

Don't Look Away

Two Years Later: A Monitoring Progress Report



The Representative and staff, working throughout the province, would like to acknowledge that we are living and working with gratitude and respect on the traditional territories of the First Nations peoples of British Columbia.

We specifically acknowledge and express our gratitude to the keepers of the lands on the traditional territories of the Lheidli T'enneh peoples (Prince George) and the Lekwungen (place to smoke herring) people of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations (Victoria) where our offices are located. We also acknowledge our Métis and Inuit partners and friends living in these beautiful territories.

July 16, 2026

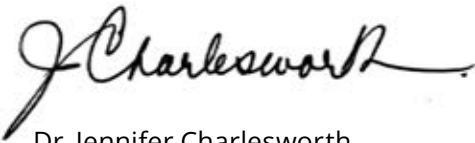
The Honourable Raj Chouhan
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Suite 207, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C., V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour of submitting the report *Don't Look Away Two Years Later – A Progress Monitoring Report* to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

This report is prepared in accordance with Section 20(2)b of the *Representative for Children and Youth Act* which gives the Representative authority to make special reports to the Legislative Assembly, if the Representative considers it necessary, to report on the level of compliance with previous recommendations made by the Representative under this Act to public bodies responsible for the provision of designated services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "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

Mr. Darryl Hol
Committee Clerk, Legislative Assembly

Rohini Arora, MLA
Chair, Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth

Kristina Loewen, MLA
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 2SLGBTQIA+ 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

Two years ago, *Don't Look Away – How One Boy's Story Has the Power to Shift a System of Care for Children and Youth* asked the government and legislative assembly of British Columbia to do something difficult.

It asked us to sit with discomfort.

To acknowledge where systems failed children.

And to act – collectively, urgently, and differently.

At the centre of that report was Colby, an 11-year-old boy whose life and death revealed not only individual failures but the deep structure of a system that was never intentionally designed to nurture children to thrive. His story illuminated both the light, love, connection, and resilience, and the shadow, violence, fragmentation, and missed opportunities within his family's life and within systems.

We said then that Colby was not an outlier.

Today, we must say that again.

But we must also ask a different question: What have we done with what we learned?

This monitoring report is an effort to answer that question. It looks at what has changed, and what has not, since *Don't Look Away* was released. It reflects on progress made by government, by communities, and within our own office. It also brings forward the stories of children and youth whose lives continue to be shaped by the same systemic patterns we identified two years ago.

As in the original report, we begin with truth.

Because we cannot change what we do not acknowledge.

And because children in B.C. need us to get this right.



Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth
Representative for Children and Youth



Introduction: Why We Continue to Look Closely

Don't Look Away asked B.C. to confront a difficult truth.

That the systems designed to protect children were not, in practice, designed to ensure their well-being. Despite decades of reports, recommendations, and reform efforts, the same patterns continued to surface in the lives of children and families across the province. The report showed that addressing this reality requires more than incremental improvement. It requires a fundamental shift in how we understand, organize, and deliver care for children.

Colby's story illuminated the devastating consequences of fragmented systems, missed opportunities, and unclear accountability. But it also revealed something enduring: The conditions that shaped his life were not unique to him and his family.

They were systemic.

This report begins from that same premise.

The Sacred Story Investigation

The Representative for Children and Youth has a statutory mandate to review and investigate critical injuries and deaths of children in care or receiving reviewable services from government and health authorities. RCY began the work that led to the *Don't Look Away* report with a Sacred Story investigation into the life of Colby, an 11-year-old boy with a deep love for family, culture, and community, and his tragic death at the hands of approved extended family caregivers. The investigation examined how the systems responsible for protecting and nurturing him failed to keep him safe. Despite his joyful spirit and resilience, Colby did not receive the coordinated care and support he and his family needed, when they needed it.

Colby's story revealed systemic challenges, issues, and concerns that extended beyond the experience of one child. Guided by Colby's story and the wisdom of three Cultural Advisors and an esteemed Circle of Advisors, RCY extended its review to look at the experiences of many other children. The team undertook independent research and sought advice and counsel from close to 2,000 people involved in child-serving systems to reveal the broader systemic failures that lead to poorer life outcomes for too many children and families across British Columbia. The resulting report honoured Colby's life by making visible the gaps in the system and opportunities for improvement, and calling for a collective commitment to do better for all children.



A System Finding Its Bearings

On the day *Don't Look Away* was released, the provincial government publicly acknowledged the seriousness of the findings and committed to a new direction for child and family services in British Columbia.¹ This included a commitment to shift toward a government-wide approach to child and youth well-being, grounded in prevention, collaboration, and shared responsibility across ministries. In tandem with that larger shift, there was recognition that immediate action was required to address known risks, including strengthening responses to family violence, improving interagency collaboration, and enhancing supports to families and kinship caregivers.

Since the release of *Don't Look Away*, we have seen important and significant movement within B.C.'s child- and youth-serving systems. The provincial government has introduced the Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan and

Outcomes Framework – a first for any province or territory in Canada. It has also introduced new initiatives and new funding. Ministries are more consistently engaging with concepts of child well-being, prevention, and the social determinants of health. There is growing recognition that no single system – health, education, child welfare, income security, housing, or justice – can meet the needs of children and families alone.

Yet alongside this progress, challenges and harms persist. The Representative continues to receive thousands of reports each year of critical injuries and serious harm experienced by children receiving reviewable services,² and the number of children and young people seeking advocacy support continues to rise. Stories of unmet need, fragmented care, delayed intervention, and persistent systemic gaps remain a consistent feature of our work, as we expand on in Part 1 of this report.

¹ Government of British Columbia Child and Family Development. "Province takes new direction for vulnerable children, families." Media release. July 16, 2024. <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024CFD0009-001124>.

² Reviewable services are defined in the Representative for Children and Youth Act and include services under the Child, Family and Community Service Act, child and youth with support needs services, mental health and addiction services, and youth justice services.

Context and Commitments – What *Don't Look Away* Called For

Don't Look Away set out a clear direction for change, establishing shared expectations for how systems must work differently to improve

outcomes for children and families, anchored by a collective commitment to child and youth well-being.

More Than One Child – A Systemic Review

Our systemic review examined in detail the areas of family and intimate partner violence; family supports, early years, and early help; kinship care; interagency communication and coordination; accountability and quality improvement; workforce capacity in MCFD; and child welfare reform, including the in-process resumption of jurisdiction by B.C. Nations over their own children's well-being. In addition to learning through the stories of children and families, we commissioned 13 research papers that examined the current state in B.C. in each of these areas and how other jurisdictions have experienced and tackled similar issues, as well as promising practices and approaches that could work in B.C.

It was very important to us to gather input from those experiencing the child- and family-serving systems in B.C. as well as those working in them. Through working sessions, webinars, focus groups, interviews, and online surveys, we engaged with close to 2,000 people who care about children and their well-being. This included Indigenous leadership, government and health authority leadership and direct service staff, community sector agencies and workers, as well as family and kinship carers, many of whom have received services and supports from the child- and family-serving systems. Their feedback ensured that we had both a strong sense of the current state of child and family systems and a good understanding of innovative ideas for how to improve care and support for children and their families.



At its core, the report called for a shift in both *what* government prioritizes and *how* it organizes itself to act. The recommendations reflected the lessons learned from the sacred story investigation, systemic review, and engagements on the necessary shift in mindsets and focus toward child well-being. They set the “North Star” for a coordinated systemic transformation of child and family services in B.C. Action was called for to begin immediately and was noted to need “intentional action to unfold over the next 10 years.” Together, the five collective responsibilities set the course to guide action across systems:

- Focus on Child Well-Being – ensure that decisions across systems are guided by the conditions that allow children and youth to thrive, including safety, stability, belonging, and connection
- Support Families – strengthen the availability of timely, consistent, and preventive supports so families, including kinship carers, can care for their children and access help before needs escalate, safety is at risk, and protective services interventions are required
- Address Violence – recognize and respond to the pervasive role of violence in children’s lives through coordinated, multi-system action that prioritizes safety and healing
- Be Accountable – establish clear and shared responsibility across ministries and sectors for decisions, actions, and outcomes in the lives of children
- Support Jurisdiction – advance Indigenous self-determination in child and family services in ways that are coordinated, well-supported, and centred on the safety and well-being of children

What we mean by “Child Well-Being”

Well-being isn’t just about the absence of harm. It’s about ensuring that children and youth have what they need to flourish: emotional safety, identity affirmation, cultural connection, and strong, caring relationships. A true child and youth well-being system is not grounded in child protection or crisis response – it is rooted in prevention, equity, and care.

In addition to the collective responsibilities, *Don’t Look Away* identified quick-impact recommendations to address where we had confidence that the actions would build a pathway to the North Star. These recommendations focused on areas of known and immediate risk, and included:

- Strengthening supports for kinship care, family support, early years, and early help
- Responding to family and intimate partner violence
- Improving accountability, quality assurance, interagency communication and collaboration
- Increasing workforce capacity
- Addressing systemic bias and inequities

SPOTLIGHT

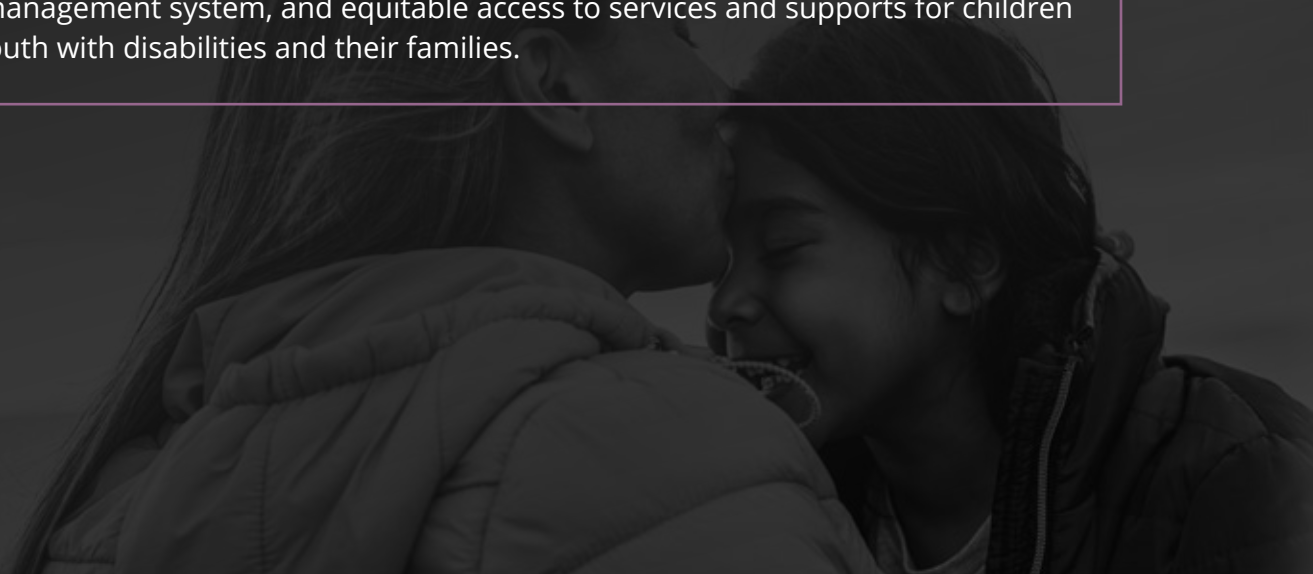
Subsequent Reports Share the Findings

RCY decided to address several issues that arose through the systemic review that required more focused consideration in supplementary reports that were released after the July 2024 release of *Don't Look Away*. These are introduced below, and progress is monitored within this document.

No Time to Wait – Parts One and Two expose a child welfare workforce in crisis and a Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) struggling to meet its responsibilities. Drawing on extensive surveys, data, and front-line perspectives, these reports reveal that social workers are carrying unmanageable caseloads, lack timely access to supports, and are working in environments that undermine their ability to protect children. Part One was released in the wake of *Don't Look Away* and is an initial examination of MCFD's workforce. Part Two was a second, more detailed examination of MCFD's workforce. Analysis of the narrative comments from the Representative's survey and focus groups painted a picture of a workforce overwhelmed with workload demands and by a high volume of standards and policies that are subject to frequent changes, with a consequent inability to be able to keep up. Seventeen recommendations were included in this report, calling for urgent and sustained action to stabilize and strengthen this vital workforce.

Too Many Left Behind: Ensuring Children and Youth with Disabilities Thrive

Colby was a young person with disabilities, including significant health-care needs. To bring more focus to the needs and interests of young people with disabilities, RCY released *Too Many Left Behind* in January 2025 as a supplementary report to *Don't Look Away*. With approximately 41 per cent of children in government care identified as having disability-related support needs, the report underscored both the scale of complexity and the inadequacy of current responses. The report further demonstrated the degree of fragmentation experienced by children and youth with disabilities and intersecting needs, and the consequences when services are not coordinated around the whole child and family. The Representative renewed calls for immediate and urgent action, including immediate funding increases, strengthening of mental health services, enhanced equitable access to education, a cross-government data management system, and equitable access to services and supports for children and youth with disabilities and their families.



Together, this work underscores a consistent message: Progress depends not only on the introduction of new initiatives but on the system's ability to operate differently in practice – by shifting mental models, through

stronger alignment, sustained capacity, and coordinated responses that are experienced meaningfully in the lives of children and families.

What do we mean by “mental models”?

The most common call to action from the engagement sessions in the systemic review was a call to shift the mental model – from child protection/child welfare to child well-being. This shift is from thinking about an action for now (to protect) to imagining a desired outcome over time (well-being). It is more congruent and aligned with Indigenous ways of knowing and being that reflect circle over hierarchy. It reflects holism and shared responsibility for the well-being of the young ones rather than separation and silos. The mental model acknowledges the many different contributors to well-being and brings in more opportunities to provide help and support to children and families.

“We will need a significant shift in the mental models and mindsets, so we will need to be bold and aspirational. But there are steps that could be taken right now that would be in the service of moving towards the fundamental changes. It's a both/and.”

– Member of the Circle of Advisors

These commitments also establish a clear test for progress. The question is not only whether actions have been taken but also whether systems are increasingly:

- Working in a coordinated way across ministries and sectors
- Responding earlier and more consistently to the needs of children and families
- Demonstrating shared accountability for outcomes
- Translating policy intent into changes experienced in practice
- Operating from a foundation of child rights, anti-racism, and equality

“Meaningful change does not come from improving one service in isolation, but from transforming the systems that surround children, youth, and families.”

– Survey respondent

Purpose of This Report

This report presents the findings of the Representative's monitoring work since the release of *Don't Look Away*. It provides an assessment of the provincial government's progress in responding to its recommendations and commitments to improve the safety, well-being, and connectedness of children, youth, and families. Its aim is to assess progress through the lens of systemic change and accountability.

Under Section 6(b) of the Representative for Children and Youth Act, the Representative is mandated:

to monitor, review, audit and conduct research on the provision of designated services by a public body or director for the purpose of making recommendations to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of those services, and to comment publicly on these functions.

This function of the Representative is essential for ensuring accountability and transparency to the public. Without monitoring, there is a risk that:

- Commitments remain intentions rather than actions
- Progress is defined by activity rather than impact
- Systems “snap back” to familiar practices under pressure

To that end, this report examines the period since *Don't Look Away* was released and asks:

- What progress has been made?
- Where are systems beginning to shift?
- What barriers limit meaningful change?

- And, most importantly, what is being experienced by children and families today?

This report does not seek to criticize, find fault, or assign blame. It is intended to support reflection on progress to date and to align efforts where change is still required. Its purpose is to make visible the current state of the system, its movement, its limitations, and its potential, so that progress can be grounded in a clear understanding of both action taken and impact experienced in the lives of children and families.

