

ANNUAL REPORT

and Service Plan 2025/26 to 2027/28



2024/25

At RCY, we gratefully acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional territories of First Nations peoples. We are especially grateful to live and work on the lands of the L̥heidli T̥enneh peoples (Prince George) and the lək̓wəŋən (Lekwungen) peoples of the Songhees and X̓wsep̓əm (Kosapsum) Nations in Victoria, where our offices are located. We also extend our respect and appreciation to our Métis and Inuit partners and friends who are also guests on these beautiful territories and who share the teachings and practices from their homelands.



September 29, 2025

The Honourable Raj Chouhan
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Suite 207, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C., V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Speaker,

It is my pleasure to present the 2024/25 Annual Report and the 2025/26 to 2027/28 Service Plan of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth to the Legislative Assembly. This document reports on the period April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025. It has been prepared in accordance with part 5, sections 17 and 19 of the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Charlesworth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative for Children and Youth

pc: Ms. Kate Ryan-Lloyd
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Chair, Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth

Deputy Chair, Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth

Emotional Trigger Warning

This report discusses topics that are very challenging and may trigger strong feelings of loss or grief, or memories of personal or familial experiences related to child and family services. If you require emotional support, the following resources are available:

Kid's Help Phone (1-800-668-6868, or text CONNECT to 686868) is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to Canadians ages five to 29 who want confidential and anonymous care from a counsellor.

KUU-US Crisis Line (1-800-588-8717) is available to support Indigenous people in B.C., 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Métis Crisis Line (1-833-638-4722) is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Youth in BC (<https://youthinbc.com>) Online chat is available from noon to 1 a.m. in B.C.

Mental Health Support Line (310-6789 – no area code) will connect you to your local B.C. crisis line without a wait or busy signal, 24 hours a day. Crisis line workers are there to listen and support you as well as refer you to community resources.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Crisis Line (1-844-413-6649) is available to individuals impacted by issues concerning missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The National Indian Residential School Crisis Line (1-866-925-4419) provides 24-hour crisis support to former Indian Residential School students and their families.

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REPRESENTATIVE'S MESSAGE

This past year was like no other I have experienced in my seven years as B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth. My world, my office's perspective, and, in many ways, the child welfare landscape in British Columbia were changed by one beautiful boy. His story continues to shape how we see our work and what is possible.

We call him Colby. To those who knew him, he was gentle, loving and full of talents and passions. People saw so much potential in him; potential that was never realized. Just shy of his 12th birthday, Colby was brutally tortured by extended family caregivers whose parenting capacity had never been assessed. His death made headlines, but behind those headlines were too many unanswered questions. With encouragement from the First Nations Leadership Council, the Our Children Our Way Society, and many others, our office was asked to uncover the events that led to his death and the systemic issues behind them.

Our review revealed more than 40 missed opportunities by adults and institutions responsible for his safety. Exposing the failures of a siloed and outdated system stretched our capacity and changed our perspective. It also opened our minds to what could be possible if we shifted toward a new vision.

We call this vision a “North Star” of well-being. It is not defined by risk, liability and protection, but by the qualities that allow children to thrive. These include safety, belonging, connection, identity, love and opportunity.

Colby's story strengthened our resolve to tell individual stories alongside systemic analysis and to grow our capacity for meaningful engagement and decolonizing methodologies. It also reminded us that we cannot do this work alone.

Nearly 2,000 people participated in our engagement processes for the systemic review this past year. Youth, families, staff, partners, researchers, Elders and cultural advisors, shared their experience and knowledge. They helped us see patterns across thousands of stories and to imagine another way forward. Their contributions, alongside the dedication of our staff, defined us as an office and guided us toward collective responsibilities.

The stories we heard connected directly with our other reports this year. *Too Many Left Behind: Ensuring Children and Youth with Disabilities Thrive* showed how families continue to face barriers in accessing the supports their children need. *No Time to Wait* Parts 1 and 2 revealed the crisis in the child welfare workforce, which affects every service available to children and families in B.C.

And our work on the toxic drug crisis amplified the voices of those on the front lines, researchers, policymakers and young people and families with lived and living experience.

What we see in our work is sobering. Despite efforts across government and the community, children are not getting the outcomes they deserve. Too many are not thriving in safe, nurturing and supportive environments.



**This moment
deserves more
than just
incremental
change.**

- Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative for Children and Youth

RCY is uniquely positioned in the social services ecosystem to identify hotspots, track trends and shed light on critical issues. However, as compelling as Colby's story and the systemic review in *Don't Look Away* may be, we have been here before with reports arising from the Gove Inquiry, the Hughes Review, the Liberating Our Children, Liberating our Nations report and many other thoughtful and reasoned systemic reviews. This time must be different – we cannot look away.

The government has acknowledged the need for change. The ministers' statements of commitment, as outlined in mandate letters, recognizes that children's well-being must not be a partisan issue. But statements alone are not enough.

Some new areas of work are just beginning. We are examining the Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment (SAJE) program as an emerging issue for young adults leaving care.

We are conducting a review of residential resources, and we are preparing a report on how systems and society are struggling to address sexual violence experienced by far too many girls. Each of these reviews will deepen our understanding of the risks and opportunities for children, youth and young adults at this time in history. We also recognize that what we call on others to do, we must do ourselves.

This moment demands more than incremental change. *Don't Look Away* defined our work in 2024 and 2025, but bringing it to life has only begun. Guided by Colby's story and the voices of countless young people, we are resolved to push for the transformation that children and youth in this province so urgently need.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J Charlesworth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative for Children and Youth

NAVIGATING TO A NEW NORTH STAR

In 2021/22, RCY renewed its strategic direction and priorities under what we called our 'Paddling Forward Strategy' focused on high-quality core statutory work, and strategic priorities that centered on the improvement of existing systems that support young people. The boy at the center of this year's foundational work in *Don't Look Away* taught us that trying to tinker around the edges of the existing system is not what we need. We can't just paddle through existing waters, we must chart a whole new course and navigate to a new North Star of child and youth well-being.

This vision shifts us from a paradigm built on risk, surveillance and compliance to one grounded in safety, belonging, identity, love and opportunity.

We must all look to this direction and that means calling on governments, Nations, agencies and communities to align their efforts across a child well-being system, guided by shared responsibility. Internally, it means re-setting our own direction, becoming more culturally agile, strengthening our use of evidence, listening more deeply to young people and families, and holding ourselves accountable to continual learning and improvement.

We cannot achieve this North Star alone. But together, by choosing a new direction, we can build a system of care where every child in B.C. is safe from harm, connected and thriving.





A photograph showing the silhouettes of two people standing in a field of tall grass at dusk or dawn. The sky is a gradient of blue and purple. The person on the left is wearing a long-sleeved shirt and pants, and the person on the right is wearing a long-sleeved shirt and pants. The text 'WHO WE ARE' is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image, with a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the text.

WHO WE ARE

OVERVIEW OF THE OFFICE OF THE REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Representative for Children and Youth is an independent office of the Legislature, appointed by members of the Legislative Assembly.

The Representative reports to two parliamentary committees, the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth (SSCCY) and the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (SSCFGS). The SSCCY members are responsible for the well-being of children and youth in the Legislative Assembly and all public reports, that the Representative prepares must be reviewed by the SSCCY. The Committee may also refer matters to the Representative for further consideration and may undertake their own research and assessment of issues about which they have concerns.

The SSCFGS members monitor the Representative's progress and performance, receive budget submissions and make recommendations to the Minister of Finance on the budget allocations for all Independent Offices of the Legislative Assembly.

The Representative's independence means that she does not report to or through any government ministry, although the Office works closely with all ministries responsible for aspects of child well-being, including the Ministries of the Attorney General, Children and Family Development, Citizens Services, Education and Child Care, Health, Housing and Municipal Affairs, Post Secondary Education and Future Skills, Public Safety and Solicitor General and Social Development and Poverty Reduction, as well as all health authorities and Community Living BC.

Both the independence and the opportunity to work with such a diverse array of public bodies is a privilege that enables and compels the Office to dig deeply into the hardest challenges and issues experienced by young people, their families and those providing services. We are called on to ask hard and curious questions, engage broadly to find solutions and advocate persistently and fiercely to improve the lives of young people.

The Representative's mandate under [the Representative for Children and Youth Act](#) is three-fold; to provide individual advocacy for designated services¹ to children, youth and young adults; to review, investigate and report on critical injuries and deaths of children and youth; and to monitor, review, conduct research, prepare reports and make recommendations related to government services and supports young people receive.

RCY Mandate Areas: Shared and Distinct Roles



Upholding Rights

RCY is a rights-based organization that believes every young person has the right to be themselves, to be safe, healthy and heard.

¹ Designated services mean any of the following services or programs for children and their families provided under an enactment or provided or funded by the government: (a) services or programs under the Adoption Act, the Child Care BC Act, the Child Care Subsidy Act, the Child, Family and Community Service Act, the Community Living Authority Act and the Youth Justice Act; (b) early childhood development and child care services; (c) mental health services for children; (d) addiction services for children; (e) services for youth during their transition to adulthood; (f) additional services or programs that are prescribed under section 29 (2) (a) of the RCY Act.

RCY's work is guided by human rights agreements including the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC), the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD) and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). As a provincial public body, we are also accountable under the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' Act](#).

To fulfill our statutory and rights-based responsibilities, RCY gathers and shares knowledge and works closely with First Nations, Métis and urban Indigenous leaders and organizations. The Office is guided by three Cultural Advisors who have both lived experience and deep knowledge of the child welfare system.

To support our statutory responsibilities, the Office also plays a key role in a number of other areas.

Engagement and Convening

The Office regularly brings people with diverse perspectives together to share learnings and wisdom on key issues impacting young people, especially when the issues are complex and there is no clear path forward.

We believe change happens collectively and this work is pivotal in moving forward improvements to care and services that young people have a right to.

Knowledge Mobilization

We know that the work we do needs to get to the right people at the right time. Whether it's partners who want to leverage our research and analysis to support the work that they do, public bodies who want to understand our perspectives more deeply as they work towards improvements, Nations who are working to resume jurisdiction and plan for their children, or members of the public, we aim to make our work accessible.

Supporting Indigenous Self-determination and Jurisdiction

There is no question that colonial mindsets and practices have caused – and continue to cause – deep harm to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples across the country.

The impact of disconnection, dislocation, abuse, neglect and racism through residential schools, the sixties scoop, Indian hospitals and contemporary child welfare, education, health and policing practices has led to a disproportionate involvement of the child welfare system in the lives of Indigenous families.

However, new federal and provincial legislation is starting to align with the long-standing visions and efforts of First Nations, Métis and Inuit leaders and communities as they reclaim their inherent rights to self-determination and jurisdiction over the well-being of their children. RCY supports and is involved in this historic shift in a variety of ways, from sharing data and information about advocacy and oversight practices, to advocating to government to ensure Indigenous Governing Bodies (IGBs) and their Nations have equitable access to resources, to providing direct service during and following transition, at the request of an IGB and Nation.

Our work is interconnected and supports young people on a variety of levels. The following page describes four examples of how RCY's team work together to ensure a more robust understanding of issues that impact children and youth.

RCY Interconnected Functions

Toxic Drug Crisis

Focus: Reduce overdose risk and push for coordinated, youth-centred responses.

- **Reviews & Investigations:** Patterns of injuries, deaths and emotional harm emerge from reportable circumstances.
- **Systemic Advocacy:** Progress on past RCY recommendations reviewed, current systems and issues mapped, and literature review completed.
- **Strategic Engagement:** Diverse people engaged to identify challenges, needs, strengths, and opportunities to effect real change.
- **Knowledge Mobilization:** Findings and actions will be shared with the government, authorities and communities in Fall 2025.

Residential Resources

Focus: Safety, quality and accountability in staffed homes.

- **Individual Advocacy:** High volume of community calls with concerns about and from youth in staffed homes.
- **Reviews & Investigations:** Data and stories of critical injuries affirm issues. Review launched and youth, providers and government engaged.
- **Systemic Advocacy:** Documents, transcripts and literature analyzed. Themes and policy/practice gaps identified.
- **Knowledge Mobilization:** Guidance and promising practices to be shared province-wide in Spring 2026.

WORKING
TOGETHER
FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE

Sexualized Violence

Focus: Prevent and respond to sexualized violence against girls in care/receiving services.

- **Reviews & Investigations and Advocacy:** Data and stories examined across both teams and patterns validated. The focus on sexual violence emerged.
- **Systemic Advocacy:** Through two-eyed seeing approach in an aggregate review of child deaths and community visits, girls' experiences of child and family serving systems deeply understood.
- **Strategic Engagement:** Community visiting circles and advisors validated experiences of girls and identified ways to respond.
- **Knowledge Mobilization:** Awareness raising to inform prevention and responsiveness in 2025/26.

Disability Services

Focus: Sustain systemic advocacy for comprehensive, equitable and accessible services that meet the needs of young people with disabilities and their families/caregivers.

- **Reviews & Investigations:** Identifies numerous situations in which children and youth with disabilities (CYD) are unable to access services they need.
- **Systemic Advocacy:** Monitors RCY recommendations for CYD. Finds limited change and delayed action. Analyzes data and research.
- **Strategic Engagement:** Connects with families, caregivers, service providers to assess current issues. Family survey gathers 1,100 responses.
- **Communication & Knowledge Mobilization:** Public report released and knowledge shared with government, disability community and organizations.

Together, these functions help shape safer, stronger systems for all young people.

OUR VISION, VALUES & APPROACH



OUR VISION

A 'North Star' of well-being: all children and youth in British Columbia are well-supported across health, education, and social systems to ensure that they are safe, connected and thriving and that their fundamental rights are upheld.

OUR VALUES AND APPROACH

Being in full service to young people and working hard to strengthen the services they receive is challenging work, and as we often say, it is also “heart” work. Our approach is grounded in shared values and principles that we are continually developing and deepening. RCY is committed to building an inclusive, accessible and culturally agile organization that fosters a sense of respect, care and belonging for those we serve and for each other. Given the very difficult and often heart-breaking work that we do, we aim for a workplace rooted in wellness, flexibility and compassion.

