Twitter (@rcybc and @rcybcyouth). Happy Child and Youth in Care week, and remember, here at the RCY we celebrate you and honour your experience, insights and ideas. You are not alone. We're here for you!

Sincerely,



Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative for Children and Youth