



VIA E-MAIL
Ref: 248348

April 14, 2020

Susan Russell
Anita Shen
Fostering Change Community Organizers
First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
E-mail: susan@firstcallbc.org

Dear Susan and Anita:

Thank you for contacting the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) regarding your concerns for youth and young adults during the COVID-19 crisis. I am also concerned with the welfare of youth transitioning into adulthood during the pandemic as well as young adults currently in the Agreements with Youth Adults program (AYA) and I appreciate your advocacy.

In response to these concerns, MCFD has put emergency measures in place that will allow youth aging out of care to maintain their current living arrangements during this pandemic and continue to receive financial supports. As we communicated at our Townhall teleconference with youth and youth advocates including Fostering Change, specific measures include:

- Youth in foster care, out of care placements, extended family programs, and contracted residential agencies will be supported to stay where they are, using new emergency measures the ministry has put in place. Ministry staff are reaching out to youth, caregivers and agencies to develop or modify agreements that will allow for care providers to continue supporting youth past their 19th birthday.
- For youth living on Independent Living Agreements and Youth Agreements, the ministry is providing options that will allow them to continue to receive monthly living expenses past their 19th birthday. Social workers are reaching out individually to these youth to walk them through this process.
- Young adults between the ages of 19 and 27 in the AYA Program whose programs have been interrupted due to the pandemic will continue to receive their monthly financial supports. We are working on a measure to ensure that any 'paused' time will not count towards the maximum 48-month program duration or age limit of 27. AYA workers will be reaching out to young adults to renew their AYAs as needed.
- Youth in care who are scheduled to transition to Community Living BC (CLBC) during this pandemic will maintain their existing foster placement where appropriate. CLBC will work closely with MCFD on an individual case-by-case basis to support a smooth transition for these youth.

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Ministry of
Children and Family
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Additional efforts are currently being made to locate young adults who have recently aged out of care to discuss options such as the AYA program and connect them to other available provincial and federal support including:

Provincial supports

- [BC Emergency Benefit for Workers](#) – one-time payment to those who have lost employment income.
- [BC Hydro bill payments](#) – deferral and support to pay Hydro bills.
- [BC Transit & Translink](#) – zero fares for transit.
- [FortisBC](#) – waiving of late fees, flexible payment plans, and no disconnection of services due to financial hardship.
- [ICBC insurance payments](#) – deferral of payments.
- [Supporting Renters and Landlords](#) – supplement to support rent to low-moderate income earners.
- [TELUS \(Mobility for Good\)](#) – no cost smartphones and zero-cost mobile plans for former youth in care.

Federal Supports

- [Changes to Employment Insurance \(EI\)](#) – easier access to EI benefits.
- [Canada Emergency Response Benefit \(CERB\)](#) – provides a taxable benefit of \$2,000 a month for up to 4 months to workers and parents who may not be eligible for EI and/or are sick, quarantined, or taking care of someone who is sick with COVID-19.
- [Enhanced Canada Child Benefit](#) – increase in support through the Canada Child Benefit.
- [Flexibility for Taxpayers](#) – deferral of tax filing date.

For a full description of supports available, and updates on the British Columbia Government and/or Government of Canada response to COVID-19, please go to the following links:

- [BC Government](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)

I would like to thank you and Fostering Change for your continued support and advocacy for youth and young adults transitioning from care to adulthood. We are making every effort possible to support youth and young adults during this global pandemic.

Sincerely,



Katrine Conroy

Minister of Children and Family Development