Given the over-involvement of government child welfare systems in the lives of Indigenous young people and their families, our work must reflect an Indigenous world view. RCY has an ethical and moral responsibility to investigate the contributing factors, disrupt colonial, colonizing and racist practices that continue to cause harm. But more than addressing inequities, RCY seeks to learn from and integrate wise practices. We won’t get to a new place by making minor adjustments to the old dominant system.

RCY has also had to rethink our ways of doing the work. Our work is constantly guided by knowledge keepers, matriarchs and elders and is done in conjunction with teachings gifted to RCY by our Cultural Advisors in 2023.

The Six Rs that follow translate these commitments into daily practice. They are the touchstones we use to plan, decide and act.



Featured above: RCY Cultural Advisors – Matriarchs Deb Foxcroft and Judy Wilson and Hereditary Chief Wedlidi Speck provide wise guidance and ongoing counsel to the Office. They draw upon their cultural teachings and languages and gifted RCY with six Sacred Teachings to guide all aspects of RCY’s work.

THE SIX SACRED TEACHINGS THAT GUIDE OUR WORK

As RCY prepared to undertake the sacred story work on a child death investigation and the related systemic review, RCY's three Cultural Advisors shared the following sacred teachings to ground our practice and assist us in remembering how to do this difficult work in a good way. These teachings are now embedded in our ways of being.

RELATIONSHIP

We are one with all things in heaven, the air, land, and sea.

RESPECT

When we see all things as sacred, our actions are guided with wisdom.

RELEVANCE

In our leadership, we listen and respond to what is being called for.

RESPONSIBILITY

We stand in our leadership and do our best to fulfill our duties, roles, and responsibilities.

RECIPROCITY

In a sacred world, we learn to express gratitude and appreciation for gifts given.

REPAIR

Repair is to make better, to heal, to restore, and to achieve reconciliation.

THE SIX Rs

The “Six Rs” values were first introduced into RCY’s ways of being with the Paddling Forward Strategy from 2020-21. The sacred teachings offered by the Cultural Advisors have enhanced our understanding and practice. The Six Rs guide our day-to-day and project work, planning and decision making as follows:

Relationship

Meaningful and respectful relationships are essential for RCY to both understand what is being called for and to advocate for changes that will improve the well-being and life outcomes of young people. Deep listening, learning, compassion and transparency are at the centre of all of our relationships.

In Action: Advocates and community engagements strengthened connections with families, youth and service providers through reviews such as Residential Resources and the Workforce Review.

Respect

Respect embraces a curiosity and openness to understanding rather than judgement and blame. We ensure those around us feel heard and valued.

In Action: Through a two-eyed seeing approach in the Sexualized Violence review, Indigenous and community voices validated the lived experiences of girls, ensuring they were heard with dignity.

Relevance

We must ensure that our work is relevant, meaningful and helpful to the children, youth, young adults and the supportive adults who reach out to us for assistance. At the same time, we must be aware of the broader systemic and societal issues that are affecting the well-being of young people and take relevant action to improve the systems and practices for all.

In Action: The Toxic Drug Crisis work reflected the urgent priorities communities identified, pushing for coordinated, youth-centred, life-saving responses.

Responsibility

We are responsible to the Legislative Assembly to fulfill our statutory mandate. We receive sensitive information everyday and we are responsible for thoughtfully using this knowledge and our authority to benefit young people and enhance their well-being. We are also responsible for creating an environment that fosters an engaged, inclusive and mission-driven workforce.

Reciprocity

While we have expertise in a number of areas, there is much that we do not know and must learn in order to be effective. Reciprocity entails giving and receiving knowledge, skills, perspectives, stories, time and resources with those that we are in relationship with.

Repair / Restore

Given the complex and evolving nature and context for our work, we will make mistakes and may inadvertently cause harm. However, we will endeavour to address and repair our mistakes, learn from them and restore the respectful relationships that we aspire to nurture.

In Action: For the Staffed Residential Resources review, RCY tracked patterns of injuries, deaths and harms, listened to young people and reviewed past recommendations and current action to identify ways to ensure quality of care going forward.

In Action: The Disability work convened families, caregivers, providers and the broader disability services community to co-create solutions and reflect back the wisdom shared.

In Action: We recognized the harms we can cause through colonial approaches to investigations and research. We fundamentally shifted our methodology for *Don't Look Away* to reflect our commitment to learn and repair.

In all of our work we are committed to fostering cultural awareness and agility, and advancing anti-racist, trauma-responsive and restorative approaches.

We also recognize that systems of care are complex and interconnected. When we examine issues, we strive to look beyond isolated issues to understand the broader web of factors shaping a young person's life and the responsiveness of services and systems.

THE FOUR PRINCIPLES

The Office is guided by four key principles (the Four Ps) that inform RCY's training, policies, practices and ways of being.

SYSTEMS & COMPLEXITY THINKING

Working with the whole system to address complex needs and issues that young people experience.

CULTURAL SAFETY & ANTI-RACISM

Identifying and opposing bias, discrimination and racism, and practicing cultural awareness and humility.

TRAUMA RESPONSIVE APPROACHES

Understanding the impact of loss, grief and trauma on young people, families and communities and supporting healing.

RESTORATIVE APPROACHES

Establishing practices and building skills to address harms, restore relationships and prevent future harms.



THE POWER OF ADVOCACY



HELPING ONE YOUNG PERSON AT A TIME

At RCY, our top priority is ensuring that all of our work makes a meaningful difference in the lives of young people. Across every function of our Office, we strive to be focused, compassionate, efficient and thorough. The following pages highlight not only the volume of our work, but also the real and lasting impact it has, as we work to pursue our strategic priority of making our work with young people and their circles of support as meaningful as possible.

Individual advocacy is the front-line of RCY's work. We support children, youth and young adults under 27 who are receiving or are trying to access designated government services in the areas of child welfare, disability services, youth justice, early childhood development, mental health, substance use and post-majority services.² Our advocacy support takes many forms including:

- ★ Helping young people understand their rights
- ★ Sharing information with young people about how to self-advocate to ensure their voices are heard
- ★ Directly advocating alongside children, youth and young adults and their families for the services they need
- ★ Working with those responsible for the care of young people to

ensure they hear a young person's perspective and uphold their rights

- ★ Convening meetings with social workers, caregiver and service providers to ensure that decisions are thoughtful and child-centred, well-understood and that action is taken as needed
- ★ Maintaining contact with each young person over time to ensure their needs continue to be met.

Demand for advocacy services is increasing, complexity is rising and limited or strained resources often mean that getting access to services is difficult, slow or impossible – especially in some communities and for some needs. Continuing to adapt and improve our front-line advocacy services so that RCY remains responsive to the immediate needs of young people is a key strategic goal for the Office.

Every contact is an opportunity to help a young person know their rights, navigate services and be heard in decisions that affect them. The stories highlighted here show how we met urgent needs, strengthened self-advocacy and used what we learned from individual files to press for system fixes. For the scale and outcomes of this work, see Advocacy by the Numbers.

² Post-majority services are supports, programs, or financial assistance offered to young adults after they turn 19, aimed at helping them transition to independence. These may include extended housing, income support, education, health services, or cultural supports, depending on eligibility and available programs.

STORIES OF HOW WE HELP



Bringing Siblings Back Together

When 15-year-old Maya and her two younger siblings were removed from their home due to serious safety concerns, they expected to stay together. Instead, they were separated and placed in three different foster homes, and months passed with little to no contact between them. Their social worker prioritized parental access over sibling relationships, meaning they could not visit together, which weakened their connection to each other. Maya's caregiver raised these issues, but frustrated by the lack of progress, she reached out to RCY. Once involved, we listened to Maya's wishes and advocated for a proper sibling access plan.

An RCY Advocate attended meetings to seek a resolution and ensured the siblings' voices were heard in every meeting. They supported the discussion about logistics and securing funding for regular visits. Today, the siblings see each other regularly, and their older sister now hosts visits at her home with support from MCFD. What started as a fractured placement has turned into a reunified sibling connection because young people's relationships with each other matter just as much as their connections to adults.

As of March 31, 2025,

4,834

children and youth were in government care in B.C.

(MCFD)

Pushing for Help Before Crisis Hits

Fourteen-year-old Haruto was a quiet, thoughtful teenager with autism who rarely asked for help; however, when he began to experience frightening thoughts he couldn't control, his parents recognized that he needed support. When his family sought specialized support to help with his mental health and disability, they were informed that he didn't qualify unless he acted on those frightening thoughts.

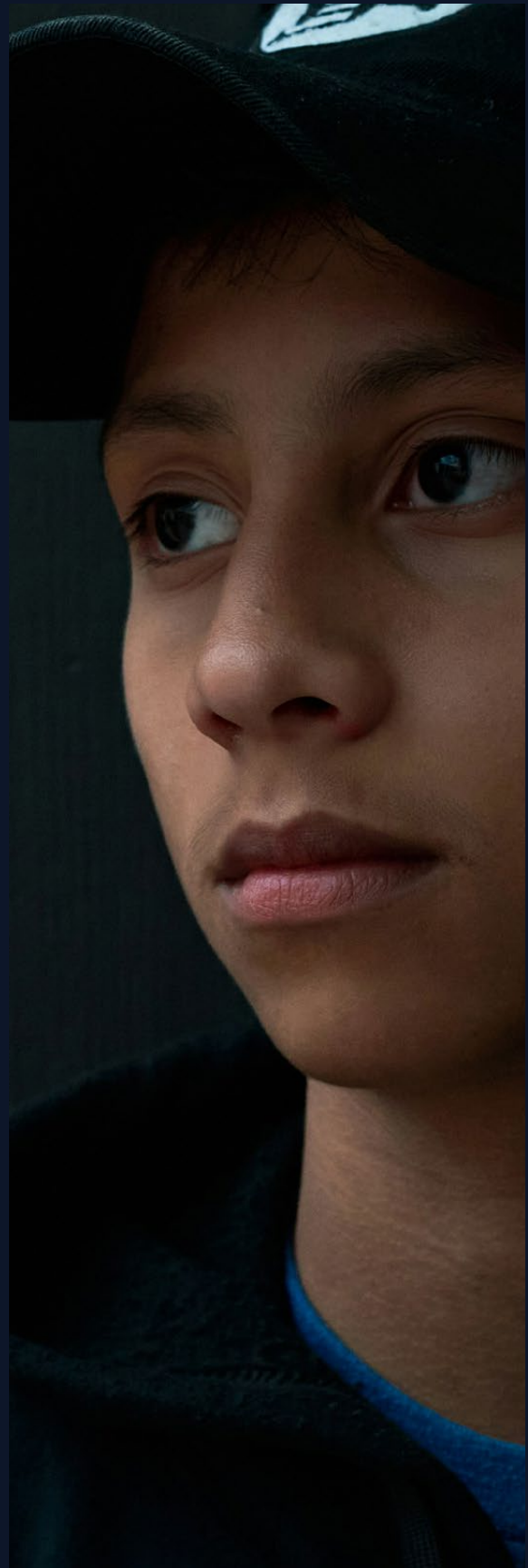
That's when a school counselor recommended they contact RCY. An Advocate promptly reached out to professionals from different MCFD program areas to challenge this "wait-until-crisis" approach. Through advocacy, Haruto's care team created a customized therapy plan that included exposure therapy, one-on-one support, and consultation with a psychologist. Haruto now feels safer, and both he and his family now feel heard.

His story reveals a harsh truth: many services and systems are facing high demands and are focusing on the most acute needs. Young people often have to break before they receive help. Our job is to prevent that break, help the system respond with earlier interventions, and advocate for the system changes and resources necessary so that young people – and their families – don't have to endure the trauma of breaking before they get the help they need.

17%

of children and youth have a diagnosed mental health condition.

(Child Health BC)





Meeting Young People Where They Are

When Jayleen turned 18, her world fell apart. Her mother had just died from an overdose, leaving her without a safe place to live. For a while, she stayed with friends, then turned to a street community where she felt she had more control over her life. Jayleen struggled to be heard by MCFD workers. A local outreach worker who had known Jayleen for years reached out to RCY, concerned that she was at significant risk of harm and that the ministry was not listening to or acknowledging her needs.

An Advocate met Jayleen where she was – outside, in the rain – bringing her food and simply listening. Together, we ensured there was collaboration between outreach teams and MCFD to develop a comprehensive street-based safety plan, which included providing warm clothing, conducting daily check-ins, offering access to meals, and providing basic medical support.

Jayleen’s story isn’t optimal, but it’s real. And it highlights why we need systems that can meet youth where they are, not where we expect them to be.

126

B.C. children and youth (under 19) died from toxic drugs (2019–2023).

(BC Coroner’s Service)

Making Independence Possible

Twenty-one-year-old Neha sought assistance with the basics like budgeting, grocery shopping, and taking transit so she could live more independently as a young adult with a developmental disability. As she aged out of MCFD's Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) services, she was referred to Community Living BC (CLBC), but when she requested a life skills worker, her application was denied for not meeting strict eligibility criteria. Feeling frustrated and stuck, Neha and a former support worker contacted our office.

An Advocate met with her to understand her goals and review her history. With Neha's consent, the Advocate contacted CLBC and coordinated a new planning meeting, submitted an appeal with supporting documentation, and ensured Neha's voice was central to the process. Ultimately, CLBC approved funding for a behavioural support worker trained in adaptive skill-building. Today, Neha is working toward her goals and building confidence in her daily life.

More young people are being referred to CLBC each year, contributing to an annual growth rate of approximately

4%

which is faster than the population growth rate.

(Community Living BC)





Calling Out Broken Promises

Twenty-three-year-old Andre aged out of care at 19 and entered an Agreement with Young Adults (AYA). He structured his future around it and secured a lease, registered for classes, and budgeted for necessities. He was later informed that he would be transitioned into the Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment (SAJE) program and would receive financial assistance until the age of 27. Then, suddenly, the program changed, and support was withdrawn. Andre was left in limbo, struggling to afford food and rent. Confused and frustrated, he contacted our Office.