Monitoring is an ongoing process rather than a one-time assessment. This report reflects the evidence available to the Representative at the time of writing and publication. Following the release of the Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan, the provincial government has advised that it is continuing to compile and provide additional evidence regarding implementation efforts and progress. The Representative welcomes this ongoing exchange of information as part of a shared commitment to learning, accountability, and continuous improvement in support of better outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Don't Look Away identified an ongoing tension between the urgent need to act on known risks now and the sustained effort required to build a system capable of preventing harm altogether. *Don't Look Away* recognized that this work of change would be complex and challenging. The Representative noted that this was a “generational shift” that would take time, perseverance, humility, and care. There are no simple solutions, and the only way forward is through collective action. Mistakes will be made, but the key is to continue striving and learning.

This report holds these realities in focus.

PART 1

What We Continue to See



Two years after the release of *Don't Look Away*, the Representative continues to observe that the core patterns identified in that report remain present in the lives of children, youth, and families across B.C. These patterns are shaped, in part, by persistent inequities, with approximately one in six children living in poverty,³ and higher rates consistently experienced by Indigenous, racialized, and newcomer families, conditions that continue to influence outcomes and access to support across the province.⁴ In communities across B.C., families are navigating rising costs of living, housing instability, and broader

economic uncertainty, alongside increasing experiences of polarization, discrimination, and hate. Together, these dynamics are contributing to heightened stress, isolation, and declining well-being for many children and youth.

These factors create a broader context for understanding child well-being. Well-being is more than safety; income and housing stability, access to services when children need them, and the ability to keep children safely belonging and connected to their families are critical.

A System Still Under Strain

Since *Don't Look Away* was released, the volume of children coming into contact with risk, and into contact with systems, has not diminished.

In 2024/25 and 2025/26, RCY's Reviews and Investigations team received 14,276 reports of injury and death involving children and youth receiving reviewable services, with a 6 per cent increase between 2024/25 and 2025/26. Alongside the reviews, 1,862 children, youth, and young adults were supported by the RCY Individual Advocacy Team in 2024/25 and 2,088 in 2025/26 – this represents a 12 per cent increase from the previous year.

Rising demand is not solely a reflection of worsening conditions but an expected outcome of improved connection and

responsiveness. As systems strengthen their relational practice and increase direct contact with children and families, previously unmet needs are more likely to be identified, leading to increased referrals and greater demand on social services.

For example, in response to *Don't Look Away*, MCFD has introduced digital monitoring to ensure that children in care are seen in person, and in private, at least every 90 days as required by policy. This is an important step toward ensuring that children have meaningful access to the systems responsible for their well-being, and it is also expected to increase demand for supports, as more consistent, relational engagement brings unmet needs to light.

³ First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society, *2025 BC Child Poverty Report Card* (2025), 4, https://firstcallbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/First_Call_Report_Card_2025_revised_Feb_28_2026.pdf.

⁴ First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society *2025 BC Child Poverty Report Card*, 5.

What This Looks Like in Children's Lives

The experiences reflected in these numbers take shape in the lives of individual children. Importantly, the children whose stories are reflected in this section are not drawn from the original report; they are new lived and living experiences, emerging since its release, demonstrating that for some the

risks and harms identified in *Don't Look Away* continue to be experienced. While the details of each child's experience may differ, the underlying dynamics – fragmentation, delayed intervention, unclear accountability, and unmet need – remain consistent.⁵

When Systems Act, but Not Together

Rory is a 15-year-old Indigenous youth in care. They are a talented musician and find calm in outdoor activities. There have been numerous efforts to support Rory across multiple systems, including education, health, youth justice, and child welfare. Yet each of these systems has struggled to respond in ways that meet Rory's needs. For example, Rory's school has not been able to accommodate their learning needs, hospital admissions have been episodic and brief, and transitions to community mental health supports have not been sufficient to sustain stabilization.

As a result, Rory has experienced escalating crises, including suicide attempts and serious youth justice charges. Their life reflects not a lack of involvement but a lack of support for well-being and a lack of coordination, each system acting within its mandate but not acting together in a way that holds a whole-child approach. Rory's experience is not unique. Across the province, indicators of youth distress remain significant, with nearly one in five young people reporting that they had seriously considered suicide within a one-year period.⁶



“Each system acted within its mandate, but not together.”

⁵ According to First Call's BC Child Poverty Report Card, in 2024 almost 53,000 children in B.C. depended on welfare supports. According to the CHEQ 2026 Provincial Summary, between 2023 and 2025, 38% of parents/caregivers reported that their child or family accessed a supportive program, including speech language intervention (44%), occupational therapy/physical therapy (28%), supported child development (25%), counsellor/therapist (19%). In addition, 35% reported barriers to accessing these services, with the most common barrier identified being appointment availability/waiting list (48%).

⁶ McCreary Centre Society, *The Big Picture: An Overview of the 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey Provincial Results* (2024), 22, https://mcs.bc.ca/pdf/2023_bcahs_the_big_picture.pdf.



“Risk can build over time when families are left to navigate fragmented systems alone.”

When Early Support Does Not Hold

The importance of early, sustained support to families is further illustrated in Marlowe’s story.

Marlowe is a 14-year-old youth who is creative, caring, and deeply connected to her family. Over time, concerns about her family’s situation, including housing instability, medical needs, and unsafe individuals in the home, were identified through voluntary services. Supports were offered, multiple files were opened and closed, but services and supports were not sustained.

Shortly after the last time services were closed, Marlowe’s younger brother died. Marlowe, who had been acting as his primary caregiver, found him, and was devastated by his death.

In the months that followed, she experienced further instability, including exposure to violence and relocation between homes, without timely access to grief or counselling supports. Her mental health deteriorated and she began to use substances to both cope and find a community.

Marlowe’s story illustrates how risk can build over time when families are left to navigate fragmented systems that do not engage or support them as a cohesive unit, and how the absence of sustained, early intervention can result in significant and preventable harm. In the 2023 Adolescent Health Survey, 20 per cent of youth respondents who reported using substances said they had used because they felt down or sad.⁷

⁷ McCreary Centre Society, *The Big Picture*, 45.

... STILL TOO MANY TIMES.



The Ongoing Presence of Violence

The presence of violence in children's lives continues to be a critical and persistent concern. For many young people, exposure to harm is not an isolated experience but part of the conditions shaping their lives, with approximately one in seven youth reporting physical abuse and a similar proportion experiencing sexual violence at some point in their childhood.⁸

Karine grew up in a context of repeated exposure to violence within her home and community. Her father's use of violence intensified alongside substance use, and her family's circumstances were marked by instability, trauma, and risk. Over time, multiple reports were made, and both child welfare and police were involved.

Despite this, the response did not result in sustained protection or coordinated intervention.

The violence continued. The risks escalated.

Ultimately, Karine and her siblings were removed from their home and separated from one another.

Karine's experience reflects the consequences of recognizing violence without acting decisively to address it. This pattern is consistent with broader findings from our reviews, which show that 48 per cent of children and youth whose critical injuries and deaths were reported to us had experienced violence⁹ within their families, at some point in their lives.¹⁰ This underscores both the prevalence of violence and the critical importance of earlier, more coordinated intervention.

⁸ McCreary Centre Society, *The Big Picture*, 47, 25.

⁹ Family violence is noted as part of the child, youth, or family's history. The child or youth is witnessing, experiencing, and exposed to forms of physical, emotional, and/or sexualized violence, actual or threatened, in familial relationships.

¹⁰ RCY tracks Lifetime Issues of Interest (LIOI) for all children and youth whose critical injuries are reviewed. Life experiences such as family violence, poverty, parental substance use or mental health concerns, that are identified in at least one current or prior reportable circumstance or associated records are noted. Children and youth can, and often do, have multiple lifetime issues of interest identified based on their own unique experiences, history and/or injuries. The tracking of LIOI is one way that RCY gains more understanding about factors that contribute to childhood vulnerability. The recognition and addition of these factors is limited to the information reported to RCY and because records often do not provide this background information, we know that LIOIs are underreported.

Complex Needs, Fragmented Responses

Thomas was an 18-year-old youth of First Nations and Southeast Asian ancestry living in a rural northern community. He lived with multiple mental health diagnoses, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and substance use challenges. His family experienced ongoing poverty and concerns related to neglect, domestic violence, and parental mental health challenges.

Throughout his life, Thomas was involved with both MCFD and police, and services were engaged across multiple points in time. In the months before his death, he experienced two overdoses, including one that required admission to an adolescent psychiatric unit. Following discharge, he was placed in a hotel with 24/7 staffing while awaiting a more stable placement.

Despite this level of involvement, there was no sustained coordination across systems to support his return to community.

Thomas died alone in that hotel room.

His story reflects not a lack of service, but the absence of integrated planning and shared accountability, particularly for youth with complex needs in rural and underserved communities. This pattern is reflected beyond Thomas's experience. Service providers in specialized programs, such as Child and Youth Advocacy Centres, report increasing demand from outside their primary regions, with some centres indicating that up to 10 per cent of cases originate from other service areas. This suggests that, for many children, access to coordinated support still depends on geography rather than need.¹¹

¹¹ BC Network of Child and Youth Advocacy Centres, *Annual Report 2025–2026* (2026), 8, <https://www.bccyac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/BC-Network-of-CYACs-Annual-Report-2025-2026-FINAL.pdf>.



“Despite this level of involvement, there was no sustained coordination across systems.

Thomas died alone in that hotel room.”

When Responsibility Ends at Reporting

Jasper has had systems involvement for most of his little life. At three years old, he has already been close to death, despite several agencies, community organizations, and professionals having expressed concerns about his well-being and his family's capacity for care.

Concerns have been reported about neglect, with reports of unaddressed head lice infestations, insufficient food, unsafe housing conditions, insufficient clothing, poor hygiene, missed appointments, and little to no medical or dental follow-up. Community services were concerned about supports not being utilized and about the parental capacity to understand Jasper's developmental needs.

Reports were on file, but thorough assessments not completed.

Service providers withdrew despite documenting ongoing need to support the child.

Medical assessments were incomplete.

Despite all of these concerns, files were closing.

Four months after the most recent file closure, Jasper was found unresponsive and taken to the Intensive Care Unit at a local hospital. Doctors stated they were surprised that Jasper was still alive based on his conditions. He continued to deteriorate in hospital and experienced a brain injury as a result, and he has since required specialized rehabilitative care.

Jasper's story illustrates the importance of strong interagency collaboration, the need for community to not only report and document concerns but meaningfully respond to them, and the need for ongoing accountability and high quality of service to families so children can be safe and nurtured.



“Reports were on file.
Thorough assessments
were not completed.

Despite all of these
concerns, files were
closing. ”



Across Boundaries and Jurisdictions

Coordinating support in complexity becomes even more challenging when responsibility is divided across jurisdictions.

For the siblings Kendall, Jason, Mitch, Alex, Sara, and Eva, involvement with child welfare was shaped by both ministry care and the transition to Indigenous jurisdiction. MCFD returned the children to the care of their parents and then transferred responsibility to another agency. When safety concerns returned, reports were directed to the wrong authorities, and actions were delayed as the different parties navigated emerging jurisdiction and who was responsible, depending on the child's legal and Nation status and jurisdiction.

As a result, some of the children were served by an Indigenous agency, while others were served by MCFD. The lack of coordination and

shared planning left the children in unsafe conditions for a period of time, receiving different levels of intervention despite living in the same home.

This case highlights the challenges that can arise when multiple authorities are involved during transition periods and underscores the importance of clear transition protocols, role clarity, information-sharing processes, and joint planning arrangements.

Their experience reflects the complexity of transition – and the consequences when systems do not align clearly around children.

A similar lack of clarity can follow young people beyond care, where access to supports may depend not only on need but on how jurisdiction is understood and applied in practice.



What We Have Learned

These experiences reflect what *Don't Look Away* made clear:

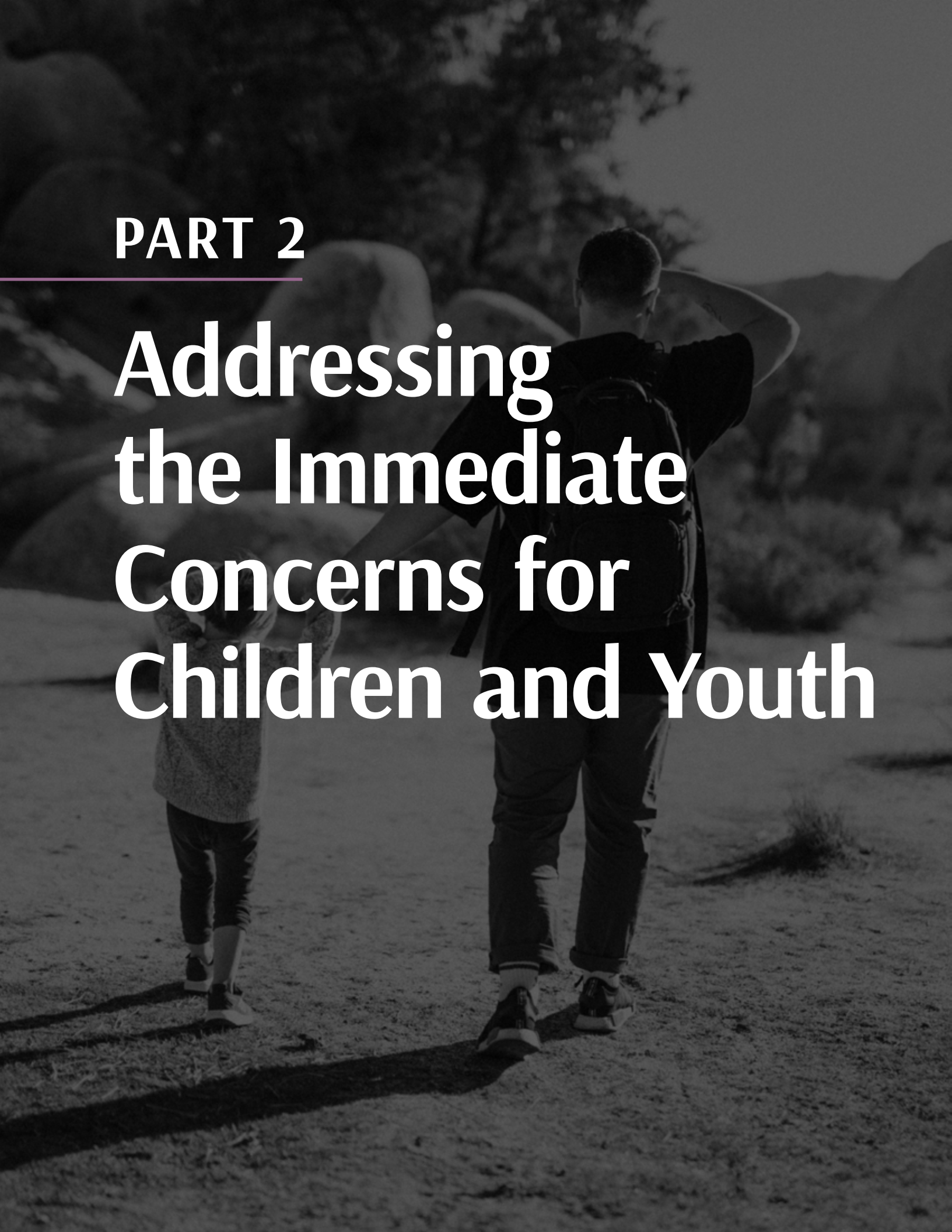
- Children don't experience challenges in silos.
- Connection to the system(s) is not always enough.

The issue is whether systems respond in a coordinated way, recognizing and acting on patterns, not just individual incidents, with sufficient clarity and urgency in light of what is already known. For example, our office continues to see incidents assessed as individual occurrences rather than understood in the context of the child and family's circumstances and experiences. Reactions within mandate silos persist, while attention to addressing underlying issues and longer-term well-being is lacking. From our monitoring efforts, we see that information-sharing limitations often prevent the bigger picture from emerging to help discern the action required.

