

REPORT



Youth in and from care and the right to education

Current context and recommendations

Kate Butler • May 2019

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Introduction

Youth in and from care in Ontario face systemic and multi-faceted barriers in getting a quality education. Educational attainment rates are extremely low. According to data collected by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, only 44 per cent of youth in care are expected to graduate from high school, compared to the 81 per cent high school graduation rate for all Ontario students.¹ Furthermore, some data suggests that as many as 82 per cent of children in care in Canada have been diagnosed with special needs.²

As education is a key social and economic right, public policies that help to uphold these rights for children and youth in care are needed. In their absence, it is possible to make the case that these children and youth are being denied the right to education.

Governments in Canada, including Ontario, have begun to undertake efforts to ensure that young people in care can better realize their rights. Two years ago, Ontario passed the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*, an important piece of legislation for a number of reasons, including the fact that it raises the age of protection for children up to the age of 18.

One year since the legislation came into effect (and two years since it was passed), this report explores the context in which youth in and from care in Ontario experience and access the right to education. Specifically, we draw attention to what has been done to realize this right, and what more can be done. This moment is also important because we have recently lost a crucial voice for youth in the system, Provincial Advocate, Irwin Elman, whose office was folded into that of the Ombudsman on May 1, 2019.

The report begins by exploring education as a human right, and the challenges faced by youth in and from care in Ontario in realizing this right. We then look at what has been happening in Ontario under the new legislation. Finally, we suggest some ways that the Ontario government can support young people in and from care in their educational paths.³

International and national context of youth in and from care as rights-holders

Globally, we are beginning to see a shift towards a recognition that the structural barriers facing youth in and from care are rights violations and go against rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other international conventions.⁴ For instance, unsafe and frequently changing foster care/group care placements violate the right to security of the person. Similarly, when children are taken from their home community, their right to grow up within their own culture is not met.

Young people in and from care need services and policies that are grounded in these conventions. They also need access to mechanisms that will allow them to have their concerns heard and addressed so they can claim their social and economic rights.

In Ontario, we can see this shift to a rights-based approach in the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies which recognizes children's rights as an important framing tool for the child welfare work it engages in. Similarly, we are seeing this shift in practice internationally. One such notable example is the Avenues to Independence transitional living program in Northern California, which gives young people leaving care a safe place to live and the skills necessary to succeed.⁵ UNICEF similarly cites child welfare as a crucial measure of how well a child's rights are being met.⁶

In Canada, child welfare proponents are increasingly recognizing that implementing children's rights would close gaps in child welfare systems.⁷ The federal government introduced its Indigenous child welfare legislation, Bill C-92, in February 2019. Best interests of the child are at the centre of this legislation, and it requires that the views of children be considered. It also legislates that separation of the child from its community be the last resort. These are all important steps in recognizing the fact that children and youth in the care system have rights.

Education as a human right

Education is a core social and economic right that is found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), signed and ratified by Canada in 1948, and also in numerous other agreements.⁸ According to Article 26 of the UDHR:

- Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
- Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Education is a human right in and of itself, but it is also a means to achieving other rights. If you have access to an education, you are more able to know your rights and know how to advocate for them. Education is important in breaking the cycle of poverty and helping to close gaps in social inequality. Education empowers people and acts as a catalyst for realizing other rights such as employment, health, and housing.

Further, as education is a human right, governments, institutions, and communities have an obligation to create conditions in which individuals can realize this right. This is one of the fundamentals of a rights-based approach in terms of the responsibilities of the state and other institutional actors. When states sign and ratify international covenants and conventions on human rights, they are acknowledging their role in the rights process – namely, that they can be held accountable if rights are not met.

Canada has signed and ratified various international conventions related to the rights of Canadians. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This means governments at all levels in Canada have an obligation to uphold the rights in these conventions, including the right to education.

And yet many Ontario students do not realize the right to education equitably.⁹ There is work to be done for many, not just those in and from care. In fact, many young people in Ontario, as well as educators, do not know that they have the right to education, or other human rights for that matter.