An Advocate examined his original agreement, documented the funding gap, and escalated the issue with senior decision-makers. Emergency funds were allocated to stabilize Andre's situation, and our team used his case to advocate for broader reforms to the new program.

Andre's experience is not unique, and that is precisely why it matters. Systems must be held accountable when changes harm the very youth they are meant to support.

47%

of unhoused people first experienced homelessness before age 25.

(BC Housing)

Supporting Families Who Step-Up

When nine-year-old Fatima and seven-year-old Meena were removed from a challenging home situation, their aunt immediately offered to take them in. She didn't hesitate; family meant everything. However, once the girls were settled with her, she quickly found herself lost in a maze of paperwork, case conferences, and unclear expectations. Having never dealt with the child welfare system before, she felt excluded from key decisions.

A neighbour mentioned our Office, so she reached out to RCY. An Advocate met with her, helped her understand her rights, simplified legal language, and attended case meetings alongside her. Our team advocated for practical support, including respite care, financial assistance, and counselling, to make the placement sustainable. Now, Fatima and Meena are in a safe, loving home, and their aunt feels confident navigating the system. This story reminds us that when kinship caregivers step up, the system must also step up.

1 in 6

children live in poverty and children in lone-parent families face a 45.5 per cent poverty rate.

(FirstCall - 2024 Poverty Report Card)





Challenging “No” to Get Real Support

Twenty-six-year-old Rosa became the primary caregiver for her younger brother Luis (17), who lives with profound developmental needs. Juggling work, caregiving and complex medical appointments, Rosa applied for a specialized program to gain organized, structured support. However, the request was denied without a clear explanation. Overwhelmed and exhausted, Rosa was on the verge of giving up when a youth worker connected her with RCY.

An Advocate reviewed Luis’ case and brought the concerns to the attention of senior ministry staff. Through our advocacy, the specialized program was approved, funding was increased, and a consistent support team was established. Rosa now feels empowered and supported, and Luis is thriving in the home he knows best. Their story illustrates how easily caregivers can be dismissed, and how powerful it can be when someone stands beside them and says, “You’re not alone, let’s figure this out.”

In RCY’s 2023 survey of 1,100 families of children with disabilities, just

32%

said that the services they receive meet their children’s needs.

(RCY Too Many Left Behind)

Top Advocacy Issues



Child Protection



Guardianship



Youth Services



Family Support



Residential Resources

The bulk of RCY's advocacy work remains focused on designated services that are connected to child welfare, with 68 per cent (1,004) involving MCFD and 13 per cent (197) involving an Indigenous Child and Family Service Agency (ICFSA). Four per cent of issues (59) are CLBC-related. Issues related to provincial and regional health authorities account for just one per cent of issues (13).³

The top five most frequent service areas in RCY's advocacy work during the last fiscal year included child protection, guardianship, family support, youth services and residential resources.

The top three issues or areas of concern identified at the RCY advocacy intake stage in 2024/25 were:

- ★ Ineffective planning/supports – 23 per cent
- ★ Disagreement with or concern about a decision – 19 per cent
- ★ Basic needs not being met – eight per cent

³ This is a much smaller number than RCY would expect to see given that the health authorities are responsible for delivering or funding some mental health and all substance use services for children and youth and that RCY consistently sees the impact of mental health and addictions concerns on the well-being of young people. It is likely that health authority staff do not provide information to young people and families about RCY as consistently as MCFD and the ICFSAs do as there is no requirement for them to apprise young people of their right to independent advocacy services and there remains a lack of awareness and understanding about RCY within the health authorities.

BY THE NUMBERS

Advocacy

Advocacy enquiries and requests

2,003

Total requests
for Advocacy

RCY received 2,003 requests for advocacy support through phone calls, text messages and emails in 2024/25, an average of 167 new requests a month. These may come from young people, parents and caregivers, service providers or community members. Every request from a young person is addressed by call team members within one business day, and within three to five business days for all others. In some situations, the caller's needs can be addressed right away by providing information, suggestions for self-advocacy or referrals. Others require further review and discussions with the callers.

New case files opened

1,385

Total Advocacy
case files
opened

For situations requiring more assistance, a "case file" is opened and follow up is done by intake staff. An average of 115 new case files were opened each month in 2024/25. Intake staff work with the young person or adult caller to learn more about their concerns and what they might need. Sometimes information, a referral, advice, coaching or communication support is all that is needed to resolve the concerns.

A case file may involve advocacy for one or more children, youth or young adult. The practice of siblings being added to one file ensures that sibling groups are supported both individually as well as collectively as a family group. This year, the 1,385 intake files reflected the advocacy needs of 1,862 young people.

Per cent increase in case files referred to an Advocate

28.5%

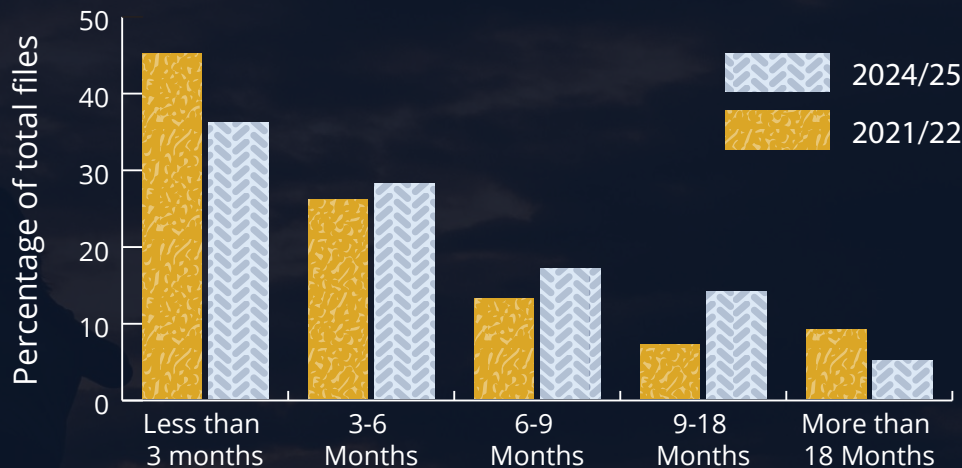
Increase in case files from 2023/24 to 2024/25

51%

Increase in case files from 2021/22 to 2024/25

In many other situations, more in-depth involvement by our Advocates is required and might include ongoing communication and support, attendance at planning meetings, assessment of service issues, and collaborative work with service providers. The graphic shows the substantial increase in the files that are referred to Advocates: 28.5 per cent in the last year and 51 per cent since 2021/2022. At the same time, the workload of each RCY advocate has increased substantially due to the greater complexity of case files, involving more young people that require more advocacy involvement over time. As new files are opened faster than older files are completed, the Advocates' workloads have steadily increased.

The average number of months files remained open at RCY



RCY has experienced increasing complexity in the advocacy cases we handle. One way that we record this complexity is through the length of time an advocacy case file remains open. An Advocate can spend anywhere from a few months to several years involved in a young person's life. As the graph shows, over the past few years, we have seen that there is a reduction in the number of advocacy situations that can be resolved in less than three months, and an increase in the number of situations that require advocacy involvement for between three and 18 months.

For example, the number of files remaining active for nine to 18 months has doubled since 2021/22. There are many reasons for this including complex care needs of children, youth and young adults and the capacity of systems to respond both in terms of staffing levels and/or funding resources.

A CLOSER LOOK AT INJURIES & DEATHS



REVIEWING CRITICAL INJURIES AND DEATHS

When a young person is critically injured or dies, it is not always clear whether the system's response or practices contributed to the injury or death. As an independent office, RCY examines these stories to reveal what efforts were made, what went wrong and how services can be improved to prevent future harm for that child or other children in similar circumstances.

The Ministry of Child and Family Development, Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies and Health Authorities are required to report critical injuries and deaths to RCY involving young people receiving specific services including child welfare, mental health and substance use and, youth justice services. Our reviews are a vital first step in determining whether a full investigation of a child's injury or death is necessary.

We receive hundreds of reports every month about young people who have experienced harm while in government care or receiving reviewable government services.⁴ All reports are reviewed by RCY staff to determine if further action is needed for the child, or if further review or investigation is needed.

Our review work also allows us to identify opportunities to assist young people immediately through a referral to our Advocates.

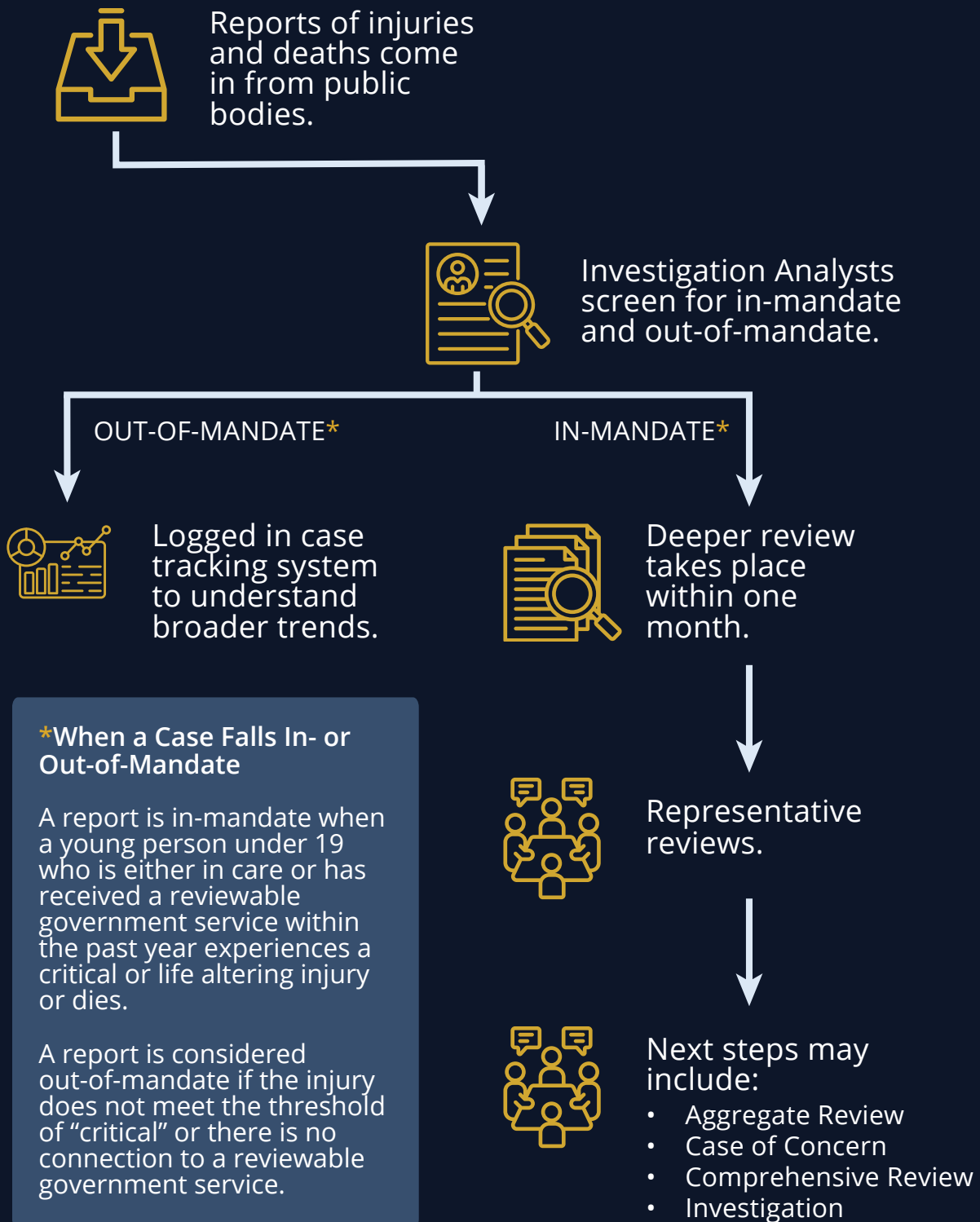
If there are concerns that a young person may be at significant risk and may not be receiving appropriate care the Representative may also raise concerns directly with senior government or Indigenous Child and Family Service Agency (ICFSA) staff (referred to as a case of concern).

The Representative has authority to undertake investigations, when a specific set of criteria are met, into a single child's circumstances, or into the shared experiences of many young people (referred to as aggregate reviews) and has broad powers to obtain records and compel people to answer questions or disclose information.

Through our review and investigative work we are also able to identify patterns and trends that inform other public reports and contribute to system improvements. An example of one such collaborative approach was with B.C.'s coroner highlighted on the following pages.

⁴ Reviewable services are defined in s.1 of the RCY Act as "services and programs under the Child, Family and Community Service Act or the Youth Justice Act and mental health and addiction services." The Ministry of Health and Health Authorities provide some of the mental health and addiction services in B.C. that are available to children and youth.

RCY REVIEW PROCESS



Reviews Spotlight

Patterns and Trends for Suicidality

In 2025, the Chief Coroner convened a Child Death Review Panel to take a closer look at youth suicide – an issue that continues to deeply impact young people and their loved ones. In support of this work, RCY did a thorough review of all reports that we received between 2020 and 2024 of suicide attempts and suicidal ideation (SASI) injuries, and child and youth deaths by suicide. This information was shared with the BCCS and Death Review Panel.

Key findings from RCY's data included:

- ★ Suicide Attempt or Suicidal Ideation (SASI) injuries make up 20 per cent of all critical injuries reported to RCY from 2020 to 2024, making it the second highest injury experienced by children and youth
- ★ The number of in-mandate SASI injuries experienced by children and youth reported to RCY increased every year from 2020 to 2024 (a 65 per cent increase)
- ★ Over half of the in-mandate SASI injuries were for children and youth who were in care at the time of the injury (54 per cent)
- ★ The highest number of SASI injuries were experienced by youth aged 15 and 16 – making up almost 40 per cent of those reported
- ★ 15 per cent of the children and youth who died by suicide were missing from their foster home or staffed residential home at the time of their death
- ★ 15 per cent of children and youth who died by suicide were either on a waitlist or were not connected to services at the time of their death
- ★ Based on the records received:
 - » Of the children and youth who died by suicide, 69 per cent identified as having a mental health issue and 29 per cent had complex developmental behavioural conditions at some point in their life
 - » 45 per cent of children and youth who died by suicide were identified as experiencing family violence at some point in their life
 - » 15 per cent of children and youth who died by suicide were identified as having experienced sexualized violence at some point in their life
 - » 11 per cent of children and youth who died by suicide were identified as having disconnections from schooling at some point in their life.

