

**Submission to
Ministry of Children and Family Development
Youth Transitions Engagement**

September 2022



putting children and youth **first**

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ABOUT US

First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society works in partnership with a non-partisan, cross-sectoral network of 116 provincial and regional organizations, individuals and local communities who share the belief that children and youth should have “first call” on our province’s resources. We are committed to achieving the following 4 Keys to Success for B.C.’s children and youth:

- A strong commitment to early childhood development
- Support in transitions from childhood to youth and adulthood
- Increased economic equality
- Safe and caring communities

BACKGROUND ON THE CONTEXT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE

The systemic circumstances that lead to individual vulnerabilities to being taken into government care are well known. In BC and Canada, the intergenerational legacy of colonialism impacting Indigenous populations includes the traumatic effects of forced attendance at Indian Residential Schools, the prohibition of traditional cultural practices, the theft of lands and subsequent impoverishment of whole communities, and many more human rights violations through legislation and social exclusion over time. With two thirds of children and youth in care in BC being Indigenous, the impacts of this legacy remain clear and present.

Childhood trauma and family poverty are two key factors that often precipitate children and youth coming into care. Consequently, when youth transition out of care, they frequently have unresolved internal conflicts resulting from their life history and care experience. They are generally less prepared to go on to post secondary education or secure well-paying employment. The cycle of poverty often continues because of these factors. Additionally, a disproportionate number of youth leaving care have special needs, compared to the general population.

These systemic and social factors must be top-of-mind in implementing improvements to the transition from care process and available supports for youth.

Good research references on this background context include:

Shaffer, Anderson, Nelson. (2016). *OPPORTUNITIES IN TRANSITION: Report 1 of 3: Educational, economic, social and wellness outcomes*, Fostering Change.ca https://www.fosteringchange.ca/reports_and_research

McParland, K., & The Office of the Representative for Children and Youth. (2020). *FROM MARGINALIZED TO MAGNIFIED: Youth Homelessness Solutions From Those With Lived Expertise*. <https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Final.From-Marginalized-to-Magnified.pdf>

YOUTH TRANSITIONS FROM GOVERNMENT CARE - IMPLEMENTATION PAPER FEEDBACK

In response to the Ministry of Children and Family Development’s request for feedback on their July 2022 [Youth Transitions Implementation Paper](#), First Call reviewed responses from several youth service partner organizations, as well as previous reports containing research and the perspectives of youth with experience transitioning from government care.

The paper identifies six core themes to guide the implementation of the youth transitions supports across six domains of need. The core themes are:

- Connection to culture and identity
- Community
- Indigenous ways of knowing and being
- Relationships
- Meeting youth and young adults where they are
- Listening to youth and young adults

The domains of need are:

- Expanded eligibility
- Financial support (Income supplements)
- Navigation and transition planning (Transitions workers)
- Life-skills, training and relationships, identity, and culture (two domains grouped together)
- Housing
- Health and Wellness

First Call agrees with the important points made in the submission from the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks (FBCYICN) that implementation must include clear accountability mechanisms for the positive intentions articulated in the six core themes.

We also support their recommendation that the Transition Workers be from the community, not government employees: *“Young people do not want transitions workers to be MCFD staff, a point they have made repeatedly. They would like transition workers to be from the community. We recommend that MCFD fund transition workers from the community and honour young people’s wishes about this very important component of the Implementation Plan. ”*

Overall, in developing its implementation plans for the announced reforms to the supports for youth transitioning out of care, we encourage the Ministry to move beyond high level commitments to heed the specific advice and best practices outlined in the following submissions and reports:

- FBCYICN, *FEEDBACK ON MCFD’S YOUTH TRANSITION IMPLEMENTATION PAPER* (Sept 2022)
- Doucet, M. M., & The National Council of Youth in Care Advocates. (2021). *EQUITABLE STANDARDS FOR TRANSITIONS TO ADULTHOOD FOR YOUTH IN CARE*. Child Welfare League of Canada. https://7f9b59af-af92-41cd-8e6c-aa2870f170de.filesusr.com/ugd/f54667_45d7b4d41270453e8d720296d22edc6c.pdf
- BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness, *WRITTEN SUBMISSION FOR THE MINISTRY OF CHILDREN OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT YOUTH TRANSITIONS ENGAGEMENT* (2022) https://www.awayhomekamloops.com/files/ugd/c4208a_c2ce2ff0d7aa4778a24fc61f0391f16c.pdf
- Aunt Leah’s Place. (2022) *WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO MCFD, CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE LEGISLATIVE REFORM CONSULTATION*.

The touchstone principle established by advocates through the Fostering Change initiative, the BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness and many youth serving and allied organizations in BC is that youth who grow up in care must have access to supports that are similar to their parented peers. Parents are subsidizing their adult children’s rent, food and transportation costs well into their 20s. As they

transition into adulthood, youth from care have an even greater need for similar, stabilizing financial support and easy access to the other necessary supports and services.

First Call appreciates the provincial government's commitment to enhanced and expanded supports for youth transitions from care which were announced in Budget 2022. We also appreciate the recognition of the need to implement these new supports flexibly, taking into account individual needs and circumstances, as captured from previous consultations. We look forward to working with government, community organizations and youth-serving agencies to monitor the effectiveness of the new measures in reducing risk, building resilience and enhancing wellness for youth from care in their transition to adulthood. Respecting the voices and experiences of youth in and from care will be crucial to our collective success in achieving these objectives.