These patterns are evident in the data. The stories reflect these realities in lived experience. And their consistency across time and circumstance makes it clear that while progress has begun to be made, the conditions required to achieve sustained and consistent changes in outcomes are not yet fully in place.

This is the context in which progress must be understood.

It is also the context that shapes the analysis that follows.

A black and white photograph of a man and a child walking away from the camera on a dirt path. The man is wearing a backpack and has his hand on his head, looking towards the horizon. The child is walking slightly ahead of him. The background shows a desert landscape with trees and hills under a clear sky.

PART 2

Addressing the Immediate Concerns for Children and Youth

Don't Look Away laid out a vision for the North Star of child well-being, longer-term actions characterized by collective responsibilities, and a number of quick-impact recommendations. The latter focused attention on actions that could be taken in the ensuing six to 12 months that would improve services for young people and families now, while the government progressed toward the North Star. This section of the monitoring review addresses progress seen for the quick-impact recommendations.

It is important to note that while the North Star and the collective responsibilities speak to the all-of-government role in child well-being, the immediate actions were primarily directed toward MCFD. Work has commenced on approximately one-third of these *Don't Look Away* quick-impact recommendations, and all the recommendations from *No Time to Wait, Part 2*. Activity is underway across key areas of system pressure, including workforce capacity, kinship care, decision-making and oversight, violence response, and systemic bias.

These efforts demonstrate increasing recognition of the issues identified in *Don't Look Away*. However, when assessed through the lens of impact on children and families, progress remains uneven and insufficient in several critical areas.

In addition to progress reported by government, the following analysis is grounded in multiple, intersecting sources of evidence gathered and reviewed since July 2024. It draws on:

- Data from 14,276 reportable circumstances¹² and 18 comprehensive reviews¹³



- Service experiences learned from the individual advocates who supported 3,950 children, youth, and young adults
- Engagement with the child and youth sector, including four provincial convenings and ongoing outreach with youth, families, communities, and service providers
- Monitoring provincial government action, including 48 information requests¹⁴ (encompassing over 11,000 documents), policy and legislative analysis, system-level data collection, and ongoing assessments of action plans and progress reports

Together, these sources provide both a broad systems view and a close understanding of how policies and decisions are experienced in practice.

¹² Reportable circumstances are 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.

¹³ A comprehensive review is a detailed examination of the child's files to learn as much as possible about what happened that led to a child's critical injury or death, and whether a story should proceed to full investigation.

¹⁴ Under the RCY Act (Section 10), the Representative for Children and Youth is entitled to access any information in the custody or control of a public body (other than an officer of the Legislature) or a director that is necessary to enable the Representative to exercise their powers and perform their functions and duties under the Act.

Workforce Capacity

There has been increased recognition of workforce pressures and early efforts to respond. The provincial government has focused on strengthening training, supervision, and organizational supports, including the development of an MCFD Workforce Plan, reviews of onboarding and credential pathways, and expanded training in trauma-informed, anti-racist, and jurisdictional practice. Additional initiatives, such as peer support programs and leadership development through team leader training, reflect increasing attention being paid to the conditions required to support staff.

This looks like:

- Development of an MCFD Workforce Plan that sets direction, actions, and outcome measurement
- Expanded training in trauma-informed, anti-racist, and jurisdictional practice including almost 1,300 employee completing “Upholding Jurisdiction” training by March 2026
- Introduction of a peer support program pilot and increased use of critical incident debriefings
- Leadership development through Team Leader training, with 25 learners participating in the pilot in fall 2025, and three cohorts planned or underway for 2026
- Ongoing reliance on provincial remote response teams remains necessary due to recruitment difficulties, particularly in rural and remote areas without delegated staff.
- Introduction of new practice standards (Adaptable Practice Framework) for understaffed offices reflects a system adjusting expectations in response to shortages, rather than addressing underlying capacity issues.
- Based on ministry reported data on active employee counts over time, there has been a 7 per cent decrease in the number of child protection workers since March 2024. During this same time, there has been a 4.7 per cent increase in the total number of child welfare support workers¹⁵ who are able to assist child protection workers.

However, the pressures identified in *No Time to Wait* continue to shape practice, and progress has not yet translated into sustained relief at the front line.

While further work is planned, including options for professional registration, development of a workload measurement tool, and improved workforce monitoring, progress to date has not yet closed the gap between expectations and capacity. The continued strain on staffing levels, workload, and support means there is an ongoing risk that the system will have little choice but to default to crisis response rather than early intervention and relational practice. Importantly, these pressures reflect not only internal workforce challenges but strain generated across the broader child- and family-serving system, where workforce and capacity challenges in areas such as housing, health, education, and income support both exacerbates family stress and contributes to the creation and escalation of child welfare concerns.

¹⁵ The total child welfare workforce includes Resource Social Workers, Social Work Assistants (SPO 15) and Child and Youth Support Workers (SPO 21), who actively support and enable Child Protection staff to deliver protection services. While they are integral members of the child welfare team, they do not perform delegated child protection functions.

Improving Accountability, Quality Improvement, Interagency Communication, and Coordination

There has also been movement toward strengthening oversight and decision-making. Efforts have focused on improving visibility of system performance, clarifying expectations, and introducing changes intended to support more responsive, community-informed decision-making.

This looks like:

- Introduction of new dashboards to track key indicators, such as visits, care plans, and overdue assessments of a child protection concerns
- Public efforts to reinforce expectations related to duty to report and respond
- Changes to screening processes to allow greater local decision-making and consideration of community context
- Changes to audits to ensure that family planning is prioritized and barriers and enablers to meeting policy requirements are identified

Together, these initiatives reflect alignment with the direction set out in *Don't Look Away*, particularly in strengthening accountability and responsiveness within the system.

However, these efforts remain at the early stages of implementation and are not yet consistently reflected in practice. Further work is needed to:

- Establish a cross-ministerial mechanism to identify and address intersectoral policy, practice, and service delivery barriers for information-sharing practices
- Develop shared approaches or revised training for information-sharing and collaboration across sectors
- Assess the role and impact of centralized screening processes, including from the perspective of communities, Indigenous service providers, and families

Without greater clarity, consistency, and coordination across systems, there is a risk that improvements in policy and oversight will not translate into meaningful changes in the experiences of children and families.

“Families should be met by a connected system that sees the whole family, honours their identity, and responds collaboratively.”

– Survey respondent



Family Support, Early Years, and Early Help

There is growing recognition of the importance of supporting families earlier and more effectively, as was most recently reinforced in the release of government's new Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan and Outcomes Framework. MCFD has taken many steps to act on the recommendations made around family support, early years, and early help, including:

- Policy reviews and current state analysis of least intrusive measures and family-centred planning
- Development of practice circles, including over 500 staff participating in circles that emphasize least intrusive measures¹⁶ and family-centred planning
- Policy reviews and new resources developed for the use of discretionary funding

At the same time, key recommendations from *Don't Look Away* related to strengthening early support for children and providing earlier help for families have not yet advanced, including:

- Increasing service capacity for Collaborative Practice and Decision-Making
- Reimagining and funding the MCFD Family Preservation Framework
- Reimagining the Early Years Framework, to focus on early help and strengthening family resiliency

These frameworks are important foundational tools to support this work moving forward and ensure that it is sustained in years to come.

¹⁶ "Least intrusive measures" refers to the legal mandate requiring child protection staff to consider the options that have the least disruptive impact on children while creating safety as priority.

Strengthening Supports for Kinship Care

MCFD has also begun a comprehensive review of kinship care arrangements, signalling a recognition of the need for change. The prioritization of kinship care reflects a well-established finding: that children are often best supported within their extended families and communities when they are unable to live with their parents, and that these families must be adequately resourced to meet children's needs.

This looks like:

- Research into equitable financial and caregiving supports for kinship care
- Ongoing policy and practice reviews
- Development of new resources, out-of-care guidance, an interim guide for caregivers, and an external webpage for kinship families

While these are important and key developments, the pace and scope of this work have not kept up with the scale of need. Approximately 5,700 children are currently in out-of-care arrangements,¹⁷ and many continue to experience inconsistent oversight, inequitable supports, and unclear accountability. The comprehensive kinship care review is not expected to be completed until 2027.

¹⁷ "Out of care" includes the children and youth living outside their parental home through any of the following: Extended Family Program, Out of Care Orders, Child in the Home of a Relative Program, Youth Agreements, Section 54.01 and Section 54.01 placements.



Responding to Family and Intimate Partner Violence

Increased attention has been paid to the role of family and gender-based violence in children's lives, including efforts to strengthen tools, training, and interagency responses.

This looks like:

- Development of a provincial multi-sector violence response framework is underway, informed by cross-ministry and multi-sector consultations, with a public intentions paper anticipated by the end of summer 2026 to support broader engagement
- Child protection worker training and policy updates that hold perpetrators accountable and recognize that children and youth living with violence are themselves experiencing violence
- Quarterly Domestic Violence Practice Forums for team leaders to support learning on priority topics
- Required use of the BC Summary of Domestic Violence Risk Factors Form for assessment whenever domestic violence is found to be a factor during a child protection response, and integration of this assessment form into the Integrated Case Management System¹⁸
- Amendments to the Child, Family and Community Service Act to enable new temporary safety plan agreements while an assessment or investigation is underway¹⁹

It is also important to note that government commissioned Dr. Kim Stanton to undertake a systemic review of the legal system's treatment of sexual and intimate partner

violence. Her report and recommendations, released in June 2025, complements the calls for action outlined in *Don't Look Away*, with the former bringing more attention to the legal system and the latter focusing on the significant and enduring impacts of violence on children and youth. Despite this attention and these commitments, RCY is concerned that changes resulting from the *Don't Look Away* quick-impact recommendations are not yet meaningfully reflected in direct service practice. While important multi-sectoral policy and framework development work is underway, its impact on service delivery and coordinated responses for children, youth and families has not yet taken hold. Areas where further progress is expected include:

- Identification of funding strategies and commitments to enhance and expand community-based and Indigenous-led family violence resources
- Evidence that capacity assessments and enhancements to support coordinated responses for local service areas and Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies have begun

Given the well-documented role of violence in many of the cases reviewed in *Don't Look Away*, and in the reportable circumstances received by this office, it is critical that gaps between policy development and front-line implementation are steadfastly addressed and closed. Strengthening front-line capacity and decision-making in situations where timely and coordinated action in response to violence is critical, is essential to children's safety.

¹⁸ The Integrated Case Management System is the internal software used by social services ministries within the provincial government.

¹⁹ British Columbia, Legislative Assembly, *Bill 29—2025: Child, Family and Community Service Amendment Act, 2025*, 1st Sess., 43rd Parl. (Victoria, BC: Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, 2025) <https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/bills/billsprevious/1st43rd:gov29-1>.

Addressing Systemic Bias and Inequities

There have been efforts to advance anti-racist and trauma-informed approaches across the system, reflecting increased recognition of systemic bias and inequities in service delivery. Since the release of *Don't Look Away*, we have reviewed specific evidence from MCFD's efforts in this area.

This looks like:

- Internal reviews of competencies, staff expectations, training, and available resources to strengthen anti-racism practice
- Analysis of workforce and service delivery data, including staff experiences of racism, to inform system improvements
- Development of an updated anti-racism learning framework, with implementation planned for later this fiscal year

However, this work remains at an early stage and has not yet translated into observable changes in practice:

- It is not yet clear how these initiatives are influencing authority, expectations, or accountability at the front line.
- Implementation efforts do not consistently demonstrate how the lived experiences of children, youth, families, and caregivers have informed design or delivery.
- There is a risk that efforts will remain focused on internal system change rather than outcomes experienced by those most impacted.

While this foundational work is critically important, sustainable change will depend on whether the work leads to meaningful shifts in how decisions are made, how accountability is exercised, and how children and families experience the system. As *Don't Look Away* emphasized, this requires more than technical solutions; it requires systems that are informed by those who experience them most directly.



PART 3

Building a Child and Youth Well-Being System of Care



As noted, *Don't Look Away* set out a broader expectation that government would begin to organize itself differently, moving beyond isolated responses and toward more deliberate alignment across systems to support child and youth well-being. This included rethinking how ministries work together, how decisions are made, and how responsibility for children is shared, with the intention of creating conditions in which support is more coordinated, timely, and responsive to the complexity of children's lives.

There are indications that key elements of this approach are taking shape. The provincial government initiated a comprehensive review of services across ministries, led

by a new Deputy Ministers' Project Board, to identify existing initiatives, programs, and strategic plans that contribute to the well-being of children and families. Viewed through a broader understanding of the social determinants of health, this work represents an effort to understand how current investments collectively support families to thrive. The resulting inventory informed the development of the [Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan](#), released on June 16, 2026, marking a key step toward greater alignment and coordination of existing services, as well as demonstrating where new initiatives support the plan.

Throughout this work, the Province has regularly consulted with the Representative. This has included sharing approaches and draft materials, as well as seeking input on alignment with the findings and recommendations of *Don't Look Away*. This engagement has been an opportunity for the Representative to advocate for alignment and mobilize lessons learned, while maintaining our position of full independence in assessing progress and outcomes.

“Words don't change children's lives. Real action by the government and equality would.”

– Dr. Cindy Blackstock



A System Beginning to Move

The Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan represents a first-in-Canada effort to bring together the work underway across government ministries and authorities to support children, youth, and families. It is organized around a set of priority areas that reflect the conditions necessary for children to do well: families are supported early and consistently, services are coordinated and accessible, children are safe from violence, and systems respond in ways that address inequity and support Indigenous self-determination.

The plan also introduces a shared approach to governance and accountability, including cross-ministry structures and a common outcomes framework intended to track progress over time. This signals an effort to move beyond individual program reporting toward a more integrated understanding of whether children's lives are improving. It

places emphasis on aligning decision-making across ministries, strengthening connections between services, and ensuring that policy and investment decisions translate into direct impact on children and families.

While the Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan is a significant step forward, a clear implementation pathway with shared, cross-government accountability has not yet been delivered. The plan builds on existing ministry mandates and structures, and explicitly states that it “does not replace or interfere with ministry-specific plans and accountabilities.”²⁰ While this is an understandable place to begin, especially in light of the significant fiscal challenges faced by the province, it is vital that responsibility for child well-being is reinforced as a collective, cross-government outcome. This illustrates a challenging tension between describing a future changed state and committing to also stay the course.

²⁰ Government of British Columbia, Child and Youth Well-Being: Action Plan (2026), 16, <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/121/2026/06/CYWB-Action-Plan.pdf>.

Alignment with the North Star of Child Well-Being

The Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan identifies five pillars that align with the collective responsibilities:

- 1. A Safe, Strong, and Healthy Foundation for Families:** The goals and strategies of this pillar are directly related to the Support Families and Child Well-Being collective responsibilities. Importantly, this pillar looks at opportunities to improve the social determinants of health and promote child well-being within families. This also aligns with streamlined recommendations for screening tools and assessment processes across service lines, support within the K-12 system for young people at risk or in care, comprehensive mental health and substance use services, and supports for children and youth with disabilities.
- 2. Preventing and Responding to Intimate Partner, Gender-Based, and Family Violence:** This pillar clearly aligns with the Address Violence collective responsibility. The emphasis on prevention and breaking the cycles of violence is well aligned with the recommendations. While continued support for the PEACE and Violence Is Preventable programs and the Child and Youth Advocacy Centres is critically important, further enhancement of child-specific supports and implementation of the recommendations of the Stanton Review will help shift the mental models that underpin our systems.
- 3. Integrated Services and Crisis Response:** This pillar aligns strongly with the Be Accountable interagency quick-impact recommendations, as well as actions that support more coordinated responses to Address Violence. The intended action should reduce barriers for families navigating multiple systems by promoting collaboration. Many of the services that were highlighted as working well in *Don't Look Away*, such as Interagency Case Assessment Team (ICAT), Intervention Circles, and Indigenous Justice Access Centres, see continued support in this plan.