Digging Deeper

Investigating When Something Goes Wrong

RCY has a unique vantage point in being able to see individual harms to one child in the broader context of many others. This perspective enables us to detect patterns and systemic issues that may be missed in case-by-case reviews. We are also uniquely positioned in our ability to access information and evidence to piece together what happened in the life of a young person. Our investigations uncover the deeper causes behind critical incidents and provide compelling evidence that drives change. RCY investigations culminate in public reports that include clear, actionable recommendations to improve systems of care.

These recommendations target both long and short-term structural changes. Over the years, RCY's investigative work has helped shape improvements to policies, practices and standards and has also helped shift the traditional ways of thinking about child welfare that have kept us stuck in crisis-driven, reactive and risk mitigation responses, rather than responses that elevate fairness, equity and thriving.

This past year our investigative efforts were centred around the story of Colby, a beautiful boy who was tortured and killed by approved extended family caregivers. Findings from this investigation are highlighted on the following page.



Investigation Spotlight

Colby's Sacred Story

In 2024, RCY completed one of the most extensive and complex investigations in the Office's 18-year history. It was the sacred story of a boy the Office called "Colby" – a young First Nations boy who was killed by extended family caregivers while in the care of government in 2021. The circumstances that led to the death of a boy who was widely loved by family, friends, teachers and community members, were egregious and it was the Representative's conclusion that Colby's death was entirely preventable.

The investigation relied on the continuous support and advice of three Cultural Advisors with extensive experience in child welfare issues. The investigation team reviewed close to 5,000 documents, and conducted dozens of culturally-informed interviews with family members, leaders, community members, staff from Colby's Nation, MCFD staff, RCMP, and health and education professionals. They also reviewed other children's stories of injuries and death to look for patterns and themes.

RCY's investigation found dozens of missed opportunities to provide coordinated and non-judgmental assistance and support to Colby's family as they tried to support his considerable medical needs while experiencing violence, poverty, housing insecurity, mental health and substance use. Mis-steps included:

- ★ Inadequate assessment and response to repeated instances of intimate partner and family violence
- ★ Lack of MCFD response when medical and educational professionals repeatedly raised concerns about the well-being of Colby and his siblings
- ★ Inadequate assessment of the extended family caregivers' capacity to care for Colby and his siblings, including missed prior contact and criminal record checks
- ★ No home visits for seven months, when policy calls for visits with children every 90 days.

The investigation found that Colby's death was not an outlier. The themes and patterns that were present in his story are present in many children's stories. These include a high prevalence of and inadequate responses to family violence, inconsistency in supports and oversight for family kinship caregivers, a lack of collaboration between agencies tasked with caring for young people, a critical need for enhanced early help and support for families, and a deep need to thoughtfully support transition to Indigenous self-determination. To extend RCY's understanding of these systemic issues, RCY also extensively reviewed the stories of 14 other children who either died or suffered critical injuries while in care or receiving government services. Combined with Colby's experience, these children's stories formed the foundation for RCY's companion systemic review of the child welfare system contained in the report *Don't Look Away*.

BY THE NUMBERS

Reviews & Investigations

Summary of Reports of Injuries and Deaths 2024/25



Total Reports:
6,905



Monthly average
of reports:
575



In-mandate critical
injury reports:
3,074



In-mandate critical
death reports:
115

In 2024/25, RCY received a total of 6,905 reports of injuries and deaths of children and youth who were in care or receiving reviewable services in the year preceding their injury or death: approximately 575 per month. Each of these reports are reviewed by RCY Investigations Analysts with the goal of understanding and documenting each young person's story in a way that

respects their experience and helps to inform individual and systemic change. Of these 6,905 reports, 3,074 (44.5 per cent) were determined to be critical or life altering injuries which means that RCY is mandated to undertake further review (referred to as in-mandate injuries). A further 115 were in-mandate deaths.

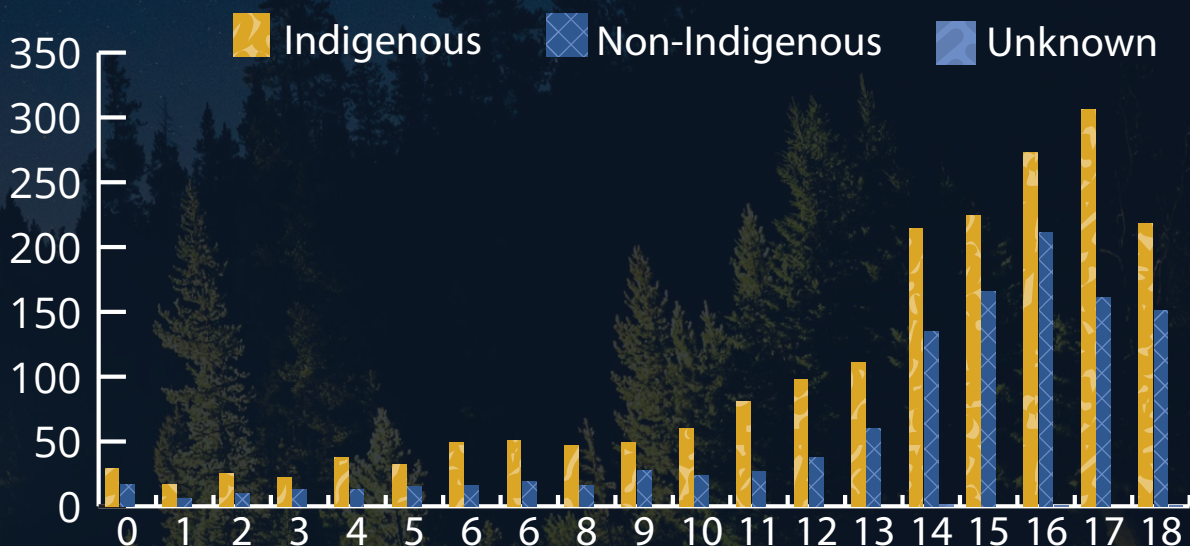
Changes in in-mandate critical injury reports 2020/21 to 2024/25



RCY has seen a steady increase in the numbers of reports of critical injuries across the last five years. The total number of in-mandate injury reports in 2024/25 was 3,074 representing a 69 per cent increase since 2021/22 when the number of in-mandate reports was 1,813.

RCY tracks the ages of children and youth experiencing injuries. The graph below shows that the number of injuries is significantly higher for children and youth after the age of 13.

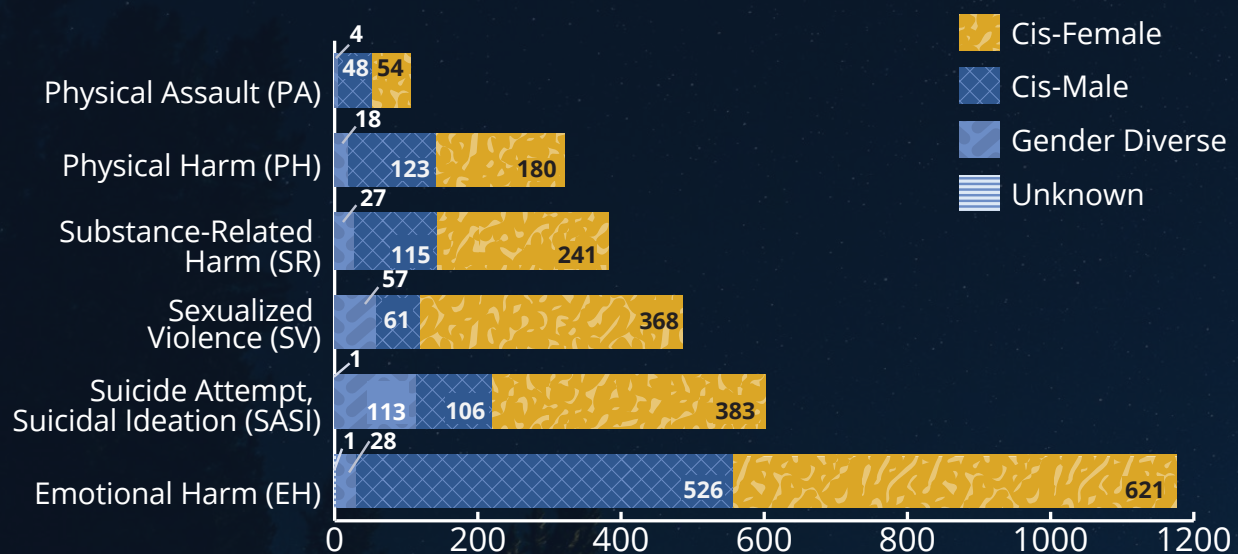
Age distribution of in-mandate critical injuries by Indigeneity 2024/25



RCY Reportable Circumstances also provide insight into the nature of critical injuries experienced by children and youth. RCY is paying particular attention to emotional harm in part due to the increase in deaths from toxic drug supply.

Many youth are experiencing emotional harm from the death of parents or siblings due to toxic drug poisonings. The graph below shows in-mandate critical injuries by type of injury and gender.

In-Mandate critical injuries by RCY classification and gender 2024/25



Emotional harm refers to an incident that may cause an emotional injury to a child/youth. For emotional harm to be considered in-mandate for RCY, it must be reasonable seen as having a potential to cause serious or long-term emotional or psychological harm to the child/youth. This may include, but is not limited to:

- ★ Death of, or injury suffered by, a significant person (parent(s), significant caregiver, etc.)
- ★ Mistreatment/inappropriate behaviours by an approved caregiver or usually trusted person.
- ★ Witness to traumatic event (such as a drug poisoning, murder, etc.).

Critical injuries by Indigeneity and care status 2024/25

RCY is keenly aware of the over-involvement of the child welfare system in the lives of Indigenous children, youth and their families. The figure below makes clear that this over-involvement is also reflected in RCY reportable injuries:

- ★ Of the 3,074 in-mandate critical injuries reported to RCY in 2024/25, 1,946 critical injuries (63 per cent) were experienced by Indigenous children and youth.
- ★ 1,407 (46 per cent) of the total in-mandate critical injuries (3,074) were experienced by Indigenous children and youth in government care.

Indigeneity	In Care	Not in Care	Total
First Nations	1,211	447	1,658
Métis	183	86	269
Inuit	11	4	15
Indigenous: Unspecified*		2	2

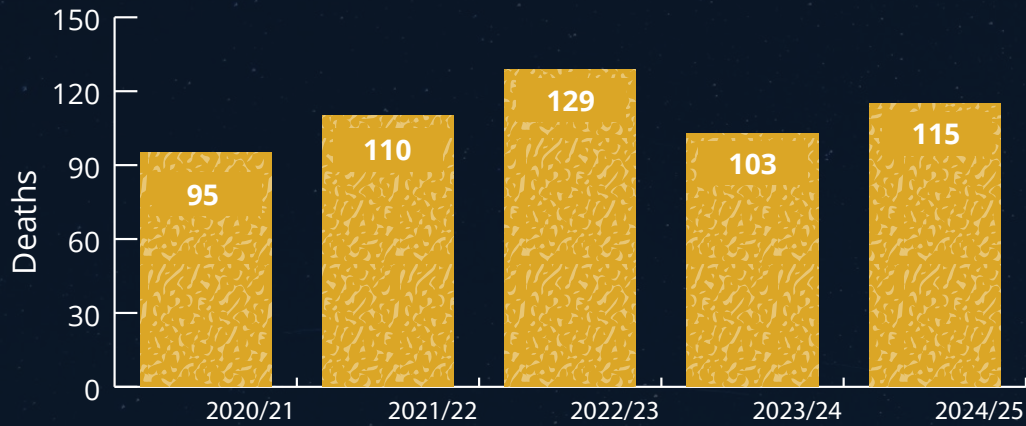
Death Reports

RCY receives reports of deaths of children who were in care or receiving reviewable services in the year prior to their death. All such deaths are within RCY's mandate to review regardless of whether they were anticipated deaths (e.g., due to congenital disorders or terminal illness) or unanticipated (e.g., due to toxic drug poisoning, suicide or violent assault). The number of in-mandate deaths has fluctuated every year but overall has remained relatively steady since 2021/22. In 2024/25 the number of in-mandate deaths was 115.

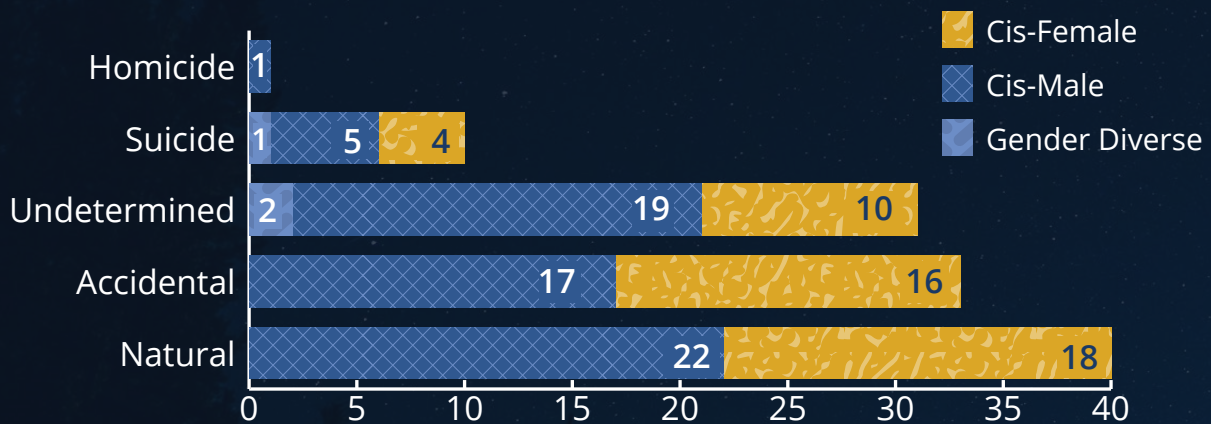
A significant number (40 or 45 per cent) of death reports received by the Office were natural. However, a substantial number were coded as accidental and a significant portion of these reflect the impact of toxic drugs on children, youth and young adults. Undetermined deaths were also high, often as a result of the need for additional information from the Coroner's Office to determine exact cause.