Education is a provincial responsibility. Therefore, in the case of the right to education, the provinces as duty bearers are accountable. In addition, the federal government has responsibilities because of its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as its jurisdiction with regards to Indigenous peoples, which includes education.¹⁰

Youth in and from care in Ontario and their right to education

Currently, there are 63,000 young people in Canada living in permanent government care, including with foster families, extended family or relatives, and in group home settings.¹¹ In Ontario alone, there are approximately 16,500 youth in care at any moment, and about 7,000 of these are living in extended society care (formerly referred to as Crown wards).¹² Each year, approximately 17 per cent of these youth leave the care system in Ontario.¹³

Indigenous young people are vastly overrepresented in the care system in Ontario and across the country.¹⁴ While Indigenous children make up only 4.1 per cent of the population under 15 in Ontario, they represent almost 30 per cent of children in foster care. Similarly, Black youth are also overrepresented in the Greater Toronto Area and across the province.¹⁵ According to a 2014 *Toronto Star* article, 41 per cent of children and youth in the care of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto identify as Black, even though only 8.2 per cent of Toronto's population under the age of 18 is Black.¹⁶

Young people in and from care experience multiple challenges that come from policy choices, institutional barriers, and inequitable opportunities.¹⁷ As noted above, there is a growing recognition, both in Canada and on the global stage, that the barriers they face are not individual failures but rather systemic violations of the rights of young people.¹⁸ As Dr. Nico Trocmé, director of the Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal noted in a 2017 interview with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, "child neglect is really a collective failure as opposed to a family failure."¹⁹

One of the core principles of human rights is that they are indivisible – our economic, social, political, and civil rights are all important, and each relies on the others for their fulfillment. So when we are unable to realize some of these rights, other aspects of our lives are at risk.

In terms of educational attainment, then, we can't just look at the right to education. The educational experiences of young people in and from care are compounded by violations of other core human rights, including the right to security of the person, the right to basic necessities of life, and the right to health.

For instance, major health disparities exist for youth in and from care: young people in care are diagnosed with health conditions 1.2 to 1.4 times more often than children in the general population; young women in continuing care become pregnant four times more often than young women who have never been in care; and youth between the ages of 19 and 25 who have been in care experience poorer health indicators than those who have not.²⁰ Housing, or a lack of access to good quality housing, is also an important factor for youth in and from care in how they realize their educational opportunities.²¹

Similarly, security of the person is often not attainable for youth in the care system, as they report high percentages of abuse as well as neglect.²² These youth may also become “crossover youth,” a term used when youth in care become involved with the youth justice system: for instance, in B.C., the most recent data shows that 36 per cent of youth in care appeared before youth court, in contrast to fewer than 5 per cent of the general youth population.²³ Data on crossover youth collected from a recent project at Ryerson University founded and co-led by former Chief Advocate of the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy, Judy Finlay, shows similar patterns in Ontario.²⁴

These other barriers intersect with educational challenges to create a complicated situation for many young people in and from care as they attempt to complete schooling requirements and aspire to post-secondary education. The educational challenges that children and youth in care face are numerous and include:

- Multiple placements leading to multiple school changes;
- Lack of mental health supports and in school supports that acknowledge distinct challenges of youth in care; and

- For youth leaving care, financial insecurity, lack of learning about life skills such as financial literacy, and weak or minimal support networks.

Youth in and from care experience these educational challenges in elementary, middle, and high school, and these challenges remain as individuals get to college or university. These problems remain unresolved partly because we often don't have the data required to see the full picture of educational attainment of youth in and from care. Without this data, we can only do so much to understand the unique needs of this population. The lack of data, combined with the fact that available data is not disaggregated, means that we are not able to find the best solutions and monitor progress.²⁵

Current context of education as it relates to youth in and from care in Ontario

On June 1, 2017, the Ontario government passed Bill 89, *The Child, Youth and Family Services Act* (CYFSA). The new legislation emerged out of the 2015 review of the *Child and Family Services Act*, and was influenced by the foundational work provided by the Blueprint for Fundamental Change to Ontario's Child Welfare System. The Blueprint Report was published in January 2013 and contained a number of recommendations from youth, including noting explicitly that children and youth in and from care have a right to education, and that they need supports in place to achieve their full educational potential.²⁶

The legislation was ground-breaking for many reasons, including the fact that it established best interests of the child as a starting point, and placed children at the centre of decision-making and services. The Preamble specifically notes the importance of rights and begins with the statement: "The Government of Ontario acknowledges that children are individuals with rights to be respected and voices to be heard."²⁷ In this way, the legislation marks a move towards a rights-focused approach. The effects of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* also go beyond education and touch on many parts of youth's lives.