- 4. Advancing Indigenous Self-Determination and Jurisdiction:** This pillar aligns with the intentions of a Child and Youth Well-being Framework as well as the collective responsibility recommendations for Support Jurisdiction. It incorporates Indigenous knowledge systems, recognizes acts of resistance over time, and identifies and responds to areas of systemic racism, such as equity gaps and fiscal discrimination. It also speaks to the streamlined recommendation for the co-development of a fiscal framework, which was recommended in our *At a Crossroads* (2022) report.²¹
- 5. Protecting and Uplifting the Most Vulnerable:** This pillar aligns with both Support Families and Child Well-Being; it leans into past recommendations that have been streamlined into well-being, such as supporting youth in care transitions to adulthood, supporting youth justice services, and incorporating trauma-informed practices in screening and assessment tools. This pillar also includes many actions from the quick-impact recommendations, including clarifying and implementing least intrusive measures, improving access to discretionary funding, continuing a review of kinship and out-of-care arrangements, and using “real-time oversight” for monitoring critical child safety and guardianship practices.

Taken together, these areas are in line with what was called for in *Don't Look Away*: They reflect a growing focus on the social determinants of health, bringing together work across health, education, income security, housing, social services, and justice. Children's outcomes are shaped by these conditions, and cannot be improved through a single service or system in isolation. Supporting children to thrive therefore requires attention to the health of families and communities, and to systems working together to strengthen those connections over time.

²¹ Representative for Children and Youth, *At a Crossroads: The Roadmap from Fiscal Discrimination to Equity in Indigenous Child Welfare* (2022), https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/RCY_At-a-Crossroads_Mar2022_FINAL.pdf.

The Child and Youth Well-Being Outcomes Framework

The Child and Youth Well-Being Outcomes Framework that accompanies the Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan offers an overview of how the system will be collectively monitoring whether these shifts are making the intended changes over time. The framework is based on the internationally recognized OECD Framework²² and may support other provinces and territories to take a similar approach, enabling cross-jurisdictional comparisons and learning. In addition, we are encouraged to see the following:

- **The framework proposes the use of diverse and reputable data sources**, including those recommended for consideration in *Don't Look Away*, which include the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) and the McCreary Centre Society.
- **The framework is also based on current state availability**, and is informed by some initial internal cross-ministry engagement and consultation to identify what data is currently available.

While the framework and recent government shifts in organization are creating a foundation for a strong shift in data collection, we will continue to monitor for:

- Continued funding of the bodies that are collecting data
- Distinctions-based and disaggregated data collection that incorporates the Grandmother's Perspective²³
- Alignment with the Provincial Health Officer's Child Well-Being Model²⁴
- Embedding the framework in service plans and mandate letters as indicators of service delivery and strategic priority needs

“Imagine if we had a proper family support system. Then our child protection system would wither away.”

– RCY Circle of Advisors member

²² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Measuring What Matters for Child Well-being and Policies* (2021), OECD Publishing, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e82fded1-en>.

²³ British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, *Disaggregated Demographic Data Collection in British Columbia: The Grandmother Perspective* (2020), https://bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/BCOHR Sep2020_Disaggregated-Data-Report-FINAL.pdf.

²⁴ Office of the Provincial Health Officer, *Overview and Guide to the Child and Youth Health and Well-Being Indicators Project* (n.d.), https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/reports-publications/special-reports/overview_guide_-_child_and_youth_health_and_well-being_indicators_project.pdf.

SPOTLIGHT

Supporting Children and Youth with Disabilities – Ministry of Children and Family Development

The Ministry of Children and Family Development has announced a new Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) service delivery framework intended to improve supports for children and youth with disabilities and their families. The redesign includes significant new investments in CYSN services inclusive of two new programs providing direct funding to families, and an expansion of community-based services and supports. The intent is to broaden access to services, better align supports to individual need, and strengthen early intervention, family support, mental health supports offered within community-based services.

Key initiatives underway include:

- Introduction of a new B.C. Children and Youth Disability Benefit and Disability Supplement, intended to provide direct funding to eligible families with the highest level of need.
- Expansion of community-based services, including behavioural supports, mental health services, navigation and family supports, therapies, supports for young people aged 6–18.
- A phased implementation approach intended to increase access to supports for historically underserved children and youth while improving coordination across programs and service systems
- Efforts to align disability services with the Province's broader Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan and commitment to earlier intervention and prevention-focused supports

Given the scale and significance of these changes, RCY will undertake focused monitoring of policy development, implementation, service accessibility, equity, and outcomes for children, youth, and families. Particular attention will be paid to alignment with recommendations from RCY's previous reports *Too Many Left Behind*, *Toward Inclusion, Excluded*, and *Alone and Afraid*, including coordination between ministries, access to services in rural and remote communities, support for families during transition, equitable access to comprehensive, accessible supports across disability groups, and whether children, youth and families experience meaningful improvements in well-being and inclusion as the redesign unfolds.

Sustaining Momentum: Timeliness and Accountability

The work underway signals that the direction of change is increasingly understood. A shared vision for child and youth well-being, combined with early efforts to align policy and practice, reflects a system beginning to move toward a more integrated, preventive approach.

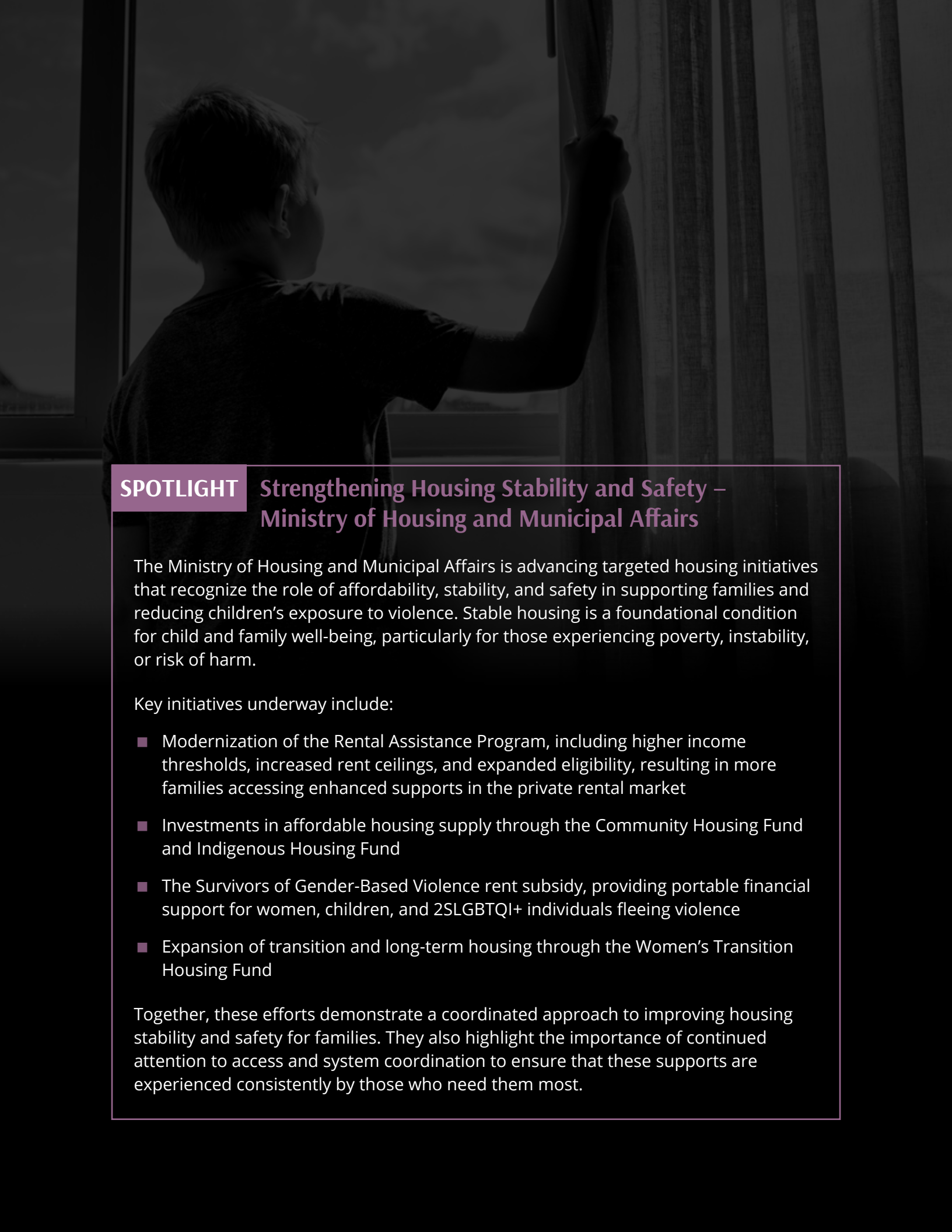
The question is not whether progress is occurring but whether it is occurring with sufficient urgency to improve outcomes for children and families in real time. Children's lives do not unfold according to implementation timelines, and the risks identified in *Don't Look Away* remain present today.

The Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan and Outcomes Framework provides an important foundation. Its impact, however, will depend on how clearly its commitments translate into coordinated action across

ministries, through shared decision-making, aligned resources, and accountability for outcomes that matter to children and families. Strengthening the connection between policy intent and practice, and ensuring consistent feedback from front-line experience, community partners, Nations, and the voices of the families most impacted, will be essential.

The task ahead is clear: to move from establishing momentum to sustaining it through coordinated, timely, and accountable action. This is not a call to begin new work but a call to deepen and accelerate what is already underway, so that its impact is felt more consistently in the lives of children and families. We must continue to act, develop, learn, shift in alignment with discoveries and the evidence, and persevere. We must not look away.



A young child with light-colored hair is seen from the back, pulling a light-colored curtain. The child is wearing a dark-colored t-shirt. The background is a bright, slightly overexposed window or doorway. The overall image has a soft, ethereal quality with a light blue and white color palette.

SPOTLIGHT

Strengthening Housing Stability and Safety – Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs

The Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs is advancing targeted housing initiatives that recognize the role of affordability, stability, and safety in supporting families and reducing children's exposure to violence. Stable housing is a foundational condition for child and family well-being, particularly for those experiencing poverty, instability, or risk of harm.

Key initiatives underway include:

- Modernization of the Rental Assistance Program, including higher income thresholds, increased rent ceilings, and expanded eligibility, resulting in more families accessing enhanced supports in the private rental market
- Investments in affordable housing supply through the Community Housing Fund and Indigenous Housing Fund
- The Survivors of Gender-Based Violence rent subsidy, providing portable financial support for women, children, and 2SLGBTQI+ individuals fleeing violence
- Expansion of transition and long-term housing through the Women's Transition Housing Fund

Together, these efforts demonstrate a coordinated approach to improving housing stability and safety for families. They also highlight the importance of continued attention to access and system coordination to ensure that these supports are experienced consistently by those who need them most.

Cross-Cutting Findings: Enablers and Barriers

In addition to monitoring specific actions and initiatives taken in response to *Don't Look Away*, we look for what is both enabling and limiting or constraining the change efforts. In naming these enablers and barriers, we hope that systems can gain insight that will support future progress.

Across the recommendations – both quick-impact and collective responsibilities – we see consistent patterns.

Mental models are shifting, and work is underway; however, the system is not always working differently in practice.

In many instances, implementation efforts remain focused on reviewing existing policies and structures within ministry silos, rather than reorienting toward shared responsibility for child and youth well-being. To date, the action plans submitted in response to the Representative's recommendations do not reflect the coordinated, cross-ministry approach that was envisioned and that will be required for system transformation. Many ministries are still unsure of their role, or still work from the understanding that MCFD holds the primary responsibility to make these transformational shifts. Our office recognizes that large-scale shifts take time, and we will continue to monitor for increasing intra-provincial collaboration as the system reorients itself to the North Star.

Don't Look Away also called for, in building effective system shifts, broad engagement with those from multiple levels of government,

those with lived experiences, and those delivering services on the front lines and in community. Monitoring efforts show that engagement often occurs after the planning and before implementation instead of in the earlier developmental stages. Co-development and meaningful engagement earlier on would have a significant impact on making meaningful changes.

Several key recommendations remain delayed, particularly those requiring shifts to prevention, integration of mental health and substance use services, and the uptake of Indigenous-led, decolonizing approaches. These delays reflect systemic barriers: polarized politics that constrain action, fiscal pressures that limit upstream investment, and a lack of interministerial infrastructure to enable coordinated, cross-government implementation. Addressing these barriers will require political courage, sustained cross-ministerial leadership, and dedicated investment in prevention.

Timeliness also remains a critical concern. The quick-impact recommendations were intended to be acted on within six to 12 months, reflecting what was already known about risk in children's lives. Two years later, that level of urgency is not yet consistently evident in practice.

And as *Don't Look Away* made clear, children are harmed not only by what systems fail to know but by what systems already know and do not act on with sufficient urgency.

SPOTLIGHT

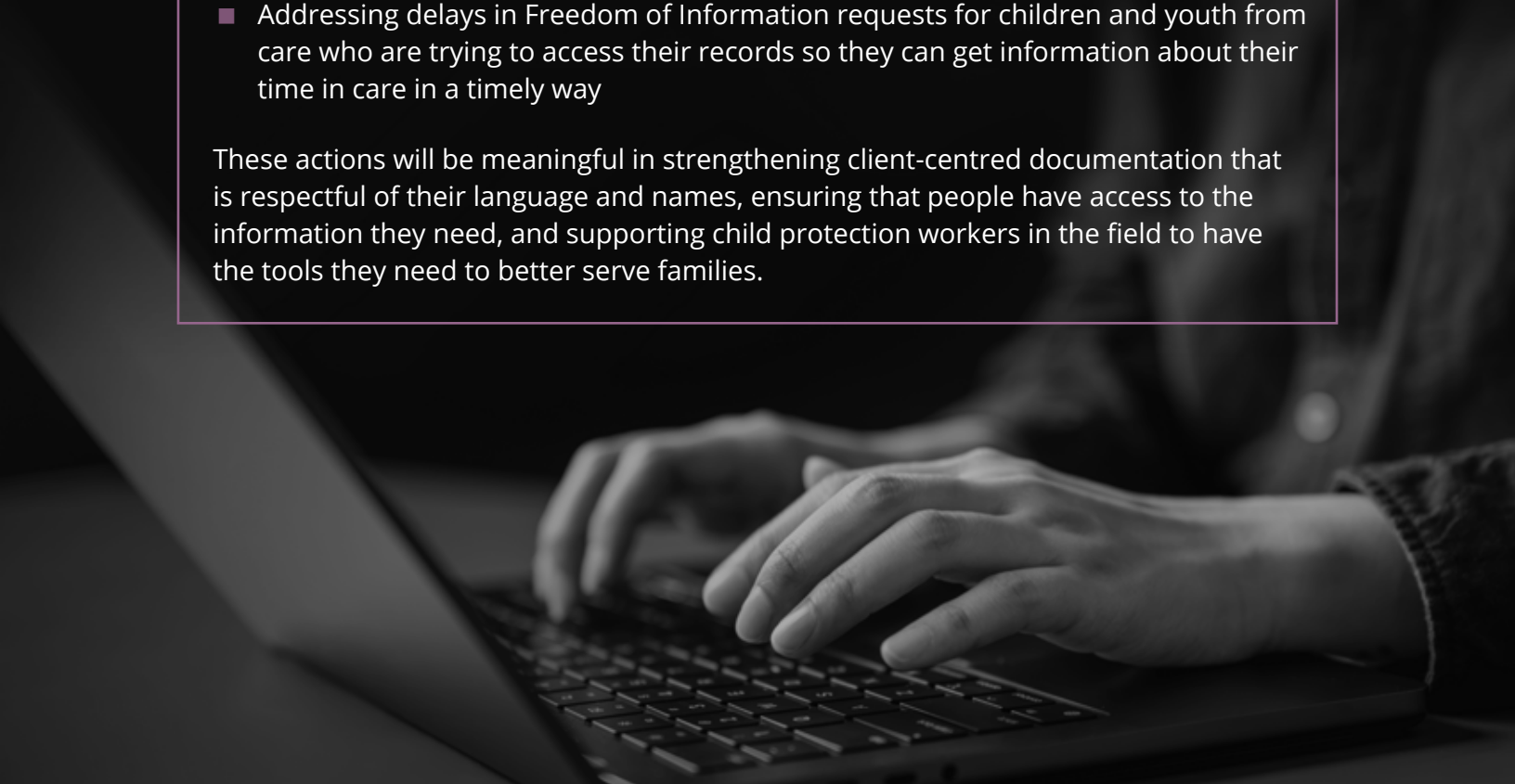
Building the Data and Shifting Systems – Ministry of Citizens' Services

The Ministry of Citizens' Services is developing tools and addressing data problems to allow B.C.'s children, youth, and families to be better served. This includes leading projects that are cross-ministry and interjurisdictional between the province and the federal government and upholding the inherent rights of Indigenous people to use their language and names in documentation.