The majority of in-mandate death reports happened to children and youth not in care.

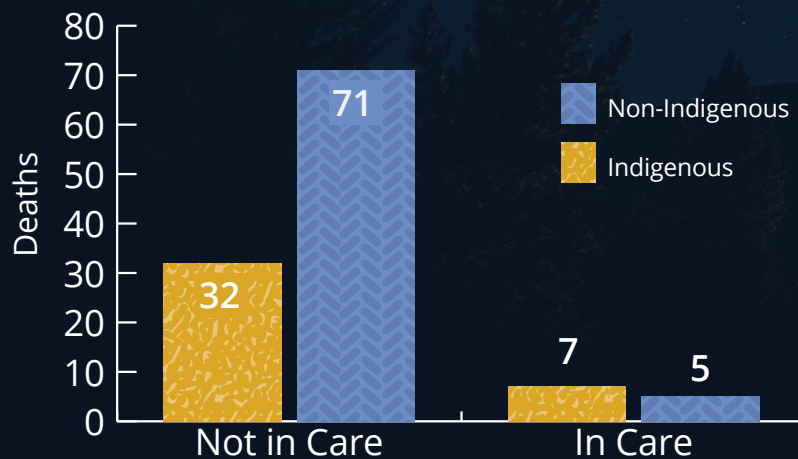
Changes in in-mandate death reports 2020/21 to 2024/25



Causes of in-mandate deaths



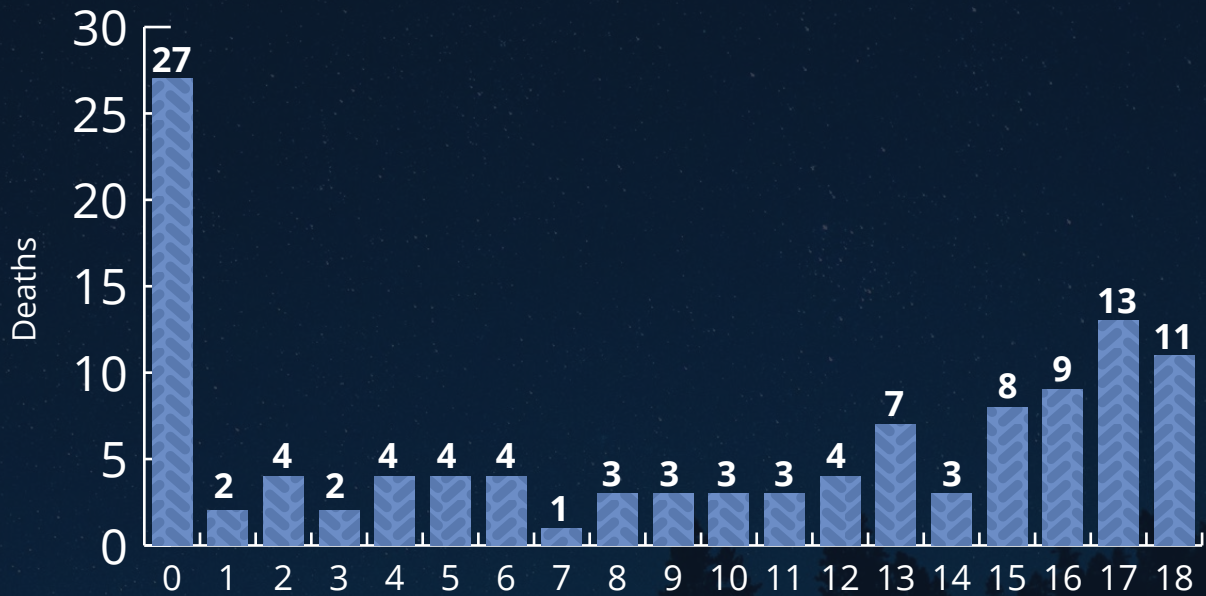
Deaths by Indigeneity and care status 2024/25



RCY data also provide insight into the ages of children and youth when they die. Injuries and deaths trend upward as children enter their middle years and then adolescence.

Of all critical injury reports received by the Representative in 2024/25, most were experienced by children and youth ages 12 and older. This age group experienced almost 48 per cent of critical injuries.

Age distribution of in-mandate deaths 2024/25



MONITORING & SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY



IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE SERVICES AND SYSTEMS

The Honourable Ted Hughes was appointed by the provincial government in 2006 to undertake an independent review of B.C.'s child protection system. The "Hughes Review" led to the unanimous passage of the *Representative for Children and Youth Act* in the Legislative Assembly and the subsequent creation of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth.

Honourable Hughes' vision for this Office was inspired and unique in Canada as he proposed building upon advocacy and injury and death review functions to monitor, research and assess the systems of care and make recommendations to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of services and systems.

This systemic monitoring and advocacy mandate enables RCY to identify recurring issues, trends, strengths, gaps and barriers in current services for children, youth and their families, undertake research and propose short and longer term changes. The Office is unique amongst the other independent child advocacy offices in Canada for the depth and breadth of systemic work that is undertaken.

In practice, we look across individual advocacy files and reviews of critical injuries and deaths to spot patterns. We gather qualitative and quantitative data about how services and systems are performing. We speak with young people and families, and engage service agencies and public bodies. This helps us identify gaps, inequities and risks that call for policy, practice or legislative change.

Last year we focused on a number of strategic priority issues that impact many young people in the province. While our central effort was completing our investigation and systemic review of the child welfare system which resulted in our report, *Don't Look Away*, we also reviewed and reported out on the continuing gaps in services for young people with disabilities, addressed issues impacting young people with mental health and substance use challenges, and advocated for the rights of young people to be heard in the family justice system. As the year progressed, additional systemic priorities emerged including escalating concerns about services for young people transitioning into adulthood.

MONITORING PROGRESS TOWARD THE “NORTH STAR” OF CHILD WELL-BEING

Many of our public investigation and special reports make recommendations for change where we see opportunities for improvement. Our role, as an oversight office, is to hold government accountable for the implementation of these recommendations and to examine systems of support closely to ensure any weaknesses we identify are strengthened over time.

As well as conducting progress assessments on the implementation of recommendations in our reports, we identify both enablers and barriers to change that impact government’s ability to realize the short-term and long-term transformation called for by the Representative.

The *Don’t Look Away* report proposed a fundamental shift from a child welfare system that is primarily focused on protection, risk and liability towards a child well-being system that engages all of government to implement policies, programs and resources that will result in better life outcomes for children and youth. The six collective responsibilities and over 60 immediate impact and longer term recommendations laid out in the report call for a new approach to holding government and ourselves accountable. This means we are looking not only at specific recommendations tied to a particular service or support but also looking more deeply at how the

system is making progress in relation to the collective responsibilities. These responsibilities include enabling a safe and supported transition for Nations as they resume jurisdiction over the care of their own young people, enhancing the quality and availability of data that allows us to measure the true well-being of young people over time, addressing the prevalence of violence impacting families and children, strengthening early and fulsome family supports and developing a Child Well-Being Strategy and Action that will ensure children remain our most sacred responsibility and a top political priority for government.

Following the release of *Don’t Look Away*, RCY began working with government to streamline our recommendations to identify work underway that will move the system towards the North Star, as well as identify where the system is getting ‘stuck’ in its efforts to transform outdated thinking and structural barriers to change.

Assessments across ministries identified progress towards the implementation of RCY recommendations that will have a direct impact on child well-being in the system. For example, RCY reviewed work underway at the Mental Health Review Board to support the

implementation of new services and resources to ensure children and youth are aware of their rights while involuntarily detained under the *Mental Health Act*. This work demonstrated exemplary cross-government collaboration and timely response between the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Mental Health Review Board and the Ministry of Health. This work remains critically relevant as involuntary youth mental health hospitalizations continue to occur 23 per cent more often than voluntary admissions in B.C.

RCY is closely monitoring the work underway to develop and implement a Provincial Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Strategy. The Representative has released four reports and made numerous recommendations calling for action to improve access to mental health service for children and youth in care, children with neurodevelopmental conditions, gender-diverse young people and youth navigating the transition to adulthood.

Other monitoring activities this year focused on MCFD's progress on recommendations to address the responsiveness to children who are lost, fleeing or missing from their foster or staffed (group) home. RCY notes a continued commitment to work collaboratively with Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies to strengthen policy and practice for children who are missing, including new practice guidelines to support

meaningful engagement with children and youth during and after they go missing, to better understand what is pushing them away (e.g., not feeling safe, included or welcome in the home, insufficient care or food, feeling of isolation) or pulling them away from the placement (e.g., desire to be with friends or family or reconnect with their community, seeking substances). RCY refers to these as the "push and pull factors".

MCFD has made progress on RCY's calls to increase awareness and action to support young people's sense of belonging to people, place, culture and identity (i.e., relational, physical, cultural and identity belonging), with new training provided to over 800 staff this year.

Responding to systemic issues that create cracks and gaps in care is essential to realizing the vision of a holistic and comprehensive system of care that supports children to thrive. While RCY documented considerable effort to improve policy and practice standards, it was also determined that recommendations that call for the necessary resources to implement these changes have not yet been addressed. Efforts to improve data collection to track child outcomes continue to be delayed, resulting in a dearth of systems data to support thoughtful decision making and adequate resourcing.

SPOTLIGHT: AREAS WHERE PROGRESS IS STALLED

EQUITY



At a Crossroads - The Roadmap from Fiscal Discrimination to Equity in Indigenous Child Welfare (2022)

First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth living off-reserve continue to face inequity in the supports and services offered to them, and are still awaiting the increased funding and transparency that has been repeatedly called for.

TIMELY ACCESS TO SERVICES AND SUPPORTS



Alone and Afraid (2018), Left Out (2020), Excluded (2021), Still Left Out (2023), Too Many Left Behind (2025)

Children with disabilities and their families and caregivers continue to face lengthy waits for assessments and diagnoses and limited access to needed services – especially for those with FASD, Down Syndrome and other neurocognitive and developmental disabilities.

ACCOUNTABILITY



Don't Look Away (2025)

The lack of consistently collected data about children's needs, services, utilization and outcomes and the barriers to sharing information make it far more difficult for decision makers to assess what is working well or not working and how effectiveness and efficiency could be improved upon. The Representative consistently includes recommendations for improved data collection and information sharing in her reports.

CHILD RIGHTS



Detained - Rights of Children and Youth Under the Mental Health Act (2021)

The rights of children and youth to be informed and have a say in major decisions being made about their lives is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and yet, mechanisms to enable children to be heard when they are involuntarily detained under the Mental Health Act, or when family justice matters are being considered remain inadequate and inconsistent.

FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION AND HATE



Right to Thrive (2023)

Two Spirit, transgender, non-binary and gender diverse children and youth remain at significant risk of harm, with inadequate action toward establishing legislative protections that would address the ongoing discrimination and disinformation that persistently impacts these young people.

Skye's Legacy (2021)

First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous children and youth in care continue to be inadequately supported in connecting to their families, culture and communities, with calls to ensure social workers are better supported to promote a sense of belonging and identity for these youth still in progress.

BELONGING



MONITORING Spotlight

Impact of changes to post-majority supports for young adults transitioning out of government care

This year, RCY Advocates identified growing concerns about the transition from the former Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) program to the new Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment (SAJE) program. SAJE was introduced by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) to provide more comprehensive support to young people aged 14 to 27 with experience in government care. This was to include navigator support, income and housing assistance including rent supplements, health and wellness resources, and funding for life skills, training and cultural connection.

The design for the SAJE program was heavily influenced by recommendations made by the Representative in [A Parent's Duty \(2020\)](#), including the recommendation to provide young adults with the same kind of sustained support that young people who aren't in care typically receive from their families. The Representative was very encouraged by government's response as SAJE offers earlier and more holistic transition planning and a broader array of supports. However, thus far, it has fallen short in providing consistent financial support for all eligible young adults.

In 2024/25, RCY identified 1,063 young people transitioning from the AYA to the new SAJE Income Support Agreements. Many of these young people were facing a significant reduction in monthly financial support when required to move from the AYA program to SAJE by MCFD's deadline of March 31, 2025.

In December 2024, RCY met with MCFD to discuss the supports in place to ensure a safe and supported transition to the new services and at that time learned that the government had not yet begun an assessment of young people's readiness for this change.

Following RCY's advocacy, MCFD conducted a provincial case review which resulted in fewer than ten young adults deemed as being at risk. However, RCY identified significant concerns in the initial review, including large groups of young people who were not included in MCFD's review process.

The Representative's concerns were further intensified by ongoing requests for RCY advocacy from young people impacted by the discontinuation of AYA and consequent financial insecurity and housing precarity.

In response, RCY worked with MCFD to review the methodological limitations of their initial review and advocated to resolve individual issues.


These efforts prompted an additional provincial case review by MCFD to ensure that they accurately identified young adults who would require extended supports. This resulted in 164 young people's situations being reviewed to ensure a safe and supported transition to the new services. MCFD also identified opportunities to update policy and practice related to the role of SAJE Navigators to foster meaningful engagement with young people to assess readiness and transitional planning.

The Representative has been strongly encouraged by both MCFD's collaborative and thoughtful response to concerns about SAJE raised by the RCY to date and the early evaluation material for SAJE, which reports an increased uptake of youth transition supports, associated with the launch of the first components of the SAJE program.