The bill came into effect on April 30, 2018, and replaced the *Child and Family Services Act, 1990*. Major changes relating to youth in and from care included:²⁸

- Changing the age of protection from 16 to 18 which will provide increased protection services for vulnerable youth around housing support, human trafficking, and education;
- Focusing on early intervention, with the goal of preventing children and families from reaching crisis situations;
- Ensuring services are culturally appropriate for all children and youth in the child welfare system, particularly to make sure that First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and Black children receive the best support possible; and
- Improving how service providers, including children’s aid societies, are monitored in order to make sure that all children and youth receive consistent, quality services across the province.

The reactions from those involved with youth in and from care were mixed. In a presentation before the Standing Committee on Justice Policy which was studying the bill, the Ontario Child Advocate stated:

What young people told us was that the preamble is nice. It’s really important, the commitment to anti-racism, the commitment to Indigenous child welfare, the commitment to child-centred practice, the commitment to children’s voice, children’s rights. That’s very important, but they didn’t see themselves in the bill or those principles further on...There are pieces in the act that we think work against those nice principles.²⁹

The Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies stated in its 2016-2017 Annual Report that the new legislation provides a “significant lever of change for the child welfare system.”³⁰

While reactions were mixed, it’s worth noting that one of the innovative things about this legislation was that young people in and from care were welcomed into policy conversations about the care system before the legislation was formulated. While tensions certainly existed, young people participated in the review leading up to the legislation in unprecedented ways.³¹

The new legislation has also led to some promising collaborations between Ministries, including what was at the time the Ministry of Children and Youth

Services (and is now the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services or MCCSS) and the Ministry of Education (EDU). These include:

- The **Joint Student Achievement Protocol**, developed previous to legislation but still in line with the new Act's goals, which is intended to guide children's aid societies and schoolboards in developing local collaborative practices and support outcomes for children and youth in and from care;³²
- The **Children and Youth in Care (CYIC) transportation funding**, which allows eligible students to stay in their school temporarily if it's the best option for them by providing funding for transportation for students from their new placement to their school (it should be noted that this was also launched at approximately the same time as the new legislation);³³ and
- The **Education Liaison Program**, which coordinates education supports for children and youth in care.

Despite these developments, pressing problems remain for youth in care, especially Indigenous and racialized youth. Indigenous youth are still vastly overrepresented in the care system. They face systemic barriers that arise due to a system that doesn't embrace Indigenous culture, as well as a history of colonialism and its impacts. There are a number of initiatives in Ontario that are in progress that are assisting First Nations communities to be self-governing from a child welfare perspective and from an education perspective, however, there is still work to be done. In addition, the province's recent removal of the funding to develop Indigenous curriculum is a huge step backward in realizing the right to education.

Similarly, in the Greater Toronto Area and the province as a whole, Black youth experience care at much higher rates than other groups, and often do not have appropriate cultural supports in place, although there have been attempts in recent years to make child welfare more culturally appropriate.³⁴ One Vision One Voice, the joint project between the Ontario government and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, is one example of a proposed approach for moving forward.

Since the legislation was passed, Ontario also saw a major change in advocacy on behalf of youth in care with the abolition of the Office of the Provincial Advocate by the new Ontario government (some of the Advocate's functions have been moved over to the Ontario Ombudsman).

Under the aegis of the Provincial Advocate, young people had an independent office that was able to organize effectively on issues of youth leaving care. Through hearings, reports, and research, the Advocate could also further illustrate what the major challenges for these youth were, as they related to health, education, work, financial and social support, and the criminal justice system.

Many advocates have raised concerns about the effects of this change on the challenges faced by youth in care.