Key initiatives underway include:

- Releasing the Indigenous Language Technology Standard, along with supporting guidance and tools – The standard outlines technical requirements for computer systems to read, write, store, process, and display Indigenous languages, and the development of a curriculum to support public servants in understanding the importance of including Indigenous languages in systems, and tools and techniques to enter the languages
- Developing a mobile centralized system that supports child protection workers to be able to access more information when in community working with families and share information quickly to respond to needs faster
- Supporting the launch of MCFD's dashboard to track key indicators of child safety and policy adherence
- Launching MCFD's new caregiver portal to allow caregivers of all types access to the information they need to ensure equitable support
- Addressing delays in Freedom of Information requests for children and youth from care who are trying to access their records so they can get information about their time in care in a timely way

These actions will be meaningful in strengthening client-centred documentation that is respectful of their language and names, ensuring that people have access to the information they need, and supporting child protection workers in the field to have the tools they need to better serve families.



PART 4

Collective Responsibility Spotlights



Collective Responsibility: Focus on Child Well-Being

Shifting from child protection to the North Star of child well-being remains the most fundamental change called for in *Don't Look Away*. Two years later, this direction is increasingly understood but not yet fully realized in the way government operates.

Don't Look Away called for:

- A cross-government Child Well-Being Strategy and Action Plan
- Alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- Integration of Indigenous and Western knowledge
- Shared outcomes, accountability, and long-term oversight

What we are seeing now:

- Well-being positioned as a shared responsibility, and recognition of the influence of social and economic conditions, in the recently released Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan
- Significant investments announced in Budget 2026, including in (all over three years) primary health care (\$2.3B), youth mental health²⁵ (\$131.5M), child welfare (\$478M), student supports (\$634M), child care (\$330M), and expanded supports for children with disabilities (\$475M)
- Broader efforts to address the conditions affecting families, including Look West: Jobs and Prosperity for a Stronger BC and Canada, the 2024 Poverty Reduction Strategy, and, most recently, the Provincial Anti-Racism Action Plan

What we will continue to monitor for:

- Movement from coordination and strengthening of existing services to meaningful system redesign as plan is implemented
- Shared accountability across ministries – only one of 11 service plans across the child and youth well-being system currently includes a commitment to child well-being
- The development of mechanisms to align new investments within a unified system – analysis of budget and estimates documents suggests that decision-making continues to operate in silos

²⁵ Based on Health Estimates, which listed \$131.5 million to implement Integrated Child and Youth (ICY) teams in 20 school districts.

Collective Responsibility: Support Families

Supporting families early and consistently is central to improving outcomes for children. While investment is increasing, families continue to experience systems as fragmented and difficult to navigate.

Don't Look Away called for:

- Cross-ministry action to strengthen family supports
- Early intervention grounded in children's rights and responsive caregiving
- Integration of Indigenous and Western knowledge
- Use of data to support coordinated, place-based responses

What we are seeing now:

- Policy updates underway to strengthen supports for kinship carers and family-centred practice
- Over 900 new licensed child care spaces across the province, expanding access to affordable child care
- Expanded teacher training in First Nations communities co-designed with the First Nations Education Steering Committee and the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association
- Changes in the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) have resulted in an increase of 58 per cent more households accessing the program

What we will continue to monitor for:

- Service shifts that are coordinated across ministries, and policy approaches that are grounded in child well-being
- The availability and ongoing resourcing of services for families before moments of crisis
- Integration of Indigenous approaches in policy and practice, beyond work undertaken in partnership with Indigenous communities
- Coordination of data collected to support early intervention, family support, and early help, enabling preventive, community-level responses
- Implementation of new Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) framework, including equitable access to disability supports and new community-based supports for children and youth with disabilities

Collective Responsibility: Address Violence

Violence remains a defining condition in many children's lives. While action and investment are increasing, the interconnection and collaboration required to support families is missing.

What *Don't Look Away* called for:

- A coordinated, cross-system response to family violence
- Increased Indigenous-led healing supports with funding
- Revision of the Gender-Based Violence Action Plan
- Stronger accountability for perpetrators

What we are seeing now:

- Updates to the Family Law Act, broadening definitions of family violence and prioritizing children's needs and safety
- Investments in new programs, like Caring Dads, and renewed targeted healing funds for Indigenous communities
- 1,500+ gender-based violence housing supplements since December 2025
- New tools to support domestic/intimate partner violence risk assessment in child welfare

What we will continue to monitor for:

- The coordination of systems (health, justice, and social services) when responding to violence experienced by families
- Funding, service accessibility, and waitlists for community-based programs designed for children who have experienced violence, such as Child and Youth Advocacy Centres and the PEACE program
- Updates to Safe and Supported: British Columbia's Gender-Based Violence Action Plan to include a specific focus on children and youth experiencing violence
- The development of a multi-sector provincial violence response framework to support service providers responding to violence at the community level

Collective Responsibility: Be Accountable

Accountability remains one of the most persistent challenges. Despite progress in data and government infrastructure, planning has been insular and responsibility for child well-being outcomes remains unclear.

What *Don't Look Away* called for:

- A child well-being accountability and data framework
- Shared outcome indicators across systems
- Stabilized and strengthened data collection
- Transparent reporting on outcomes and inequities

What we are seeing now:

- Reappointment of B.C.'s Anti-Racism Data Committee to identify and address systemic racism and advance racial equity
- Expansion of the Data Innovation Program, and launch of Connected Services BC to support whole-of-government coordination
- Amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act aimed at reducing delays and improving access to records for youth transitioning from care
- New MCFD dashboards tracking overdue incidents and service indicators to strengthen monitoring of policy compliance

What we will continue to monitor for:

- Widespread public engagement to inform the development of the Child and Youth Well-Being Outcomes Framework
- Budgets and investments in B.C.'s public data infrastructure, including critical longitudinal population data related to child vulnerability
- Commitments to improve data and information-sharing, including the implementation plan and defined safeguards
- Incorporation of anti-racist data principles, Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP), and Indigenous data sovereignty into outcomes measurement

Collective Responsibility: Support Jurisdiction

Advancing Indigenous jurisdiction is essential to system transformation. While commitment is growing, the conditions required to support implementation remain underdeveloped.

What *Don't Look Away* called for:

- Clear roles for ministries supporting jurisdiction
- Co-led review of safety and well-being gaps during transition and beyond
- Integration of social and cultural determinants of health in all jurisdiction discussions
- Indigenous-led mechanisms for capacity development, transition planning, and advocacy

What we are seeing now:

- Incorporation of goals related to supporting Indigenous self-determination and shared decision-making into the Service Plans of multiple ministries
- Indication by at least 15 Indigenous Governing Bodies in B.C. of their intent to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services since the Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families (Bill C-92) came into force in 2020
- Seven MCFD Divisions with divisional goals related (in varying degrees) to Indigenous jurisdiction written into their 2025/26 Business Plans.
- Advancement of a range of agreements by First Nations in B.C., including coordination agreements and other arrangements, to support self-determination in child and family services

What we will continue monitor for:

- The development of a co-developed provincial framework with Indigenous leadership and Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies to support safe and consistent transitions of children
- Consistent commitment to meaningful engagement, as outlined in the *Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples*
- The co-development of funding models to advance racial equity, including those needed to address recommendations from *At a Crossroads* (2022)
- Meaningful collaboration between MCFD and Indigenous Governing Bodies to ensure safe and supported transitions, as children and youth move from provincial to Indigenous jurisdiction

A black and white photograph of a young girl standing in a doorway, seen from behind. She is wearing a dark dress with a full tutu and large, translucent butterfly wings attached to her back. Her hair is in a bun. The doorway is brightly lit, creating a silhouette effect on the girl. The floor is tiled, and a patterned rug is visible at the bottom.

PART 5

Our Collective Responsibility for System Transformation

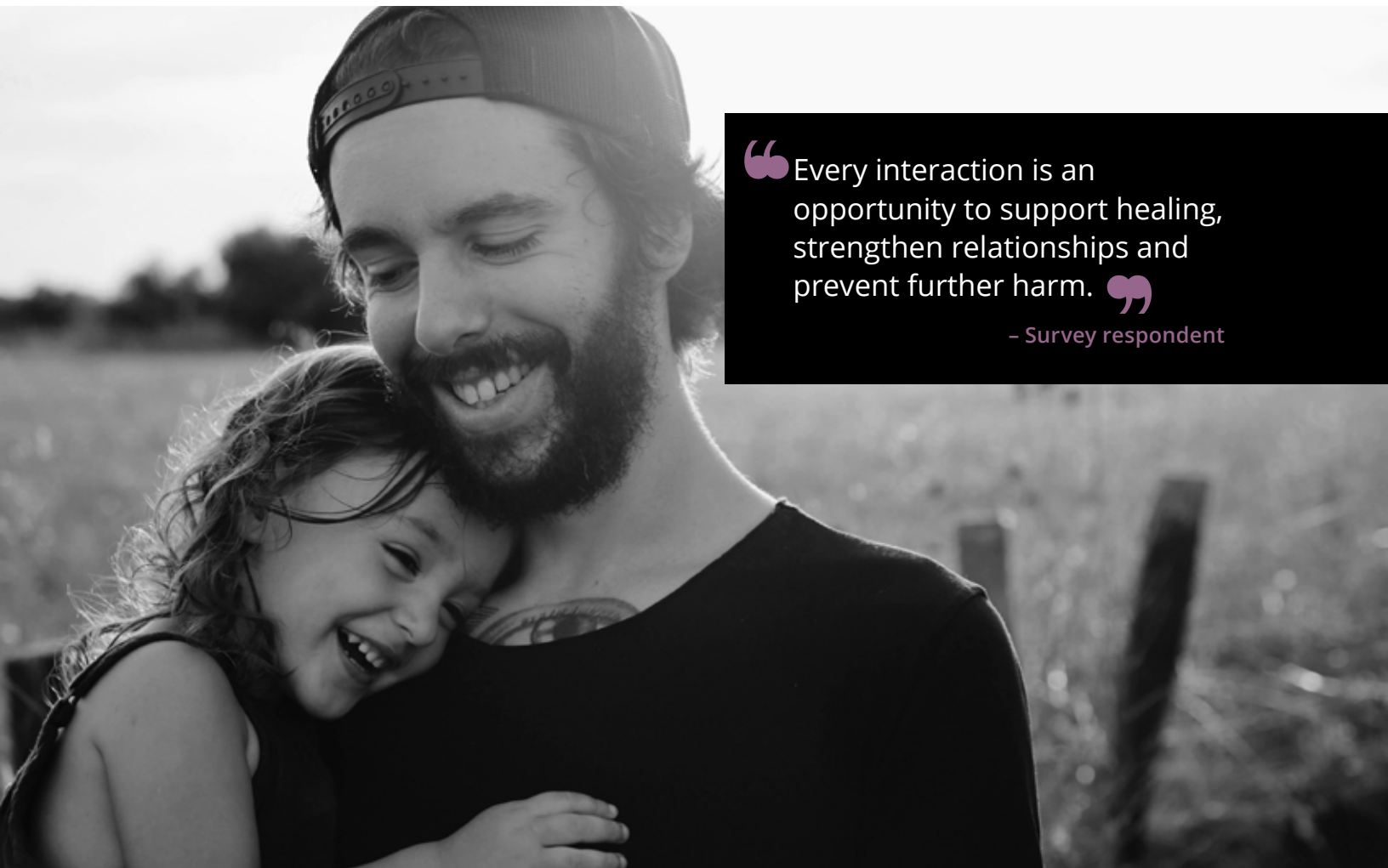
Don't Look Away acknowledged that our office is part of the system, and that our independent oversight role carries important implications for our responsibilities within the broader work of systemic transformation.

This recognition is critical. It reflects an understanding that monitoring cannot be limited to oversight alone. It must contribute to system learning, support reciprocal accountability, and create the conditions for participation in change, rather than critiquing it from a distance.

In this way, the Representative holds a dual responsibility: to hold government and public bodies accountable for the actions they take and the outcomes they produce, while also continuously examining and adapting the office's own approaches. This ensures that our office's work remains relevant and actively contributes to meaningful and sustained system change.

What our office committed to in *Don't Look Away*:

- Sustained monitoring and public reporting on system change toward the North Star
- A relational, decolonizing approach to monitoring that supports learning, reciprocal accountability, and meaningful participation in system transformation
- Use of evidence, research, and promising practices to inform and accelerate system learning
- Convening government, communities, and partners to support collective dialogue and action
- Ongoing engagement with children, youth, families, and communities to ground accountability in lived experience



“Every interaction is an opportunity to support healing, strengthen relationships and prevent further harm.”

– Survey respondent

From Recommendations to System Themes

Historically, oversight and monitoring have been structured around tracking individual recommendations: whether actions were completed, whether timelines were met, whether commitments were fulfilled. This work remains important. But over time, it has become increasingly clear that compliance does not equal transformation or better experiences or outcomes for children, youth, young adults, and their families.

What has emerged instead is a deeper understanding: Lasting change does not come from individual actions. It comes from how systems learn, align, and move together over time.

In response, we have begun to adjust our monitoring work in a way that helps the system learn and improve. As part of this shift, we undertook a comprehensive review of our recommendations over the past six years.

Rather than treating each recommendation as a stand-alone action, we have reorganized this work into broader system themes aligned with the collective responsibilities outlined in *Don't Look Away*. This approach shifts attention from task completion to system conditions, from what has been done to whether meaningful change is occurring.

Our monitoring now focuses on:

- Alignment – Are ministries working toward shared outcomes?
- Commitment – Are efforts resourced and sustained?
- Progress – Are changes being implemented in practice?
- Impact – Are children experiencing better outcomes?

This reflects a recognition that system transformation must be observable in children's lives, not only in plans and policy documents.

Working in Allyship: Addressing Violence

One of the clearest examples of our evolving role is in our response to recommendations related to family and gender-based violence.

Rather than initiating parallel work to create our own provincial inventory of family violence resources in response to *Don't Look Away*, we chose to support and strengthen existing sector leadership, particularly through collaboration with the Provincial Community Coordination for Survivor Safety Working Group and research partners at the Ending

Violence Association of BC, BC Network of Child and Youth Advocacy Centres, and BC Society of Transition Houses. This includes contributing to a provincial initiative to map the prevalence of violence in B.C. and better coordinate violence-related services.

This approach reflects an intentional shift: Meaningful system change does not require new structures for every problem. It requires stronger connections among what already exists.



Learning in Relationship: Community Convenings

Our office has committed to ongoing engagement as a sustained way of working in relationship with communities, partners, and those most impacted by the system. The “We Are Not Looking Away” convening series reflects that commitment. Across three provincial gatherings, we have engaged over 1,000 participants, including community organizations, service providers, Indigenous leaders, and government representatives. These convenings are intended to create space for continued reflection, shared learning, and collective responsibility, building on the themes and systemic findings identified in *Don’t Look Away*.