However, outstanding work remains to ensure that the spirit and intention of *A Parent's Duty* recommendations are fully realized.

Recently, RCY Advocates have begun reporting that an additional component of SAJE, the Rent Supplement Program, which provides a benefit of \$600/month for a maximum of two years, did not accept applications for either the September 2024 or February 2025 intakes. This pause in accepting new rent supplement applications has disrupted transition plans for youth and their SAJE Navigators who planned for the availability of this support.

The Representative is seeking more information from government about these changes and will continue to monitor the transition to the new SAJE program closely to ensure that government's response to *A Parent's Duty* recommendations results in continuous improvement and meaningful change for young people leaving care.



**OUTREACH,
STRATEGIC
ENGAGEMENT
& KNOWLEDGE
MOBILIZATION**

BUILDING TRUST THROUGH PRESENCE, PARTNERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

At the heart of RCY's work is the belief that systems change begins with both listening deeply and mobilizing action. In 2024–2025, RCY focused on its strategic goal of deepening its commitment to meaningful outreach and engagement with partners to catalyze dialogue on key strategic and emerging issues.

Through a coordinated, multi-faceted approach that included regional outreach, youth engagement, knowledge-sharing strategies, fostering strategic partnerships and translating our research in accessible and influential materials, we were able to deepen our impact and connection. Whether through kitchen table conversations in northern communities, workshops in urban centres, or dialogue with provincial leaders, RCY sought out and amplified the lived and ongoing experiences of children, youth, young adults, families, caregivers, service providers and Indigenous partners.

Youth and Community Outreach

This year, RCY significantly expanded its outreach capacity through the continued integration of two Youth and Community Engagement Specialists (YCES). These specialists led innovative youth rights and self-advocacy workshops, helped re-imagine RCY's youth-facing materials in alignment with the refreshed brand and website, and delivered more than 40 youth-centred engagements

throughout the year. Their work included:

- ★ Hosting engagement sessions in more than twenty communities across five regions, from Prince George to Nelson and Dawson Creek to Victoria, with an emphasis on rural, remote and underserved areas
- ★ Piloting refreshed content for youth at events such as Gathering Our Voices, while maintaining strong relationships with organizations including the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, Sk'ai Zeh Yah Youth Centre and Strive Youth Employment Program
- ★ Supporting youth in the Burnaby Youth Custody Centre through in-person advocacy visits and rights education
- ★ Facilitating youth consultations for RCY's new website, ensuring the redesign is youth-friendly, accessible and relevant.

Centering Indigenous Voices

Recognizing the over-representation of Indigenous children and youth in care, RCY prioritized ongoing, respectful engagement with Indigenous communities and organizations.

These efforts were reflected in:

- ★ Regular meetings with the First Nations Leadership Council, Our Children Our Way Society, BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres and local friendship centres.

- ★ Participation in and sponsorship of Indigenous-led initiatives, including the OCOW National Forum and Loving Justice: Breathing Life into Our Own Laws.

Strengthening Our Digital “Front Door”

Guided by feedback from youth, and consultations with stakeholders, RCY’s new website is set to launch in late 2025. The redesign reflects our emphasis on accessibility, advocacy and impact, featuring updated pages for young people, streamlined access to reports, and new interactive resources.

Strategic Engagement Across Sectors

RCY maintained a province-wide presence between April 2024 and March 2025, hosting more than 160 strategic engagements during this period. These included conferences, workshops, community and Indigenous-led events, government briefings, media appearances and report releases. The Representative and the executive team led a high-intensity schedule across policy, education, disability and Indigenous partnership tables. Key highlights include:

- ★ Co-hosting ceremonies, working sessions and sacred story gatherings with Our Children Our Way Society, amplifying Indigenous leadership in systemic review processes
- ★ Presenting findings from major systemic reports including

Don’t Look Away, Still Left Out, Right to Thrive and *No Time to Wait* to cross-sector partners such as the Federation of Community Social Services’ Social Policy Forum, the BC Disability Summit and the Canadian Symposium on Child Maltreatment

- ★ Participating in youth- and family-serving networks such as First Call BC, the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres and Inclusion BC to share research, hear lived experience and align on common advocacy goals
- ★ Offering full-day workshops to organizations including the First Nations Education Steering Committee, the Ministry of Education and Child Care, and the BC School Trustees Association to help educators support Indigenous learners, children and youth in government care, and young people living with disabilities
- ★ Hosting five provincial convening sessions on the toxic drug crisis, with more than 450 participants, to spotlight the impacts on young people, share promising practices and identify urgent and long-term actions
- ★ Leading convenings after the *Don’t Look Away* report to mobilize action on recommendations by gathering feedback, clarifying roles and establishing accountability benchmarks with communities and system leaders.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS WHO MAKE THE WORK STRONGER

Real change does not happen in silos. RCY works with a wide network across B.C. The examples below show the range of collaboration.

Indigenous Children & Families

Our Children Our Way (OCOW) Society – Co-creating culturally grounded tools and sharing learning from delegated agencies.

Mental Health

Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division (CMHA-BC) – Improving mental-health for families raising young children.

Early Development

First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition – Bringing evidence on child poverty and well-being into policy and practice.

Youth Data and Engagement

McCreary Centre Society – Using youth-led insights and provincial survey data to inform action.

Anti-violence

Ending Violence Association of B.C. (EVA BC) – Aligning responses to family and intimate partner violence.

Youth Perspectives

Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks (FBCYICN) – Centering lived expertise and peer leadership and informing decision-makers.

Research Partners

Universities – Current grants with University of Victoria and University of British Columbia - Okanagan; ongoing collaboration with Thompson Rivers University, University of Northern B.C., Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia.

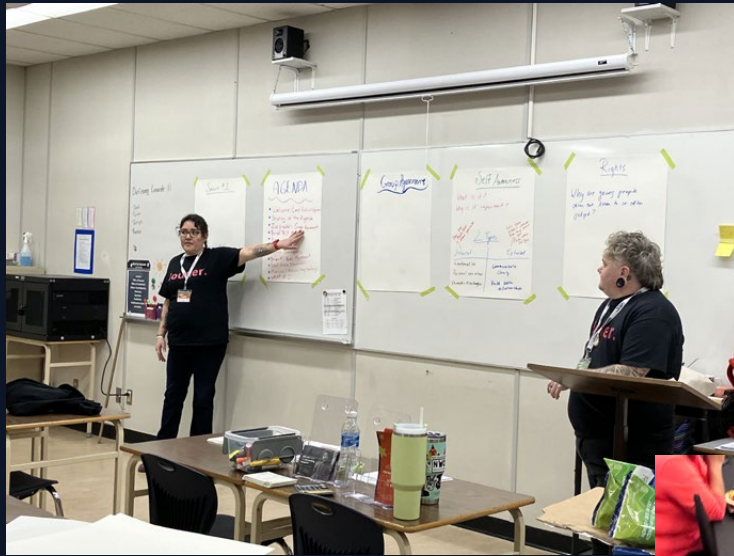
Population Health

Office of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) – Connecting social determinants to child and youth well-being indicators.

Our partnership approach shows up in many ways; co-designing resources, sharing aggregate data responsibly, hosting dialogues, evaluating impact and moving recommendations into action.

Note: These are examples, not a full list. We are grateful to many other partners across B.C.

RCY IN COMMUNITY



Left: Youth and Community Engagement Specialists
Jessy Neal and Ajay Wilder at
Gathering Our Voices youth
conference.

Below: Advocate Alan Doll at a
community visit in the North
West of B.C.



Above: The contents of
medicine pouches being made
at Gathering Our Voices youth
conference.

Right: Youth and Community
Engagement Specialist Jessy
Neal makes a medicine pouch.



PRIORITY ISSUES

Last year we focused on a number of strategic priority issues that impact many young people in the province. The central focus of our report work last year was completing our investigation and systemic review of the child welfare system which resulted in our report *Don't Look Away*.

The majority of our work supported this landmark body of work including our continued exploration of gaps in services for young people with disabilities, issues impacting young people with mental health and substance misuse challenges, and the right for young people to be heard in the justice system. As the year progressed, additional systemic priorities emerged including concerns about the implementation of the SAJE program (see monitoring spotlight), and concerns about children and youth receiving inadequate and poor quality care in staffed residential resources (i.e., group homes).

Our work on these key strategic priorities is highlighted on the following pages.

PRIORITY ISSUES

Systemic Review of Key Themes from the Life of “Colby”

In July 2024, RCY released the report *Don't Look Away*, the most extensive report since the office was formed in 2007. Prompted by the horrific death of “Colby” a young Indigenous boy killed by extended family caregivers in 2021 that was the centre of the investigation highlighted on page 40, the report contained a detailed examination of the circumstances around Colby's life and death, and took a deep dive into the systemic failures that were prevalent in his life and the lives of too many children who are critically injured or die while receiving government services.

The review was called for by the First Nations Leadership Council, the Our Children Our Way Society, and others seeking urgent action and deeper understanding. The review was informed by the work of twenty-one researchers and the perspectives of more than 2,000 people who took part in RCY engagement sessions including government staff, Indigenous leadership and organizations, service providers, community organizations, academics and families.

The ensuing review exposed systemic gaps requiring both immediate and transformational change, including:

- ★ Inequities and a lack of oversight in family caregiving arrangements
- ★ Significant weaknesses in interagency collaboration and communication
- ★ Inadequate family supports and early prevention services



- ★ Blurred accountability as jurisdiction shifts to First Nations and Indigenous governing bodies
- ★ Unaddressed violence, often intergenerational, in children's lives.

The report makes both short and long-term recommendations grounded in the experience of Colby and other children. The Representative calls for collective responsibility and action in five key areas:

- ★ Enhancing child well-being
- ★ Addressing violence
- ★ Supporting families including kinship carers
- ★ Enhancing accountability
- ★ Supporting Indigenous jurisdiction.

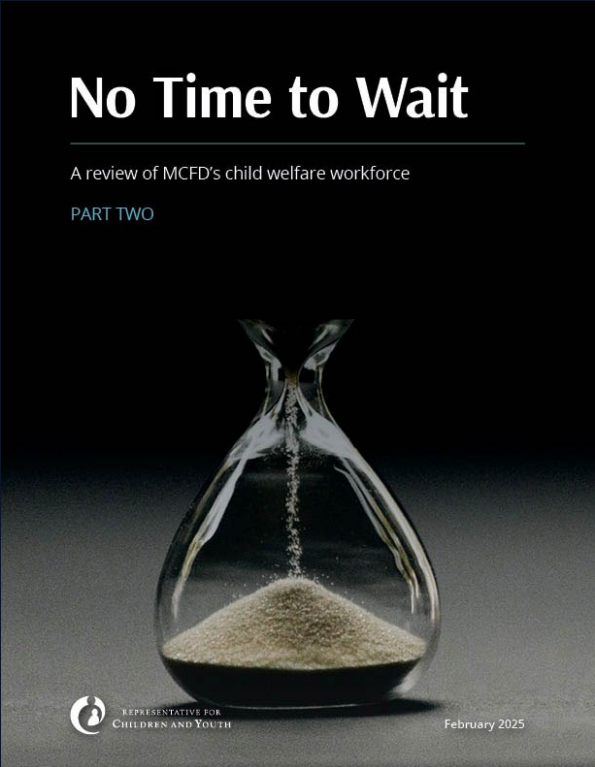
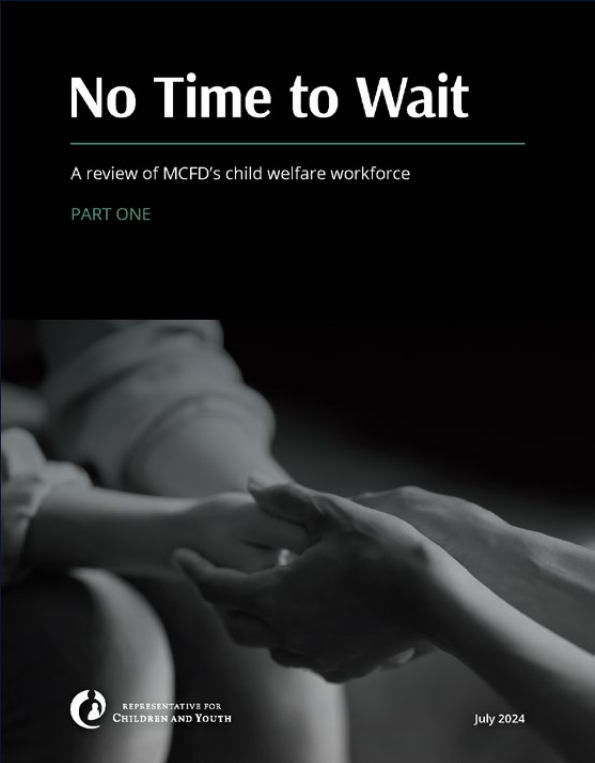
To view the report, visit our website at rcybc.ca.

Building on *Don't Look Away*, RCY released a two-part compendium report: *No Time to Wait*. Both of these reports address the crisis in the child welfare workforce and share insights from over 700 MCFD social workers, team leaders and managers who engaged in a survey conducted by the Representative's office in spring 2024. Findings were further informed by focus groups of social workers, community engagement sessions, literature reviews, past reports, and analysis of ministry documentation and data. Key findings include:

- ★ 80 per cent of social workers say they are unable to properly do their jobs because their caseloads are too high
- ★ 77 per cent of social workers lack timely access to necessary family and community supports to help the children and families they are working with
- ★ 90 per cent of social workers report having very high stress levels
- ★ Consistently low compliance with a range of provincial policies and practice standards due to excessive workloads.

A previous MCFD workload analysis found that meeting just 85 per cent compliance with provincial standards would require hiring several hundred more social workers. *No Time to Wait* highlights the urgent need for significant investment in the workforce and services for children and families.

To view the report, visit our website at rcybc.ca.



Facing the Crisis:

How RCY Has Responded to the Toxic Drug Emergency Affecting Children & Youth

The toxic drug crisis is now the leading cause of death for youth in British Columbia. In addition, thousands of young people are experiencing drug poisonings and consequent brain and physical injuries and trauma. Many young people are also losing peers, siblings and the important adults in their lives and coping with loss and grief.