Recommendations for the Ontario government

While the 2017 legislation has certainly improved some of the key educational challenges for youth in and from care, barriers remain. Too many children are failing to realize their right to education while in the care system.³⁵ Part of the reason is that the challenges facing youth in and from care include socio-economic factors, emotional and physical well-being, and systemic poverty and racism. And while there are (often limited) resources to help students, too often, young people are not aware of these supports.³⁶ Furthermore, there is a need for educators and boards of education to be informed about the specific needs and contexts of children and youth in care.

As noted above, all levels of governments have responsibilities for ensuring that citizens can realize their rights, however, the provincial government has the biggest role to play. The following are some recommendations for the provincial government to improve practices so that young people in and from care will better realize their right to education.

- The right to education should be explicitly referenced as a core principle of the Ministry of Education. When education is named as a human right, it becomes easier to ensure that it is recognized by the relevant parties, that institutions are committed to ensuring that

this right can be realized, and that mechanisms of accountability and transparency are in place.

- The Ontario government should re-instate the Provincial Advocate's Office. The systemic review and advocacy function that was part of the Advocate's mandate is no longer in place now that the Ombudsman's office is responsible for individual advocacy for youth in care. This is a real gap.³⁷
- The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should implement the recommendations of the Residential Services Review Panel, especially as these recommendations have to do with creating stable home-like environments for children and youth in care.³⁸ A stable home environment is an important context for educational attainment. In particular, the MCCSS should focus on the Review Panel's recommendations that address the multiple moves from one residential setting to another that youth in care typically experience.
- The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should also implement the recommendations from the *Safe With Intervention* report from the Office of the Chief Coroner, specifically the recommendation to provide an integrated system of care for young people and families that includes a commitment to health, mental health and wellbeing, education, early intervention, and more.³⁹
- Elementary and secondary curricula should incorporate skills outside the 3Rs (reading, writing, and math). For instance, People for Education notes that other provinces and countries have begun to explore how to teach skills and competences such as creativity, citizenship, health, and socio-emotional learning.⁴⁰ For youth in and from care, the opportunity to learn these life skills is especially important as they may not be receiving additional educational opportunities outside of the formal school setting or learning skills like financial literacy at home.
- Policies should ensure that Indigenous peoples and certain racialized groups are provided with opportunities to make up the educational attainment gaps noted by the Mowat Centre in its recent report *A Different Ontario: Education*.⁴¹ Not everyone in Ontario is well-positioned to meet the challenges of the 21st century. When we talk

about life skills needed, we must make sure that all students have opportunities, not just those who go on to do higher education.

- The Ministry of Education should require schools to print and display the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and inform students about these rights. When students know their rights, they will be better able to realize them.
- The provincial government, working alongside the federal government, should collect better data on youth in and from care. In the last UN review of Canada looking at how well we are adhering to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it was noted that the Canadian government could not tell the monitoring committee the number of children in care, because it did not know it.⁴² Data is important for tracking educational outcomes so we have a better sense of the kinds of challenges and opportunities that exist for youth in the education system. In particular, graduation rate data on youth in care would be extremely helpful in understanding the full picture of the barriers facing youth in and from care.
- In addition, data collection agreements should be in place so data on youth in care can be collected and released to the public. Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) data may not be perfect, but it provides an adequate picture of how youth in care are doing in the education system. Currently, data collection has ceased because data collection agreements are not in place. Data should also be disaggregated so we can figure out which young people are most at risk.⁴³
- Finally, the provincial government, together with the other two levels of government, should ensure that there are opportunities to hear from youth in and from care about how to make the right to education realizable. Young people with care experience are knowledgeable about what they need. Great suggestions as to ways to support these young people exist, but there needs to be ways for government to hear them.⁴⁴

Endnotes

- 1 The Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. (2012). *25 is the new 21: The Costs and Benefits of Providing Extended Care & Maintenance to Ontario Youth in Care Until Age 25*. Retrieved from <https://www.provincialadvocate.on.ca/reports/advocacy-reports/english-reports/25istheNew21.pdf>
- 2 Children's Aid Foundation of Canada. (n.d.). Hundreds of thousands of kids in Canada are at risk of abuse and neglect. Retrieved from <https://www.cafdn.org/our-impact/the-issue/>
- 3 It should be noted that many other organizations in the youth in and from care space have contributed great recommendations about education that can and should be implemented. The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies is currently preparing to release recommendations, which include a call for better data collection.
- 4 For the full text of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, see: <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>
A number of articles in the UNCRC summarized below relate specifically to young people in and from care. These include:
 - Article 9: Children have the right to live with their parent(s), unless it is bad for them. Children whose parents do not live together have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might hurt the child.
 - Article 12: When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.
 - Article 19: Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally.
 - Article 20: Children who cannot be looked after by their own family have a right to special care and must be looked after properly, by people who respect their ethnic group, religion, culture and language.
 - Article 21: Children have the right to care and protection if they are adopted or in foster care.