At their core, these gatherings respond to a fundamental call in the original report: that awareness alone is insufficient. Meaningful change requires a shift in how systems think, relate, and act, grounded in relationship, prevention, accountability, cultural safety, and shared responsibility for outcomes.

Across these engagements, several consistent insights have emerged:

- Early support continues to be identified as both critical and underdeveloped.
- Indigenous-led and culturally grounded approaches are consistently recognized as essential to meaningful change.
- There is a clear call to move from individualized accountability toward shared responsibility for outcomes.
- There is a growing understanding that transformation must be relational in nature, rather than transactional in design.
- The broader service delivery system – including community-based organizations and municipal governments – is increasingly defining roles for its components in reaching for the North Star of child well-being.

These insights are grounded in lived experience and front-line practice. Importantly, they closely reflect the findings of *Don't Look Away*. This alignment reinforces a central observation in this monitoring work: while the system continues to encounter challenges in implementation, there is increasing clarity and shared understanding regarding the direction of change.

Building on these provincial convenings, we have also begun more targeted, community-based engagement in areas where patterns of risk and harm are emerging. These engagements bring together senior staff, advocates, investigators, and outreach teams to engage directly with communities in real time. Consistent with a relational and preventive approach, this work is designed to

provide timely feedback to the system, rather than waiting for crisis. It creates opportunities to share emerging findings, surface local context, and support dialogue on the system pressures contributing to risk.

These engagements are intended to both raise awareness and support collective problem-solving. They create space to consider immediate actions that may reduce risk in the short term, while also supporting longer-term, community-informed approaches to addressing underlying conditions. In this way, community engagement becomes an extension of our monitoring role, not only identifying where systems are not working as intended but supporting earlier, more coordinated responses and strengthening the conditions required for sustained system change.

Monitoring Toward Collective Impact: Tracking the Evidence

Our office holds responsibility not only to assess progress but to contribute to it, through evidence, through relationship, and through timely and transparent feedback. This includes maintaining a focus on emerging risk, supporting continuous system learning, and ensuring that the lived experiences of children and families remain at the centre of accountability.

Key areas of monitoring related to system pressures and immediate risk:

- Trends in child and youth well-being indicators
- Funding changes in community-based services supporting families
- Availability, access, and consistency of supports for kinship caregivers
- Coordination and responsiveness of interministerial and interagency responses to violence and complex needs

- Planning and supports for children transitioning to the care of their Nations
- Workforce capacity and stability in rural and remote communities

The work ahead is not to generate a new direction but to deepen and sustain the alignment that is already emerging. This will require continued collective effort across all parts of the system, and a shared commitment to act on the evidence.

An example of this approach is the Representative's ongoing monitoring of the Province's new Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) service delivery framework. RCY has begun reviewing policy development and key implementation decisions as they occur, and will monitor whether the resulting changes improve access, equity, coordination, and well-being for children, youth, and families.



SPOTLIGHT

Strengthening Local Collaboration – The Village Initiative

The Village Initiative (TVI) reflects a community-led response to the fragmentation identified in *Don't Look Away*, bringing together more than 70 organizations to improve how children, youth, and families access and experience support on South Vancouver Island. This region has several of the fastest growing municipalities in B.C.

Guided by a focus on expanding access, strengthening coordination, and investing in practice and policy, TVI is working to shift from a collection of services to a more connected system of care, aligned with the call for fewer silos and greater collaboration.

Since its establishment, TVI has advanced several key initiatives, including securing a Foundry centre with youth and leadership advisory input, establishing a Municipal Leaders Advisory Team, and hosting a monthly community of practice for service providers. It has also supported coordinated planning for service spaces and collaborated on funding and training to expand integrated service delivery.

Together, these efforts show how community-led coordination can strengthen alignment and improve access to supports. At the same time, they highlight the importance of broader system conditions, such as shared accountability and sustained resourcing, in enabling this work to be maintained and expanded over time.

Conclusion: We Cannot Look Away

Two years ago, *Don't Look Away* asked British Columbians to face what had too often been avoided. It asked us to recognize that children were being failed not only by individual decisions but by the cumulative effect of systems not designed to respond to the full complexity of their lives. It called for more than acknowledgement; it called for sustained, collective monitoring action.

This report returns to that moment, not to repeat it but to understand what has followed.

There has been movement. Recognition across provincial government bodies has grown, and significant efforts are underway to build a more coordinated and preventive approach to child and family well-being. The language of belonging, connection, and shared responsibility is becoming more visible. Important work has begun.

But the stories and evidence presented in this report also make it clear that there is still work to be done to reach the depth and consistency required to alter the experiences of many children and families. They remind us that the conditions identified two years ago have not disappeared.

They remind us that accountability cannot end with intention; it must extend to outcomes.

This is the responsibility that remains.

It is not a reflection of a lack of effort. It reflects the scale and complexity of transformation, and the reality that meaningful system change requires more than commitment. It requires alignment across structures, resources, relationships, and ways of working. It requires urgency that is sustained beyond moments of attention.

And it requires measuring progress not only by what has been initiated but by what is changing in the lives of children.

This report shows that the system stands in a different place than it did two years ago. The direction of change is clearer. The foundations for a new approach are emerging.

The question is no longer whether change is needed, or even what that change should look like.

The question is whether the system is prepared to sustain the focus, coordination, and urgency required to carry it forward.

Every delay, every gap, every moment of disconnection has consequences that cannot be undone. As *Don't Look Away* made clear, system failure is not abstract; it is lived in disrupted relationships, unmet needs, and unrealized potential.

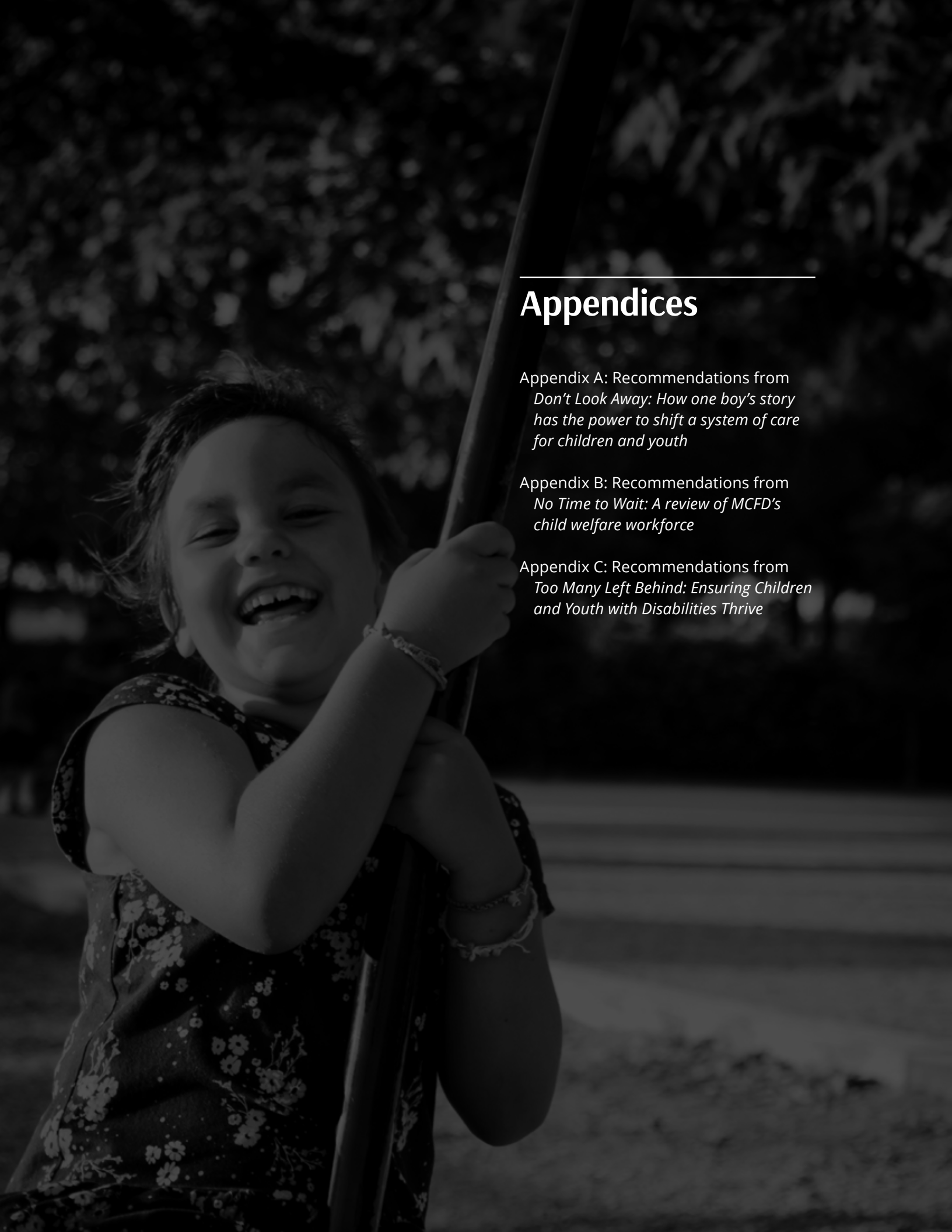
Two years ago, the call was to not look away.

Today, that call remains, not as a response to a single story but as an ongoing responsibility.

The conditions we are seeking to change are still present. The window to act in a child's life remains limited. And every child in this province continues to rely on the adults, systems, and communities around them, not only for plans or commitments but for care, safety, and the opportunity to thrive.

We cannot look away.

Now we must act, with urgency, with coordination, and with the clear understanding that children cannot wait.



Appendices

Appendix A: Recommendations from
*Don't Look Away: How one boy's story
has the power to shift a system of care
for children and youth*

Appendix B: Recommendations from
*No Time to Wait: A review of MCFD's
child welfare workforce*

Appendix C: Recommendations from
*Too Many Left Behind: Ensuring Children
and Youth with Disabilities Thrive*

Appendix A: Recommendations from *Don't Look Away: How one boy's story has the power to shift a system of care for children and youth*

Recommendations for Long-term Transformational Change

The following recommendations reflect the lessons learned from the sacred story investigation, systemic review and engagements on the necessary shift in mindsets and focus toward child well-being. They set the “North Star” for a coordinated systemic transformation of child and family services in B.C. Action must begin immediately and will need intentional action to unfold over the next 10 years.

Collective Responsibility 1: Focus on Child Well-Being

The Representative recommends that the **Government of British Columbia** establish a Child Well-Being Strategy and Action Plan¹ to guide a coordinated whole-of-government approach that will improve the well-being and outcomes for all children, with particular attention to those children and families experiencing the greatest inequities in the province of B.C.

To fulfill the spirit and intention of this recommendation the Plan must:

- reflect a whole-of-government approach²
- be developed through meaningful consultation and engagement of rights and title holders, federal and municipal governments, families and youth, and leaders and service providers in the following interconnected systems of care and service: health, education, disability, justice, social development, mental health, substance use, housing, and urban Indigenous
- recognize the rights of children under the UNCRC, UNDRIP and UNCRPD
- recognize and address the ongoing harms of colonization and racism on Indigenous children and families, particularly within the child welfare system
- acknowledge the many acts of resistance and resilience demonstrated by First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, youth, families, communities, leadership, knowledge carriers, elders, and matriarchs, and the many efforts that have been made over decades to achieve a transformative approach to Indigenous child well-being

¹ RCY envisions that the Child Well-Being Strategy and Action Plan would be similar in profile to the *Declaration Act Action Plan*, *Safe and Supported: British Columbia's Gender Based Violence Action Plan*, *Pathway to Hope* and the *CleanBC Roadmap*.

² The current public bodies that have an important contribution to make to child and youth well-being are as follows: Ministries of Attorney General (MAG), Children and Families (MCFD), Citizens Services (MCS), Education and Child Care (MECC), Health (MoH), Housing (MH), Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR), Mental Health and Addictions (MMHA), Post Secondary Education and Future Skills (MPSFS), Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG), Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR), Secretary of State for Child Care, Offices of the Parliamentary Secretaries for Gender Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives, and health authorities.

- reflect Indigenous and Western knowledge about child well-being, including the importance of the early years, collective care, the social and cultural determinants of health and interdependencies, healing from loss and intergenerational trauma
 - identify shared outcomes and indicators to allow better tracking of progress and impacts (see recommendations below on accountability)
 - identify, learn from and build on or adapt strong practices and approaches demonstrated in B.C. and in other jurisdictions, including with those identified by RCY through the systemic review
 - commit to sustained and meaningful legislative, policy, practice and financial support for community-based healing, achieving substantive equality, and supporting transition to greater self-determination and jurisdiction over child welfare, to the extent that the Nations desire
 - address the importance of healthy child development and family resiliency including early help, social assistance and wraparound family support services (see recommendations below)
 - consider enacting legislation requiring the development of a Child Well-Being Strategy and Action Plan, annual reporting to the Legislative Assembly and any other provisions necessary to ensure that there is a sustained non-partisan approach to child well-being and outcomes.
- Actions recommended to enable on-going governance, mobilization and oversight of the *Child Well-Being Strategy and Action Plan* include:
- establish Cabinet and Deputy Minister committees on child and youth well-being to guide the development of the *Child Well-being Strategy and Action Plan*, support ongoing interministerial work to fulfill government-specific commitments under the Action Plan and contribute to annual progress reporting
 - require that all Cabinet and Treasury Board submissions include an assessment of the impact of their initiatives on child rights and well-being under the UNCRC, UNDRIP and UNCRPD
 - ensure the terms of reference for the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth have a strong focus on the development, implementation and progress reporting of the *Child Well-being Strategy and Action Plan*.

Collective Responsibility 2: Support Families

Family support and setting children off on the right course

In the context of the *Child and Youth Well-being Strategy and Action Plan* the Representative recommends that all ministries and public bodies that have important contributions to make to child well-being including: Ministries of Attorney General, Children and Families, Citizens Services, Education and Child Care, Health, Housing, Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Mental Health and Addictions, Post Secondary Education and Future Skills, Public Safety and Solicitor General, Social Development and Poverty Reduction Secretary of State for Child Care, Offices of the Parliamentary Secretaries for Gender Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives, and health authorities, participate in a province-wide Keeping Families Safely Together dialogue, hosted by RCY, to build a cross-ministerial commitment and approach to wraparound support for families to care for their children.

To fulfill the spirit and intention of this recommendation, the dialogue and resulting action must:

- acknowledge that for children to reach their full potential, as is their right, they require opportunities for early learning and responsive caregiving, to set the path for lifelong well-being
- reflect Indigenous and Western knowledge about supporting families, including the importance of early learning, child development and nurturing families
- acknowledge the importance of the social and cultural determinants of health and the systemic discrimination that creates barriers and perpetuates inequity in the lives of families
- incorporate a strong understanding of early adversity and the need for early care when families experience challenges – including parental mental health and substance use and violence
- build on existing data and knowledge, and outcomes measurement frameworks in organizations and research bodies in B.C. (e.g., the Human Early Learning Partnership, the McCreary Centre and Child Health BC) and across Canada
- explicitly address the influence of place and culture and the importance of developing cross-government family support approaches that recognize the unique needs of each community.

Collective Responsibility 3: Address Violence

The Representative recommends that the **Government of British Columbia** address the pervasive silencing, secrecy, diminishment, acceptance and concealment of intimate-partner violence and family violence in society and within child and youth serving systems, and commit to:

- revise the recently released *Safe and Supported: British Columbia's Gender Based Violence Action Plan* to include a specific focus on the profound impact of violence on children and youth and:
 - challenge the belief that children who witness violence are less impacted: children who witness violence experience violence
- dedicate resources to enhance intersectoral and interministerial collaboration to respond to violence in communities
- dedicate resources for culturally relevant victim's services for children and youth
- expedite actions respecting violence set out in the *Declaration Act Action Plan* and significantly enhance access to targeted healing funds for communities, Nations and urban Indigenous organizations so that they may address intergenerational impacts and the root causes of violence.

