



News Release

For Immediate Release
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**Representative for Children and Youth
calls for provincial government to address “urgent needs” of up to 83,000 young people
with disabilities not receiving adequate services**

Victoria, B.C. – In a report released today, the Representative for Children and Youth says “the time to act is now” to ensure the needs of young people living with disabilities, and their families, are met.

“A staggering number of families are at their breaking point, living within a system that remains underfunded, fragmented and almost impossible to navigate,” said Representative Jennifer Charlesworth. “They have been waiting too long for change and they can’t wait any longer.”

Today’s report *Too Many Left Behind* is a follow-up to RCY’s July 2024 report, *Don’t Look Away* which called for short and longer terms actions to transform systems of care that the Representative highlights are too often not meeting the urgent needs of children and families. While government accepted all of the Representative’s recommendations in that report, and expectations have been laid out by the Premier in the recent ministry mandate letters, Charlesworth says now it’s time for action.

Today’s report is based on extensive engagement with families, service providers, and disability organizations across B.C., on a survey of more than 1100 families conducted by RCY in late 2023 and on in-depth review of government records. The report’s findings include:

- Only 32 percent of families agree that the services they receive meet their children’s needs.
- Less than seven percent of families report feeling confident they will receive the out-of-school or in-school services they need within the next one to three years.
- 14 percent of families have considered placing their child in care solely to access disability services that would not be funded if the child remained at home. This percentage rises to 16.4 percent for families with Indigenous children.
- 20 percent of families whose children are in government care reported that they made this decision because it was the only way they could secure the necessary support for their child.

- Over the past five years, children and youth with disabilities are overrepresented in government care, with an average of 41 percent of all children in government care identified as having a disability-related support need.

The report also relies on an analysis of government expenditures on services for young people with disabilities over the past 18 years. It finds that, although expenditures increased by 190 percent during this period, the majority of the spending growth went to salaries and a narrow set of programs. The report highlights that only 28 percent of funding growth was left to address the growing needs of children and youth with a wide range of disabilities, and their families. The report also finds that up to 83,000 young people, 70 percent of the 120,000 people under 19 living with a disability, did not receive the services and supports required for their well-being including respite, transportation to medical appointments, specialized medical equipment and therapies in the community and in school.

“This prolonged under-resourcing is resulting in heart-breaking and frankly shocking situations that should be a wake-up call for us all. We listened to families tell us they would give up their kids to get the care they needed, there were others who were close to harming themselves and their children because they saw no other answers, and still others who have been waiting on waitlists as they watch their kids lose their childhood.”

The report reiterates the Representative’s call in *Don’t Look Away* for an “all-of-government” approach to develop a Child Well-Being Strategy and Action Plan. Today’s report emphasizes the importance of providing supports to families of young people with disabilities to enable them to stay in their own homes, ensuring equitable access to supports and resources across the full spectrum of disabilities, facilitating cross-ministerial collaboration and establishing a data gathering system that allows for an accurate picture of exactly how many young people in the province are living with disabilities and are being served.

“We know it will take many years to achieve what we are calling the North Star of child well-being as laid out in *Don’t Look Away*, but the path to reaching the North Star is built by taking meaningful action every step of the way and continually learning and improving. This report makes it clear where we are starting from and what actions need to be taken now.”

To view the report visit: <https://rcybc.ca/reports-and-publications/reports/too-many-left-behind/>

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