Unfortunately, the toxic drug crisis and what to do about it – especially concerning children – evokes strong emotions, positions and misunderstanding which makes it harder to plan and achieve progress.”

Since the fall of 2024, the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) has led a comprehensive effort to address the toxic drug crisis and its devastating effects on young people in British Columbia. Recognizing the crisis as both a public health emergency and a failure of the systems intended to support and protect children and youth, RCY has worked to connect voices across the province, build momentum for systemic change, and centre youth in the path forward.

More than 450 people, united by a shared purpose.

Between November 2024 and May 2025, RCY gathered more than 450 individuals through a series of virtual and in-person events designed to spark conversation and inspire change. Across the five convenings, participants emphasized:

- ★ System silos and fragmentation, lack of accessible and timely services and no provincial plan
- ★ Exclusion of youth voices in key decisions
- ★ Persistent stigma and discrimination
- ★ A strong desire to collaborate, but few structures to do so effectively.

Ten Areas for Collective Action

In March and May, participants helped identify and shape ten high-impact areas where coordinated efforts could enhance outcomes for youth. These initiatives are not led by RCY; instead, they represent shared areas of focus acknowledged across various sectors:

- 1. Involve Youth in Policy Discussions**
Centre youth in mental health and substance use decisions.
- 2. Coordinate a Cross-Ministry Mental Health and Substance Use System**
Build cross-ministry coordination.
- 3. Stigma Reduction**
Shift public narratives through youth and Indigenous leadership. Replace stigma with care. Normalize harm reduction, elevate Indigenous perspectives and support public education led by youth and the community.

- 4. Revise Funding to Support Innovation**
Enable innovation through outcome-based funding.
- 5. Create Fast, Seamless Access to Help**
Build real-time access to support. Extend service hours and simplify navigation across sectors.
- 6. Support Families Early, Not After Crisis**
Support substance-using parents with compassion rather than punishment. Enhance early intervention, highlight family strengths and break cycles of trauma.
- 7. Support Youth-Led Harm Reduction**
Empower youth to lead education, outreach and care. Invest in sustainable, trust-based models.
- 8. Transform Health and Education Together**
Co-create a non-stigmatizing, responsive substance use curriculum.
- 9. Reframe Safer Supply with Care**
Address misinformation using values-based messaging. Emphasize effectiveness, dignity and public health.
- 10. Approach Involuntary Care with Caution**
Explore culturally safe, trauma informed options alongside voluntary services.

RCY will release a report in Fall 2025 to highlight the evidence and insights gathered through this process and describe each of the collective actions proposed by the participants. Going forward, RCY will continue to convene and support those who are stepping up to lead initiatives and take action in each of the ten areas.



Child Rights, Voice and Participation

RCY continues to advocate for child rights, including calling for stronger legislative protections for Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary and gender diverse young people, and ensuring that youth voices are fully heard when involved with the family justice system.

The Office is currently collaborating with the Society for Children and Youth, which conducted research commissioned by RCY on children's rights in family law, child protection and health/mental health contexts.

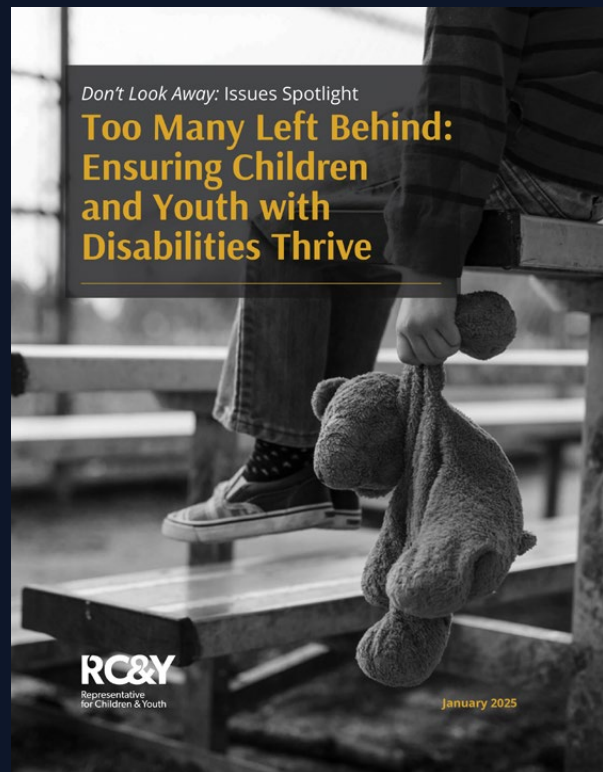
The research will draw from existing literature, other jurisdictions, and conversations with young people and their families. It will help provide direction on issues related to children's best interests, consent, capacity to participate, rights under involuntary detention, and approaches for meaningful participation. This research is informing the Office's in-depth report on children's rights in family justice matters, which will be released in late 2025.



Children & Youth with Disabilities

Since its inception in 2007, RCY has published twelve reports focusing on the barriers young people with disabilities and their families face when trying to access provincial services. Despite repeated calls to successive governments, serious gaps remain. This past year, the office continued its systemic advocacy for more timely and equitable services in its report *Too Many Left Behind*. The report relies on an in-depth review of government records and extensive engagement with families, service providers and disability organizations across B.C., as well as a survey of more than 1,100 families conducted by RCY in late 2023. The report's findings paint a stark picture:

- ★ Of the 120,000 people under 19 living with a disability, an estimated 70 per cent – 83,000 young people in B.C., 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.
- ★ Less than seven per cent 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.
- ★ Fourteen per cent 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.



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. The report urges government to:

- ★ Provide families with the supports they need to care for their children at home
- ★ Ensure equitable access to supports and resources across the full spectrum of disabilities
- ★ Improve coordination across ministries and agencies
- ★ Establish a comprehensive data gathering system to accurately track how many young people in the province are living with disabilities and whether their needs are being met.

BUILDING A STRONG OFFICE



ONGOING WORK AND PRIORITIES

All of RCY's work is supported by corporate service functions that are an essential backbone and enabling mechanism for effective and efficient mandated functions. The services provided and the work done in support of front-facing staff are key in delivering high-quality individual and systemic advocacy for children, youth, included adults and their families in B.C. Corporate services comprises finance, human resources, administration, records coordination, project coordination, information management and technology and privacy support services for RCY. Consistent innovation and improvement in the delivery of corporate services is an on-going commitment.

Corporate Service

By the end of 2023/24, RCY had completed a carefully planned transfer of Corporate Services to the B.C. Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (OHRC). This year, RCY has continued to refine its corporate structure to ensure optimum effectiveness and efficiency. Importantly, this has included the recruitment of an Executive Director of Corporate Services and CFO, who now holds strategic responsibility across all corporate functions and for RCY's careful stewardship of resources. In addition, the refinement included the reclassification of three director positions to managers.

Enhanced Human Resource and Financial Planning

The process of budget review and assessment at RCY is ongoing: every opportunity is taken to enhance efficiency and allocate resources to achieve the greatest impact. Careful forecasting and expenditure management across all STOBs allowed RCY to remain within budget. RCY also began the process of comprehensive workload planning to provide the foundation needed for wise decision-making in resource allocation across RCY's mandated services.

On-going Workplace Culture Innovation

RCY continues to be committed, through its Six Rs and Four Ps, to an organizational approach that emphasizes belonging, inclusion and wellness for all staff. For the 2024/25 fiscal year, four areas of work were the focus. RCY continued to infuse strong Indigenous cultural practice through all of our work, with the support of Cultural Advisors, Matriarchs and Elders. RCY continued to refine and decolonize our policies in accordance with the wellness framework established in 2024. A strong culture requires that staff have a voice in workplace innovation and so RCY conducted a staff survey, *Thriving from Work*, to create a baseline of data that can assist both in building appropriate strategies and

also tracking our progress. And finally, implementation of RCY's Training@ RCY began with a focus on corporate essentials and hiring practices.

Accessibility

In 2024/25, RCY took meaningful steps to strengthen the accessibility of our services. These steps included final work on our new website that will be launched in the fall of 2025 and that reflects up-to-date best practices in accessible design – including fonts, contrast, plain language and multiple formats – and translation functionality.

To address internal accessibility innovations RCY engaged Untapped Accessibility consultants, to help identify where and how our organization can improve accessibility and to provide training to our staff on critically important accessibility practices. This work enabled the RCY executive team and the internal working group to refine our Accessibility Plan and lay out key goals and actions for the next three years. This will ensure that we meet or exceed the expectations set out in the Accessible BC Act. We also have continued to work with our independent offices colleagues on a joint working group to review each others' plans and share strong practices.

Records Management

RCY holds significant numbers of highly sensitive operational records that detail the experiences of children, youth and young adults in B.C. Work started this year on a review of existing records management approaches, and an assessment of areas for innovation and improvement. This work will continue for the next three years as RCY continues to adhere to accepted data stewardship practices and the OCAP Principles.

Data Innovation

In 2024/25, RCY continued implementation of an organization-wide data strategy to guide all aspects of RCY's data approach. Significant progress was made on implementing consistent coding standards in data entry, and improvement in quality assurance approaches across all RCY teams. RCY also began to assess the calls for greater government accountability in *Don't Look Away*, and the important implications of these for RCY itself. This year deepened RCY's commitment to focus on longer term outcomes.

2024 THRIVING FROM WORK SURVEY

In the early Fall of 2024, RCY implemented the *Thriving From Work* survey. The intention of the survey was to collect honest feedback to aid RCY's ongoing journey toward embedding our values and principles more deeply into our organization. It is an important component of our commitment to wellness and organizational improvement.

The [Thriving from Work](#) survey was developed at the Center for Work, Health, & Well-being at Harvard University's T.H. Chan School of Public Health. The questionnaire provides a comprehensive measure of work-related well-being. The survey questions have been rigorously validated internationally and with respondents from a wide range of cultures, sectors, occupations, educational, and economic backgrounds.

RCY chose the *Thriving from Work* survey as it meets our requirements for being manageable for staff to complete on a regular basis, administration is manageable, and it is customizable.

The survey also resonates with our organizational values and is conceptually strengths based. It references key aspects of well-being: mental, physical, and social.

It explicitly acknowledges that employees' experiences of their working conditions are connected to thriving in their overall lives, contributing to their ability to achieve their full potential in their work, home, and community.

Sixty RCY staff of the 74 invited completed the survey. The graphic on the next page clearly outlines the results of our 2024 survey. RCY was particularly pleased to see some very positive responses:

- ★ 92 per cent of respondents reported that they can usually, almost always or always voice concerns or make suggestions at work
- ★ 88 per cent of respondents reported that they usually, almost always or always feel psychologically safe
- ★ 88 per cent of respondents reported that they usually are treated fairly at work.

Survey results also highlighted some areas of focus for RCY moving forward, and these have been important in building our workplace culture. Areas for improvement included managing workload demands, increasing staff input on decisions that affect them and supporting staff to have better work-life balance.

RCY 2024 THRIVING FROM WORK SURVEY

92%

of respondents feel safe to voice concerns or make suggestions at work.

88%

of respondents say they are treated fairly at work.

88%

of respondents feel psychologically safe at work.

81%

of respondents can easily manage demands of their job.

78%

of respondents achieve a healthy balance between work and personal life.

73%

of respondents are happy with the input they have into decisions that affect them.



LOOKING AHEAD

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

RCY regularly reviews its strategic priorities to ensure they are reflective of the current environment and that the organization remains responsive and attuned to the evolving issues facing children, youth and young adults and their families. The following section outlines the strategic priorities, goals, objectives and some key performance measures that are underway or planned for the 2025/26 fiscal year and across the following two years. These are in addition to the core statutory work undertaken by each RCY team.

In our 2023/24 Annual Report and Service Plan, we stated that we expected that the “recommendations arising from RCY’s sacred story investigation and systemic review will set a clear direction for the work ahead.” This is now coming to pass. The North Star, collective responsibilities and recommendations set out in *Don’t Look Away* reflect a shift in orientation from child protection to child well-being that requires a whole-of-government approach and a broad transformation of the systems that serve children, youth, young adults and families. RCY is not a bystander to this work and our commitment to be fully engaged in the changes that we have called for has informed our service plan, as described below. While remaining grounded in the Six Rs and Four Ps described earlier, RCY is re-energizing our vision, mission, strategic priorities and goals with input from RCY staff and partners. We have identified the

following strategic priority areas for action in the upcoming years:

★ **North Star and Collective Responsibilities:**

Advocating for and supporting robust follow-through on the *Don’t Look Away, No Time to Wait* and *Too Many Left Behind* reports, to ensure that progress towards a new North Star of child well-being is sustained in B.C. This will include further action on: developing a child well-being strategy and action plan for the province; addressing intimate partner, family and sexual violence; enhancing family supports and early help; supporting kinship caregivers; sharing information to benefit young people; measuring and being accountable for outcomes; ensuring a strong and supported workforce; and supporting Nations to be self-determining and resume jurisdiction over the well-being of their children.

★ **Toxic Drug Crisis:**

Addressing the devastating impacts of the toxic drug crisis on children, youth and families and facilitating collective understanding and action to meet the challenges head on.

★ **Residential Care:**

Illuminating the strengths and weaknesses of current staffed residential resources that should provide high-quality, trauma-aware and culturally-attuned care and support to young people who are vulnerable, but often do not.

- ★ **Children and Youth with Disabilities:**
Continuing to advocate for equitable access to services and supports for children and youth with disabilities and their families and caregivers.
- ★ **Child Rights:**
Supporting Access to Justice initiatives and legislative amendments that will recognize the rights of children to meaningfully participate in legal processes where decisions about their lives are made, and to receive affirming and respectful care regardless of sexual or gender orientation.
- ★ **Mental Health:**
With government's intention to review and amend the Mental Health Act, RCY will advocate for legislation that is more appropriate for and respectful of children and youth.