Collective Responsibility 4: Be Accountable

A shift in focus toward child well-being will require the collaborative development of a child well-being accountability and data plan to enable government ministries, other public bodies, First Nations and Métis leaders and the community services sector to better understand what is helping to improve child well-being and what is not, and to make informed decisions accounting for child well-being.

The Representative recommends that the **Government of British Columbia** develop a child well-being accountability and data plan, as a component of the *Child Well-Being Strategy and Action Plan* to ensure that child well-being outcomes are being measured and reported on for all children, with particular attention to those children and families experiencing the greatest inequities in the province of B.C.

To fulfill the spirit and intention of this recommendation, the Plan must:

- facilitate agreement on key outcomes and indicators of child well-being that are shared across systems
- acknowledge the *Anti-Racism Data Act* and build on work that is already underway with respect to First Nations data governance, B.C.'s data innovation program, educational outcomes measurement, child health indicators, response to recommendations arising from the Human Rights Commissioner's 2020 report on disaggregated data collection (*A Grandmother's Perspective*), and other data- and outcomes-related initiatives and aspirations, while looking for the common ground and shared interests for child well-being measurement across all initiatives

- support ethical data collection, analysis and sharing that is inclusive of population, local and disaggregated data
- enable the development of capacity to meaningfully gather and use data, and specifically enhance data sharing between ministries
- enhance the quality and timeliness of information available to decision-makers about what actions (policies, programs, practices and investments) are improving child and family well-being and what are not
- ensure that the data collected, and outcomes measured will:
 - inform decision-making on strategic priorities, policy, program and practice development, and resource allocation
 - provide helpful feedback to workers and supervisors to support their practice
 - illuminate the interdependencies across systems, break down silos, enhance public awareness about progress towards the five collective responsibilities and restore trust in government's child and family services
 - support learning and continuous quality improvement.

The following actions are recommended for the development of a child well-being accountability and data plan:

- develop a framework of shared data standards that address responsibility for data collection, data sharing, governance and stewardship along with significant investment in the stabilization and expansion of data infrastructure in B.C.
- create a shared baseline of "current state" information on child well-being across the domains of social-emotional well-being, health, education, inclusion and belonging (at minimum) that can be compared over time and reported annually as part of the *Child Well-being Strategy and Action Plan*
- establish a limited number of child well-being outcomes and indicators that will be consistently measured to assess well-being over time
- design an approach that incorporates best practice in data disaggregation and the principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP).

Collective Responsibility 5: Support Jurisdiction

The Representative recommends that the **Government of British Columbia** clearly establish the responsibilities of ministries and public bodies in supporting Nations who are pursuing resumption of jurisdiction, and commit to:

- immediately shift jurisdiction conversations to be inclusive of social and cultural determinants of health to enable a whole child and healthy community approach to planning. This is to be inclusive of all ministries and public bodies that have important contributions to make to child well-being including: Ministries of Attorney General, Children and Families, Citizens Services, Education and Child Care,

Health, Housing, Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Mental Health and Addictions, Post Secondary Education and Future Skills, Public Safety and Solicitor General, Social Development and Poverty Reduction, Secretary of State for Child Care, Offices of the Parliamentary Secretaries for Gender Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives and health authorities

- work together with Indigenous leadership and the federal government to identify and mitigate the gaps in provincial and federal legislation that put the safety and well-being of children and youth at risk during the transition to full jurisdiction and capacity and beyond
- support Indigenous leadership in B.C. to explore ways to collectively support B.C. First Nations and Métis chartered communities pursuing greater self determination and possible jurisdiction over the well-being of their children. Based on feedback received through the systemic review and engagement sessions, and building on the many lessons learned from the development of the First Nations Health Authority, the First Nations Justice Council and the First Nations Education Steering Entity, an entity and/or mechanisms may:
 - enable sharing of Indigenous laws, policies and practices for adaptation into local laws and contexts
 - support negotiations and transition planning
 - identify and undertake reviews of recurring issues and concerns related to resumption of jurisdiction (e.g., funding, timeframes, risk and liability)
 - assist in the development of costing models
 - facilitate and host collective voice to support Indigenous Governing Bodies (IGBs) and jurisdiction
 - provide input to federal and provincial legislative and regulatory amendments as directed by and on behalf of Nations and IGBs
 - facilitate conflict or dispute resolution between IGBs
 - develop a rights-based advocacy and/or complaints resolution process for Indigenous children and their families who are concerned about the services that they are or are not receiving from their IGBs.

Getting Started

Underpinning these recommendations, and in recognition of the harms caused by fractured and under resourced colonial systems, the Representative recommends that the **Government of British Columbia generally and through the mandate letters for every Minister**, ensure that public bodies:

- immediately address the quick-impact recommendations identified in this report
- undertake shared anti-racism learning and capacity building to illuminate, disrupt and dismantle the pervasive mental models and mindsets that exist in B.C.'s public service, that perpetuate racism and inequities for families
- work with RCY to review outstanding recommendations and action plans currently being monitored by RCY to determine which recommendations and actions will best address the findings of this review, to ensure that the public bodies are directing attention and resources to those changes that will have the greatest short-, medium- and long-term impact, while the Child Well-Being Strategy and Action Plan is developed
- meaningfully participate in the sessions that RCY will host and convene in 2024/25 (noted below).

Representative for Children and Youth Actions

As part of the systems of care, RCY also has a responsibility to be part of this transformation, to create and illuminate a pathway forward for and with all public and governance partners. Following the release of this review, the Representative will:

- address the significant workforce challenges within MCFD in two special reports, the first of which will be released on July 23, 2024, with the second to follow in Winter, 2024
- work with the public bodies to whom recommendations have been made by RCY in the past six years to identify and prioritize those that are most aligned with the collective responsibilities and refocus monitoring and reporting accordingly
- release a series of issue briefs and resource “bundles” throughout 2024/25 to further inform planning and decision making in the key areas identified in the systemic review
- host a series of early stage convenings to mobilize collective action, strengthen communications and collaboration, share additional findings from the systemic review, assist the public bodies as they determine their role in transformation, and establish a provincial plan and timelines to respond to our collective responsibilities for children and youth
- monitor progress towards the “North Star” of child and family well-being.

Quick Impact Recommendations for Short-term Risk Reduction

The following recommendations reflect the lessons learned from sacred story investigation, systemic review and engagement with a focus on actions to be taken within the next six to twelve months to reduce the immediate risk of harm to children and youth that were identified through this review.

Family and Intimate Partner Violence

The Representative recommends the **Ministry of Children and Family Development** in collaboration with Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies:

Practice and Policy

- update and strengthen existing policy and practice with the support of direct service staff, to recognize children who experience intimate partner and/or family violence as victims of crime and right-holders under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- update and strengthen existing policy and practice related to working with families who experience intimate partner and/or family violence the support of direct service staff, to make clear that it is not and should never be the responsibility of the victims to manage the perpetrators actions/ behaviours or involvement in child safety planning
- ensure the B.C. Summary of Domestic Violence Risk Factors assessment tool is easily accessible, used for every assessment of family and intimate partner violence and reviewed by the Team Leader.

Service Delivery

- assess the service capacity within each local service area and Indigenous Child and Family Service Agency to respond to intimate partner and family violence. The assessment must attend to workforce capacity, service provision and participation in cross-sectoral collaborative responses (e.g., BC Network of Child Youth Advocacy Centres, Regional Domestic Violence Units, Violence Against Women in Relationships networks, Interagency Case Assessment Teams) and support Nation-led activities to end gender-based violence
- develop a plan to enhance Local Service Area and Indigenous Child and Family Service Agency capacity to respond to and collaborate in the response to violence in their communities, that includes the necessary resources for adequate staffing and support for leadership to meaningfully engage in community-led planning

The Representative recommends that the **Ministry of Children and Family Development**, **Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General** and the **Gender Equity Office** collaborate to engage cross-ministerial and cross-sectoral bodies, Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies and Indigenous Leadership, to begin to develop a multi-sectoral provincial violence response framework. Action planning to achieve this recommendation must include:

- contributions to RCY's development of a provincial inventory of family violence resources and the use of the resources, together with service capacity information, to introduce and expand culturally safe, dignity-driven, promising and wise practices
- identify immediate funding strategies to enhance and expand family violence resources in line with the shared commitment to understanding children and youth as victims, not bystanders or witnesses, in any violence in families. These services must be delivered by community-based organizations and Nations and reflect the needs and priorities of the community
- develop a cross-ministerial leadership committee, inclusive of Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies, to reimagine MCFD's Office of Domestic Violence and to provide advice and guidance on improvements and collaboration necessary to improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of cross government directly delivered and contracted services
- in collaboration with the cross-ministerial leadership committee, lead the development a Multi-Sectoral Provincial Framework to address violence at a community level. The framework must clearly outline appropriate roles, shared responsibility and appropriate coordination structures for responses to violence at a community level. The Framework must include necessary joint-training to raise awareness of indicators of violence (inclusive of coercive control) and multi-sectoral training for risk assessment and mitigation to enhance capacity to respond
- identify immediate funding strategies to implement recommendations of the Multi-Sectoral Provincial Framework to address violence.

Family Support, Early Years and Early Help

The Representative recommends the Ministry of Children and Family Development in collaboration with Indigenous Child & Family Agencies:

Practice and Policy

- update and strengthen existing policy and practice, with the support of direct service staff, to require that all family members, inclusive of the entire circle of care who support a child's sense of belonging, be included in the development of family plans. This includes fathers and extended or chosen family identified by the child, family or Nation. When they cannot engage family, require that the team leader and director of operations or director of practice be notified to ensure that all options to meaningfully engage family have been exhausted. Notifications must be monitorable at a provincial level to better understand, and track trends related to this issue
- update and strengthen existing policy and practice with the support of direct service staff, to provide wraparound support and practical assistance to alleviate barriers or unforeseen issues that impact child and family well-being (e.g., assistance to prevent hydro or water getting turned off, money for specialized diet). Needs-based support for families must reflect an approach similar to Jordan's Principle, to ensure timely, family-centred and wraparound supports for families
- update and strengthen existing policy and practice with the support of direct service staff, to enhance and expand the use of Collaborative Practice and Decision Making (CPDM). Make mandatory the offer of CPDM for all families when consideration is being given to a child needing to leave their home
- update and strengthen existing policy and practice, and explore promising and wise practices with the support of direct service staff, to establish consistent practices and

accountability measures to ensure least intrusive measures have occurred before a removal

- reimagine and expedite the implementation of the MCFD Family Preservation Framework to reflect the child well-being approach and shared responsibility commitments outlined in this report in collaboration with experts and cultural advisors in child development. The Framework must reference and influence a reimagined MCFD Early Years Framework to ensure a focus on the provision of "early help" and strengthening the resiliency of families.

Service Delivery

- ensure social workers have access to discretionary and flexible funding to support timely wraparound, family-centred and needs-based supports for families
- increase the program budget and service capacity of Collaborative Practice and Decision Making (CPDM) and ensure that all local service areas and Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies have resources to offer mandatory CPDM support when consideration is being given to a child needing to leave their home
- identify immediate funding strategies to implement the reimagined MCFD Family Preservation Framework and ensure necessary connections across child and youth service systems to enhance and expand current family support services. These services must be delivered by community-based organizations and Nations and reflect the unique needs and priorities of communities.

Kinship Care

The Representative recommends that the **Ministry of Children and Family Development** in collaboration with Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies:

- ensure all current and future kin and kith supports across legal status or out of home program (i.e., Child in the Home of a Relative and family-led arrangements for kinship care) receive equitable access to financial and caregiving supports. Supports are to reflect a dignity-driven approach, including immediate ending the practice of issuing food vouchers rather than per diem rates at time of placement
- create detailed family-centred resource guides for prospective kinship carers to explain kinship arrangements, including their roles, responsibilities, and all legal options available to them.
- conduct a comprehensive review and revision of out of home care services, including kinship caregiver assessment, planning and case management standards, policies, practice guidelines and training materials with the goal of ensuring comprehensive supports, rather than surveillance, for all out of home care providers

Interagency Communication and Coordination

The Representative recommends the **Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General** develop a cross-ministerial committee to review the barriers and enablers of information sharing and collaborative planning for child and family well-being across publicly delivered services in B.C.:

- engage cross-sector direct service and community service providers to identify intersectoral policy, practice and service delivery barriers, in addition to a review of relevant privacy legislation and regulations
- develop new and comprehensive cross-sector training on information sharing and collaboration that reflects a shared commitment to improve communication and coordination of services when responding to families in need.

Accountability and Quality Improvement

The Representative recommends the **Ministry of Children and Family Development**:

- immediately revise the Duty-To-Report to include the Duty-to-Respond when a child is perceived to be at risk and provide updated training and resource materials to all service providers across the child and youth system of care to ensure all direct service staff and leadership are aware of their responsibility to *not look away* and actively protect the rights of children and youth, providing support over surveillance. Resources are to include protocols for escalating issues within and across ministry services
- enhance ICM to allow for monitoring of basic non-negotiable responsibilities (i.e., criminal record checks, visits with children, risk assessments and plans of care) and progressively alert team leaders, local service delivery leadership and provincial monitoring if they remain outstanding
- enhance ICM to include the options of “*Recommend No Further Action*” to be used by Centralized Screening Services, to ensure final decisions related to the actioning of supports for the well-being of children and families lies within community where it can be assessed in the context of family and community concerns and supports
- provincially monitor family engagement in planning to identify and address barriers and enablers to meeting policy requirements
- expand the operational review of Centralized Screening Services to include a full implementation evaluation and impact analysis for services for children, youth and families. The implementation evaluation must include input from local service areas and ICFSAs, along with sector, family and Indigenous community perspectives.

Workforce Capacity

The Representative recommends the **Ministry of Children and Family Development**:

- implement the recommendations in the July 2024 *No Time to Wait* report on MCFD workforce capacity
- adopt the Aboriginal Operational and Policy Standards and Indicators (AOPSI) policy on Caseload Guidelines and the Social Worker’s Relationship and Contact with a Child in Care.

Appendix B: Recommendations from *No Time to Wait: A review of MCFD's child welfare workforce*

The Representative recommends:

Qualifications and Oversight:

1. MCFD to conduct a review of the expanded educational credentials for new social worker hires, with a view to assessing the appropriateness of some currently included credentials and placing less focus on the type of degree per se but instead a more finely tuned assessment of the courses that are relevant to child and family services that make up that degree, including, as necessary, prior learning assessments to recognize knowledge and skills in child and family services gained by way of previous experience and training.

Review to be completed by March 31, 2026.

2. MCFD to conduct a comprehensive review and assessment of the onboarding training program for new social worker hires which examines issues such as the adequacy of training, skill development, work experiences while undergoing training, trainee and supervisor satisfaction, client satisfaction, and employee retention, with comparisons between new hires with preferred versus expanded credentials and including the appropriate assignment of case responsibilities while undergoing training. For clarity, this review should identify how the onboarding training program should be revised to adapt to the changing nature of the incoming workforce and of changes in the jurisdictional landscape and help, on an individualized basis, to fill in identified gaps in incoming knowledge and skills amongst new hires.

Review to be completed by December 31, 2025.

3. MCFD to develop and implement a plan to require mandatory registration of all ministry child welfare workers with an independent professional regulatory body.

For greater certainty, this recommendation is limited to MCFD child welfare workers: in keeping with the rights of Indigenous peoples to choose their own path, Indigenous Child and Family and Service Agencies and Indigenous Governing Bodies resuming jurisdiction over child and family services retain the discretion to decide for themselves whether they will require their employees to be registered with an independent professional regulatory body.

Legislation respecting the mandatory professional regulation of MCFD child welfare workers to be in place by June 30, 2026 and establishment or expansion of the regulatory body (or bodies) to be in place by April 1, 2027, with mandatory registration proceeding once established.

Staffing:

4. MCFD to develop and implement social worker workload measurement tools across the spectrum of child welfare functions to determine required staffing levels, publicly posting the required and actual staffing levels at the provincial, service delivery area and local service area levels at least annually.

