



DON'T LET AGING OUT BECOME THE SUPER HIGHWAY TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS- Press Release

For Immediate Release by the BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness¹:

Thursday September 10, 2020

British Columbia- On September 30th, a large cohort of youth will be aging out of the foster care system and face a potential super highway to youth homelessness without prioritized access to housing. The sector is anticipating approximately 500 youth will be aging out based on previous estimates of how many youth age out of care a year.²

The Emergency Crisis:

A key pathway into youth homelessness is aging out of the foster-care system at 19. During COVID-19, emergency measures have been in place by MCFD to 'pause' the aging out process for youth in care across BC, which has allowed youth to remain in their current placement. Unfortunately, some youth have already left the foster-care system and those who are still in the system that have technically aged out will have their emergency measures taken away during COVID-19. Transition planning is challenging as youth are facing unprecedented challenges to securing safe and secure housing during the pandemic.

These emergency measures are coming to an end on September 30th. As a result of the pause, the sector is anticipating a significantly larger cohort of youth aging out across BC. The Coalition is anticipating hundreds of young people facing homelessness as a result of their placements coming to an end during COVID-19. The sector does not have the housing or supports needed to prevent homelessness for this vulnerable population.

The Solution:

The BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness is launching a campaign to ensure youth aging out of care do not end up homeless on September 30th.

¹ *In 2017, the BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness was founded with the purpose of leading the development of a provincial plan to end youth homelessness. The BCCEYH seeks to magnify the voices of youth with lived expertise and is a coalition of organizations across the province. The BCCEYH develops reports on various provincial ministries' roles and priorities related to youth homelessness and are a community of practice to end homelessness in BC.*

² *The number of 500 was taken from Fostering Change report "Opportunities in Transition: An Economic Analysis of Investing in Youth Aging Out of Foster Care." The report states that "approximately 1000 youth age out of care and youth agreements at age 19 in a year." As the aging out process has been paused for 6 months, we can anticipate that approximately 50% of youth could be aging out September 30th (approximately 500 youth).*

The Coalition is calling for urgent action to match as many youth aging out as possible with appropriate housing options. The Campaign is asking the social housing sector to work together to identify existing housing supports such as rental subsidies or supportive housing units that can be prioritized for youth aging out September 1st. For example, one non-profit may dedicate 3 rental subsidies and one transition unit that they already have available for October 1st.

The goal is to create an inventory of housing supports so that this cohort can receive priority access to meet their needs. Youth aging out of care will be matched to the appropriate housing intervention to help prevent youth homelessness during COVID-19.

The Request to Government:

The BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness has submitted a letter to the Premier to ask for urgent action and collaboration. The two requests include:

- 1) Provide the number of youth aging out per community on September 30th, including the type of housing response that would meet their needs. Have BC Housing and the non-profit sector identify youth as priority for housing assistance on September 30th.
- 2) Postpone the September 30th deadline for youth aging out of care until a plan is in place for every youth to be housed appropriately.

The Impact:

This project is an opportunity to prevent youth homelessness by ensuring youths aging out of care are connected to appropriate housing. When youth have a solid foundation of a home, they become contributing members of society and give back to others. They have an opportunity to follow their dreams and achieve their educational or career aspirations. Investing in young people who are aging out is our responsibility. If the government is their parent, we need communities to be adults and uncles to ensure no youth falls through the cracks or becomes homeless as a result of COVID-19. There is no time to wait!

Media contacts:

The BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness has identified these media contacts:

Interior Region:

Katherine McParland
Co-Chair of BCCEYH
A Way Home Kamloops
250-320-7837
Katherine@awayhomekamloops.com

New Westminster Region:

Sarah Stewart
Co-Chair of BCCEYH
Aunt Leah's Life Skills Society
604-880-4072
[sstewart@auntleahs.org](mailto:ssewart@auntleahs.org)

North Vancouver Region:

Paul Butler
Hollyburn Family Services Society
Director of Youth Services
604-987-8211
paulbutler@hollyburnsociety.ca

Vancouver Region:

Chelsea Minhas
Covenant House BC
Associate Director, Clinical Services
604-685-5437
cminhas@covenanthousebc.org

Susan Russell/Adrienne Montanni

First Call/Fostering Change
Provincial Coordinator/ Campaign Leader
204-803-3963

Susan@firstcallBC.org and/or Adrienne@firstcallBC.org