- ★ **Organizational Strength:**
Continuing to build and sustain an organization that is effective and efficient, as well as an inspired, resilient and positive place to work.

These are broad priorities that are touchstones for our work in the coming months and years, and the ways in which we will act on these strategic priorities are described below. However, while we have a clear sense of direction, we operate in a complex and ever-changing environment where there are many unknowns. We must pay attention to patterns and trends revealed through data, the voices and stories of young people and families, and the pressures experienced within the systems over which we have an oversight role, and then adjust our service plans accordingly to respond to emerging needs.

ONGOING COMMITMENT TO STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

The *RCY Act* requires that RCY maintain high quality, effective and integrated mandated services. Each of the RCY teams plays an important role in ensuring that RCY remains relevant and responsive. This service plan therefore includes on-going action to ensure that we continually adapt to enhance our efficiency and effectiveness.

GOAL 1: Increase the reach and impact of RCY's individual advocacy services.

GOAL 2: Ensure that all children, youth and young adults who contact RCY for advocacy support experience timely, respectful and relevant service.

Objectives 2025/26:

- ★ Increase the number of children, youth, young adults and carers who are aware of and utilize RCY advocacy services, with a focus on those who are receiving or are eligible for designated services
- ★ Increase the awareness of RCY services and referral pathways amongst direct service staff in Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSA), Community Living BC (CLBC) and community social service agency offices
- ★ Increase RCY's direct connection with young people through social media and refined rights-based/self-advocacy workshops, designed with input from young people.

Objectives 2026/27-2027/28:

- ★ Extend RCY's outreach strategy to more successfully engage with children and youth with disabilities and/or in receipt of mental health services
- ★ Extend relational work to other areas of the service system where children and youth experience challenges with the system (e.g., recreation and sport, municipalities and regional districts).

Key Performance Measures:

- ★ Baseline measures for current engagement (demographic and regional)
- ★ Year-over-year increase in number and percent of calls (text, chat, phone) from young people seeking advocacy supports
- ★ Responsiveness to calls (phone, text, chat) from young people (e.g., 90 percent within one business day).

GOAL 3: Maintain the quality and timeliness of RCY's advocacy services.

Objectives 2025/26:

- ★ Continually improve Quality Assurance policy and procedures to ensure that advocates have the necessary training and support to provide timely, respectful and relevant service
- ★ Evaluate young people's experience with RCY's services
- ★ Meet, and as far as possible, exceed RCY standards for call responsiveness.

Objectives 2026/27-2027/28:

- ★ Establish a formal child, youth and young adult feedback mechanism to inform an annual review and quality improvement strategy.

Key Performance Measures:

- ★ RCY advocates report through independent surveys and evaluation that they are well-prepared and supported within RCY to fulfill their responsibilities to young people
- ★ Surveys and interviews with young people who are receiving or have received advocacy services consistently report that they feel respected, heard, informed and supported by the advocates working with them.

GOAL 4: Utilize RCY data to discern and understand patterns and trends that are affecting the well-being of children, youth and young adults or increasing risk to their well-being.

Objectives 2025/26:

- ★ Strengthen internal RCY data collection and analysis to make evident the critical patterns and trends
- ★ Connect RCY data with system monitoring data
- ★ Increase health authority compliance with RCY reporting requirements for critical injuries and death
- ★ Establish internal structures to delve more deeply into patterns and trends emerging from RCY's data with a focus on the key strategic priorities.

Objectives 2026/27-2027/28:

- ★ Achieve full implementation of health authority reporting of mental health related critical injury and death reports to RCY
- ★ Achieve full implementation of health authority reporting of youth addictions related critical injury and death reports to RCY
- ★ Establish a comprehensive data quality improvement strategy across all teams
- ★ Ensure RCY data quality through consistent coding and a comprehensive quality assurance process
- ★ Establish new mechanisms to more rapidly share relevant and timely information with government and ICFSA decision-makers.

Key Performance Measures:

- ★ RCY consistently receives child and youth injury and death reports from MCFD, ICFSA and health authorities within 30 days of the injury or death
- ★ Amount of time required to “clean” RCY data on the case management system is reduced due to clearer expectation for and oversight of data entries
- ★ Government ministry and ICFSA staff report that the information received by RCY has informed and influenced their practice and decision-making.

GOAL 5: Support government’s progress in addressing short term and transformational recommendations through timely and impact-oriented monitoring.

GOAL 6: Continue to expand RCY’s monitoring activities to include accountability reporting, impact assessments and outcomes measurement to better understand the accessibility, timeliness, relevance and quality of care available to children and young people.

GOAL 7: Initiate public reporting on government’s progress on implementation of *Don’t Look Away* and *No Time to Wait* recommendations.

Objectives 2025/26:

- ★ Streamline and focus RCY’s recommendations monitoring approach to prioritize past RCY recommendations that are most aligned with the collective responsibilities and recommendations laid out in the *Don’t Look Away* report
- ★ Develop coordinated approaches to enhance awareness of RCY’s recommendations and intentions across government to support improved action planning
- ★ Improve the turnaround of RCY’s evaluation of government’s Recommendation Action Plans and report on the enablers and barriers to fast, effective and efficient action.

Objectives 2026/27-2027/28:

- ★ Expand RCY’s recommendations’ monitoring reporting to include analysis of the benefits and potential unintended consequences of proposed policy and legislative changes
- ★ Regularly track and report on government’s response to recommendations concerning long-term systemic change
- ★ Enhance RCY’s oversight on government progress toward improved accountability.

Key Performance Measures:

- ★ Timely review of and reporting on progress on implementation of RCY recommendations.
- ★ Government ministries report clear understanding of RCY recommendations and intentions.

INFORMING AND INFLUENCING POSITIVE CHANGE

GOAL 8: Increase the use and influence of RCY's data, research, reviews and reporting through effective translation of findings and knowledge to decision-makers.

Objectives 2025/26:

- ★ Build an informed and innovative knowledge mobilization strategy that ensures RCY's work informs and influences government ministries, health authorities and service providers towards collective action on child well-being
- ★ Expand the range of high-quality reports and other evidence-based products available to government, authorities, Nations, service providers and families to support their work and advocacy
- ★ Increase the influence of RCY's data and research on MCFD and ICFSA direct services and policies through continual improvements to the timeliness, relevance and presentation of RCY death and injury reviews, data, research and monitoring.

Key Performance Measures:

- ★ Through partner surveys, RCY is consistently identified as a trusted and credible source of information and knowledge.

GOAL 9: Enhance the profile and reputation of the Office as a trusted source of knowledge and expertise on issues impacting young people and their support networks.

Objectives 2025/26:

- ★ Adapt RCY's internal infrastructure to allow the office to expand and deepen external connections and relationships
- ★ Build an effective approach to extending and maintaining a strong network of individuals, programs and organizations that are engaged in child well-being work, to ensure that RCY information can be effectively distributed in support of their collective responsibilities and that the interests of children and youth remain at the forefront.

Objectives 2026/27-2027/28:

- ★ Increase RCY's proactive public and media communication, highlighting critical issues-based (connected to RCY priorities), and responding to immediate events
- ★ Refresh formal agreements and connections with public bodies and key Indigenous partners.

Key Performance Measures:

- ★ Through partner surveys, RCY is consistently identified as a trusted and credible source of information and knowledge
- ★ Number and diversity of reports and resources that RCY makes publicly available.

RESPONSIVENESS TO FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT COMMUNITIES

GOAL 10: As allies and accomplices, directly support Nations and their Indigenous Governing Bodies who are reclaiming their inherent rights to nurture and serve their children and families in accordance with their laws, when they request RCY's involvement.

Objectives 2025/26:

- ★ Build internal capacity to respond to Nations that are in the process of resuming jurisdiction
- ★ Remain consistently informed about the changes in B.C. systems of care, driven by larger changes in federal and provincial legislation regarding self-determination and jurisdiction.

Objectives 2026/27-2027/28:

- ★ By Nation and IGB invitation, develop protocols or agreements to support the transition of child welfare jurisdiction to Nations.

Key Performance Measures:

- ★ Performance indicators will be developed in association with Nations and Indigenous Governing Bodies.

ORGANIZATIONAL WELL-BEING

GOAL 11: Extend and deepen RCY's commitment to a workplace wellness culture that inspires RCY staff to do their best work on behalf of children and families in B.C.

Objectives 2025/26:


- ★ Improve the structures and processes that support living into RCY values and principles and ensure the organization is culturally attuned and agile, inclusive and accessible
- ★ Maintain and where needed create, a strong infrastructure of organizational policies that support wellness, cultural attunement and agility, belonging and accessibility
- ★ Implement RCY's Accessibility Plan to ensure a robust infrastructure toward on-going learning and improvement.

Objectives 2026/27-2027/28:

- ★ Practice excellence in hiring to ensure that RCY has the most effective staff to serve the needs of children and youth in the province.

Key Performance Measures:

- ★ *Thriving from Work* surveys reflect staff experiences and organizational strengths, weaknesses and opportunities
- ★ Annual reporting on accessibility improvement and updates to the plan to sustain and expand progress
- ★ Improved recruitment and retention outcomes based on measurement of diverse factors including: number of months positions remain vacant, number of qualified applicants, staff turnover rates, staff reasons for leaving and staying (via exit and staying interview findings).



OUR FINANCES



OUR FINANCES

The Office is funded by the Legislative Assembly through a voted appropriation. The vote provides separately for operating expenses and capital acquisitions. Any unused appropriation cannot be carried forward for use in subsequent fiscal years.

Budget shown in the following tables is based on budgeted expenses approved by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in December 2023 and compares voted appropriation to actual operating and capital expenditures for fiscal year 2024/25.

Budget and Expenditure 2024/25

Operating Expense Type	Budget	Actual	Difference
Salaries and Benefits (Incl. Representative)	10,316,000	10,219,651	96,349
Employee Travel	373,000	266,462	106,538
Professional Services	687,000	670,900	16,100
Information Technology	708,000	741,666	(33,666)
Office and Business Expenses	405,000	434,062	(29,062)
Utilities, Materials & Supplies	5,000	3,264	1,736
Amortization	55,000	15,520	39,480
Building Occupancy	1,181,000	964,307	216,693
Research Grants	150,000	141,250	8,750
Transfers Under Agreement	5,000	-	5,000
Other	1,000	4,358	(3,358)
Recoveries	(1,057,000)	(545,311)	(511,689)
Total Operating	12,829,000	12,916,131	(87,131)

Note: The tables do not include supplementary funding requests (access to contingencies) approved by Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in May 2024 of \$100,000 for legislative salary and benefit costs related to the 2022 Judicial Compensation Commission process and in September 2024 of \$380,000 to address costs associated with an investigation and systemic review. Final contingency access was \$87,131.

Capital Expense Type	Budget	Actual	Difference
Information Technology	63,000	16,025	46,975
Office Furniture & Equipment	5,000	15,355	(10,355)
Total Capital	68,000	31,380	36,620

Looking to the Future – Approved Plan and Budget 2025/26 – 2027/28

The tables below illustrate operating and capital budgets approved for fiscal years 2025/26 through 2027/28.

Operating Expense Type	Note*	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Salaries and Benefits (Incl. Representative)	1	10,316,000	10,316,000	10,316,000
Employee Travel	2	373,000	373,000	373,000
Professional Services	3	473,000	473,000	473,000
Information Technology	4	696,000	696,000	696,000
Office and Business Expenses	5	405,000	405,000	405,000
Utilities, Materials & Supplies	6	5,000	5,000	5,000
Amortization	7	55,000	55,000	55,000
Building Occupancy	8	1,181,000	1,181,000	1,181,000
Research Grants	9	150,000	150,000	150,000
Transfers Under Agreement	10	5,000	5,000	5,000
Other	11	1,000	1,000	1,000
Recoveries	12	(1,057,000)	(1,057,000)	(1,057,000)
Total Operating		12,603,000	12,603,000	12,603,000
Capital Expense Type	Note*	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Information Technology	13	45,000	45,000	45,000
Office Furniture & Equipment	14	5,000	5,000	5,000
Total Capital		68,000	31,380	36,620

* See notes on following page.

- Note 1 Base salaries, supplementary salaries (first aid allowance, maternity / parental leave, auxiliary health & welfare, etc) and benefits (including relocation) for all regular and auxiliary staff including the Representative.
- Note 2 Employee travel includes costs for staff on official Office business, including prescribed allowances.
- Note 3 Professional services includes fees and expenses for professional services rendered directly to the Office for the provision services in the delivery of our programs, the provision of services required by statute or legislation and are billed directly to the Office, and the provision of services that will assist the development of policy and/or programs or improve / change the delivery of programs, such as management consulting services.
- Note 4 Information technology (operating) – includes all contract fees and costs related to data, voice, image and text processing operations and services, such as data and word processing, data communications, supplies, repairs, maintenance and short-term rentals of information processing equipment.
- Note 5 Office and business expenses includes supplies and services required for the operation of the Office.
- Note 6 Utilities, materials and supplies includes the cost of services such as the supply of water and electricity, materials and supplies required for normal operation of government services.
- Note 7 Amortization includes the amortization of the cost of capital assets and prepaid capital advances over their useful lives.
- Note 8 Building occupancy includes payments for the rental and / or maintenance of office accommodation, including tenant improvements that do not meet the criteria for capitalization.
- Note 9 Research grants includes payments to individuals, businesses, non-profit associations and other entities which may include stipulations as to the use of the funds and which are not entitlements or shared cost arrangements.
- Note 10 Transfers under agreement includes payments made under the terms of a contract or agreement for which the Office does not receive any direct goods or services.
- Note 11 Other expenses includes expenses, such as financing costs, valuation allowances and other expenses, which cannot be reasonably allocated to another category.
- Note 12 Internal and external recoveries include the recovery of costs from other officers of the legislature, ministries, participants and sponsoring organizations for activities described within the vote.
- Note 13 Information technology (capital) includes the purchase or capital lease cost of mainframe and other systems hardware, software and related equipment.
- Note 14 Office furniture and equipment (capital) includes the cost or capital lease cost of office furniture and equipment.

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