Workload measurement tools to be developed and implemented by April 1, 2026.

Results of the workload measurement tools, in comparison to actual staffing levels, to first be publicly posted by April 30, 2026 and annually thereafter.

5. MCFD to work with central government agencies to secure sufficient annual funding from those central agencies so MCFD is able to support required staffing levels, as determined by the workload measurement tools.

Additional estimated interim annual funding to be allocated by central government agencies April 1, 2025 and thereafter allocated annually in accordance with the staffing levels required by the workload measurement tools.

Health and Wellness:

6. MCFD, in collaboration with the BC Public Service Agency, to develop and implement a robust plan to better support the health and wellness of child welfare staff and mitigate the effects of stress, vicarious trauma and burnout by implementing a comprehensive and proactive system of debriefing, peer-to-peer, counselling and mental health supports.

Plan to be developed by April 1, 2026 and begin implementation thereafter.

7. MCFD to bi-annually measure progress in improving the health and well-being of child welfare social workers by conducting and analyzing an anonymized, voluntary survey of child welfare social workers such as by way of the Mental Health Commission of Canada's Guarding Minds survey or similar instrument.

First survey to be implemented before March 31, 2026 to establish a baseline measurement and bi-annually thereafter.

Recruitment and Retention:

8. MCFD, in consultation with central government agencies and the BCGEU, champion the implementation of more robust compensation incentives to better support the recruitment and retention of child welfare social workers across all job functions and roles.

Enhanced compensation measures to be brought into force with implementation of the next negotiated Main Agreement with the BCGEU in 2025.

9. MCFD to develop and implement a plan to more proactively reach out to and engage colleges and universities to better support the recruitment of students to child welfare practice positions in MCFD.

Plan to be developed by September 1, 2025 and implemented thereafter.

Training and Professional Development:

10. MCFD to enhance training and clinical and case management support for social workers in relation to working with Indigenous children, families, and communities, in particular to support staff to better understand and apply changes in practice expectations arising from changes in federal and provincial legislation, and changes in relationships and dynamics arising during the transition to Indigenous Governing Bodies resuming jurisdiction over child and family services.

Plan to be developed by October 31, 2025, and implemented thereafter.

11. MCFD to recognize and encourage staff participation in local Indigenous ceremony and cultural events as a key component of professional development.

Policy to be developed and implemented by April 1, 2025.

12. MCFD to conduct a review, which includes consultations with field staff, of training and professional development with a view to enhancing programs for child welfare staff that are in-person and which focus on skill building and practice improvements that will better assist staff to achieve positive outcomes for children and families.

Review to be completed by October 31, 2025, with program offerings to be implemented thereafter.

Leadership and Mentorship:

13. MCFD to develop and implement a dedicated training program to enhance child welfare team leader competencies, with a particular focus on clinical supervision, health and wellness, staff engagement, respectful workplace, and fair treatment.

Training program to be developed by October 31, 2025 and implemented thereafter.

14. MCFD to fully implement province-wide Senior Leader positions comprised of experienced and expert child welfare staff who are provided appropriate compensation and reduced caseloads, to offer mentorship and clinical support to both newly hired and regular staff.

The number of Senior Leader positions required to be identified by October 31, 2025 and implemented incrementally over a three year period, beginning April 1, 2026.

Experiences and Perceptions of the Ministry (formerly Ministry Culture):

15. The Ministry of Children and Family Development to commit to refrain from direct or indirect criticism or blaming of child welfare social workers in circumstances where there are known systemic inadequacies.

Effective upon the date of release of this report.

16. MCFD to ensure that quality assurance mechanisms such as audits and provincial director reviews be complemented by consideration of the context in which staff are working, including critical factors such as local workload/caseload, leaves and backfill, supporting resources and clinical supervision and oversight.

Quality assurance mechanisms to be reviewed and adjusted by January 1, 2026.

Human Resource Metrics:

17. MCFD, in collaboration with the BC Public Service Agency, to take steps to improve human resources analytics and planning capability by, for example:
 - routinely disaggregating and analyzing current human resources data, including government's Workplace Environment Survey (WES) across ministry streams (i.e., child welfare, CYMH, CYSN, and YJ) and specific position types within service streams (e.g., child protection, adoptions).
 - routinely gathering and analyzing local office staffing levels (i.e., occupancy versus allocation).
 - routinely conducting and analyzing the reasons for departure (by type of worker and duration of employment) and the results of staff exit interviews across and within ministry service streams.
 - routinely collecting and analyzing training and professional development participation.
 - centrally collecting and analyzing Step 3 Appendix 4 workload reports

MCFD to develop a plan for incremental improvements in human resources metrics by March 31, 2025, and implement that plan thereafter.

Relevant Recommendations from Previous RCY Reports

The findings highlighted in this spotlight are not new. The Representative has previously made numerous recommendations to address these issues. As mentioned, in *Don't Look Away*, the RCY proposed five collective responsibilities aimed at achieving long-term, transformational change from an outdated and often ineffective child welfare system to one focused on child well-being. The government has agreed to implement the actions in each of these responsibilities. Therefore, rather than introducing new recommendations in this spotlight, we presented three of the collective responsibilities from *Don't Look Away* and emphasized the specific actions needed to uphold the rights of children and youth disabilities and their families as these responsibilities are implemented.

That said, while examining the *Don't Look Away* collective responsibilities, it became evident that many of the required actions for an effective child well-being system are supported by the ongoing progress toward past recommendations from previous RCY reports, including *Alone and Afraid* (2018), *Excluded* (2021), and *Toward Inclusion* (2023). Notably, the timelines for implementing these RCY recommendations regarding children and youth with disabilities remain outstanding (see [Recommendations | Office of the Representative for Children and Youth - RCYBC](#)). Therefore, we have restated the past RCY recommendations from these reports as a key reference for future action toward an effective child well-being system that leaves no-one behind.

It is essential to reiterate that although many of our past recommendations are directed towards specific ministries, the goal is to support the well-being of the entire child and family and that requires a whole government approach. Children and youth with disabilities, along with their families, depend on services from multiple service streams. Therefore, the responsibility to create and sustain a system that allows every child and family to thrive is a collective one.

The Office of the RCY is committed to being part of this collective effort. We stand ready to collaborate with the government to prioritize and streamline the implementation of past recommendations. Together, we can take meaningful, tangible action to build a system that upholds the rights and well-being of children and youth with disabilities and their families.

Don't Look Away Collective Responsibility #1

Focus on Child Well-Being

Previous Relevant Recommendations

Alone and Afraid Recommendation #3: That MCFD take the lead in working with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to develop an integrated service delivery model that enables appropriate information-sharing between service providers. This model would ensure that children and youth receiving special needs services through MCFD can be supported by a case coordinator who is responsible for navigating access to, and provision of, all necessary services. The case coordinator to remain assigned to the child to ensure appropriate services and facilitate successful transition to adulthood. MCFD to lead development of a comprehensive plan by the fall of 2019 and seek funding and begin implementation of the plan by April 2020.

Alone and Afraid Recommendation #10: That the Ministry of Health and MCFD develop a plan to ensure early identification, timely assessment and appropriate and accessible supports for children under six-years-old with signs of developmental delay.

Alone and Afraid Recommendation #11: That the Ministry of Health take steps to incrementally decrease the wait times to three months for completed assessments of autism and complex behavioural developmental conditions across the province.

Excluded Recommendation #4: As a first step toward realizing fundamental changes in practice that address racism, stigma and bias, MCFD, in collaboration with DAAs, community service agencies and caregivers, to conduct a review of existing FASD awareness training and the training needs of all front-line staff working with children and youth with FASD.²²⁴ MCFD, working with DAAs, to use this review to support the development of evidence-based, culturally attuned and regularly updated training materials that ground a required training program for current staff across the range of MCFD service lines and, in particular, CYMH, CYSN, child welfare and youth justice. This awareness training should then be incorporated into basic entry training for newly hired staff and made accessible to community service agencies and caregivers. MCFD to complete the reviews and curriculum development and begin training by March 31, 2022 and complete training of all relevant ministry and agency staff by March 31, 2023.

Excluded Recommendation #5: That the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions (MMHA), in collaboration with MCFD, DAAs and the Ministry of Health, lead a review, and develop and implement a plan, to provide effective and accessible mental health services for children and youth with special needs, including FASD. This should include a review of evidence-based, culturally attuned and promising practice models of therapy, intervention and care for children and youth with special needs including FASD, who have mental health impacts, as well as an assessment of current resourcing and resource gaps. The findings of this review and planning should be prioritized and built into MMHA's Pathway to Hope for implementation. MMHA to complete the review and plan by March 31, 2022, with MCFD and Health beginning the implementation of new service approaches and enhanced services by Oct. 1, 2023, and completing implementation by March 31, 2024.

Excluded Recommendation #6: That the Ministry of Health incrementally reduce wait times for complex developmental behavioural conditions (CDBC) diagnostic clinics, and also secure additional resources to provide for periodic follow-up assessments, at key development stages from infancy through to adolescence. The Ministry of Health to reduce wait times to nine months by March 31, 2022; to six months by March 31, 2023; to three months by March 31, 2024; and thereafter increase capacity to provide for follow-up assessments.

Excluded Recommendation #8: That the Ministry of Health conduct an assessment of existing FASD awareness training and the training needs of appropriate frontline staff working with children and youth with FASD, leading to the development of evidence-based, culturally attuned, Nation-specific and regularly updated training materials that ground a mandatory training program for current staff across the range of health services. Ministry of Health to complete the assessment of existing FASD awareness training by March 31, 2022. Sequentially, the Ministry of Health to identify appropriate priority front-line providers to receive training, by Sept. 30, 2022, and develop training and access to training by Sept. 30, 2023.

Toward Inclusion Recommendation #1: MCFD to ensure that the CYSN Framework reset includes purposeful engagement with rights holders, Indigenous partners, service providers and families regarding mental health services for children and youth with support needs. Final engagement report to be completed by October 2024.

Don't Look Away Collective Responsibility #2 Support Families

Previous Relevant Recommendations

Alone and Afraid Recommendation #2: That MCFD take immediate steps to improve the current accessibility of CYSN services and supports by providing respite within a reasonable period of time.

Alone and Afraid Recommendation #4: That MCFD ensure its children and youth with special needs training is mandatory for child protection staff. MCFD to ensure that all child protection social workers complete training by April 2020.

Excluded Recommendation #1: That the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) fully fund and implement a CYSN service framework and plan, fully inclusive of children and youth with FASD. The formation of the service framework and plan must extensively engage Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAAs) and all appropriate partners. This framework must articulate a comprehensive and accessible array of CYSN services, delivered based on both an assessment of functional needs and diagnosis and, therefore, fully including children and youth affected by FASD. MCFD to begin implementation by Sept. 30, 2021 and complete full implementation of the CYSN service framework and plan over a three-year period ending March 31, 2024.

Excluded Recommendation #2: Pending full implementation of Excluded Recommendation 1, that MCFD immediately include suspected or confirmed FASD, based on an assessment of functional needs, in the eligibility criteria for CYSN Family Support Services, thereby allowing children and youth with FASD and their families to access services available to others with specific neuro-developmental conditions. The ministry should seek appropriate funding to expand the capacity of these services to adequately support the number of newly eligible FASD families so that this recommended expansion of service eligibility does not lead to reduced services or longer wait lists for other CYSN families. MCFD to secure immediate funding enhancements and begin implementation of the expanded eligibility criteria by Sept. 30, 2021.

Excluded Recommendation #3: Following the completion of the engagement and evaluation reports, MCFD to develop, implement and fully fund a plan to provide comprehensive mental health screening, assessment and effective treatment services for children and youth with support needs. MCFD to take immediate action to ensure equitability and accessibility of the KWPSF by Sept. 30, 2021 and complete the best practice review by March 30, 2022.

Excluded Recommendation #10: That the Ministry of Education update its Inclusive Education Policy and supporting documents and incorporate information to increase awareness and understanding of the specific learning needs of children and youth with FASD and related disorders into the supporting documents. Ministry of Education to update Inclusive Education Policy and supporting documents and incorporate information to enhance awareness of FASD and related disorders by Sept. 1, 2021

Toward Inclusion Recommendation #2: MCFD ensure that as part of the CYSN Framework reset, that service delivery linkages and pathways for access to mental health services for children and youth with support needs are maximized in the Family Connection Centre pilots, and to ensure that the provision of these mental health services are formally included in the evaluation framework. Final evaluation report to be completed by March 31, 2025.

Toward Inclusion Recommendation #3: Following the completion of the engagement and evaluation reports, MCFD to develop, implement and fully fund a plan to provide comprehensive mental health screening, assessment and effective treatment services for children and youth with support needs. Implementation to begin in April 2025.

Don't Look Away Collective Responsibility #3 Be Accountable

Previous Relevant Recommendations

Alone and Afraid Recommendation #1: That MCFD undertake a comprehensive assessment of the actual need for CYSN services across B.C. and the capacity of the current system to meet those needs. This assessment to examine funding, staffing levels and workloads, program delivery and wait times. Findings to be used to inform comprehensive service improvements so all eligible children with special needs and their families receive culturally respectful, appropriate and timely services and supports. MCFD to complete the comprehensive assessment and plan by the fall of 2019, seek necessary funding enhancements and begin implementation of changes by April 2020.

Alone and Afraid Recommendation #6: That MCFD and the Ministry of Education develop practice guidelines and a joint protocol to address concerns of unexplained school absences and withdrawals with the view to supporting children, youth and families and addressing barriers to school participation. MCFD and the Ministry of Education to conduct this work in consultation with advocates/stakeholders from the Indigenous and special needs communities. MCFD and the Ministry of Education to complete this work by May 2019.

Alone and Afraid Recommendation #7: That the Ministry of Education establish mechanisms to enable local school districts to identify and do timely follow up when a school-age student is not registered in an educational program. Ministry of Education to complete this work by September 2020.

Alone and Afraid Recommendation #8: That the Ministry of Education determine how many students with special needs designations are being homeschooled and conduct a review to determine whether school districts should be offering additional support and guidance to these students. Ministry of Education to complete this work by September 2020.

Toward Inclusion Recommendation #5: The Ministry of Citizens' Services to initiate the development of a cross-ministry plan, in collaboration with MCFD, MoH, MMHA, MSDPR, and the Ministry of Education and Child Care, and in association with Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies, health authorities and Community Living BC, to routinely collect high-quality demographic and service data that allows for disaggregation, providing an essential foundation for more effective policy development, program provision and service monitoring for children and youth with support needs and their families, who are receiving services from these public bodies.

Excluded Recommendation #9: MCFD together with the Ministry of Citizens' Services to initiate the development of a cross-ministry plan, in collaboration with the ministries of Health, MMHA, Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and Education, and in association with ICFSAs, health authorities and Community Living BC, to routinely collect high-quality demographic and service data that allows for disaggregation, providing an essential foundation for more effective policy development, program provision and service monitoring for children and youth with special needs and their families, including those with FASD who are receiving services from these public bodies. The cross-ministry plan to be completed and implemented by April 1, 2022 and fully implemented by March 31, 2024.

Excluded Recommendation #11: That the Ministry of Education work with the British Columbia Council for Administrators for Inclusive Supports in Education (BC CAISE) to support staff training and development needs for educators and school staff who work with children and youth with FASD or suspected FASD, and their families, and build on evidence-based and promising practice approaches to better support inclusion and improved learning outcomes for children and youth with FASD. Ministry of Education to work with BC CAISE and partners to support the implementation of staff training and development to better support inclusion and improved learning outcomes for children and youth with FASD and related disorders by Sept. 1, 2022.

Toward Inclusion Recommendation #4: MMHA to coordinate, in collaboration with other relevant ministries and public bodies, comprehensive research to identify the prevalence of mental health disorders amongst children and youth with neurodevelopmental conditions to inform future service planning. Research to begin by April 2024.

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