- Article 27: Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. Governments should help families and guardians who cannot afford to provide this, particularly with regard to food, clothing and housing.
 - Article 30: Minority or indigenous children have the right to learn about and practice their own culture, language and religion.
- 5 Rashid, S. (2004). Evaluating a Transitional Living Program for Homeless, Former Foster Care Youth. *Research on Social Work Practice* 14(4): 240–248. doi: 10.1177/1049731503257883
- 6 Unicef Canada. (2018). Unicef Report Card 15. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.ca/en/unicef-report-card-15>
- 7 Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children. (2018). *The System Needs Fixing: Children’s Rights and Provincial Child Welfare Systems*. (Discussion Paper, November 13, 2018). Retrieved from <http://rightsofchildren.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Child-Welfare-Systems-and-Childrens-Rights-CCRC-Discussion-Paper.pdf>
- 8 See
- Articles 13 & 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (retrieved from <https://www.nesri.org/resources/the-international-covenant-on-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>)
 - Articles 28, 29 & 40 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (retrieved from <https://www.nesri.org/resources/convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child>)
 - Article 5 of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (retrieved from <https://www.nesri.org/resources/international-convention-on-the-elimination-of-all-forms-of-racial-discrimination>)
 - Articles 10 & 14 of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (retrieved from <https://www.nesri.org/resources/convention-on-the-elimination-of-all-forms-of-discrimination-against-women>)

Article 24: A Right to Inclusive Education (see: <http://www.allfie.org.uk/article-24-full-text/>) of the UN Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD – retrieved from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/ConventionRightsPersonsWithDisabilities.aspx>) guarantees all disabled pupils and students a right to participate in all forms of mainstream education with appropriate support

- 9 Butler, K. (2018, July 30). Think education in Ontario doesn't need to be protected as a human right? Think again. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/publications/think-education-in-ontario-doesnt-need-to-be-protected-as-a-human-right-think-again/>
- 10 Chiefs of Ontario, New Agenda Working Group. (2012). *Our Children, Our Future, Our Vision: First Nation Jurisdiction over First Nation Education in Ontario*. Retrieved from <https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/chair-indigenous-governance/img/reports/OCOFOV-education-report-2012.pdf>.
- 11 Children's Aid Foundation. (n.d.). Hundreds of thousands of kids in Canada are at risk of abuse and neglect. Retrieved from <https://www.cafdn.org/our-impact/the-issue/>
- 12 Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. (2015). Children and Youth at Risk. Retrieved from <http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/about/EBB/2016/atrisk.aspx>
- 13 The Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth (2012). *25 is the new 21: The Costs and Benefits of Providing Extended Care & Maintenance to Ontario Youth in Care Until Age 25*. Retrieved from <https://www.provincialadvocate.on.ca/reports/advocacy-reports/english-reports/25istheNew21.pdf>
- 14 See Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2018). *Interrupted Childhoods: Over-representation of Indigenous and Black Children in Ontario Child Welfare*. Retrieved from <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/interrupted-childhoods>
- 15 See the important work done by One Vision, One Voice (<http://www.oacas.org/what-we-do/onevisiononevoice/>) — which is funded by the Ontario government and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies — on addressing the overrepresentation and disparities faced by African Canadians after coming into contact with the child welfare system.

- 16 Contenta, S., Monsebraaten, L., & Rankin, J. (2014, December 11). Why are so many black children in foster and group homes? *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/12/11/why_are_so_many_black_children_in_foster_and_group_homes.html
- 17 Quinn, N., Davidson, J., Milligan, I., Elsley, S., & Cantwell, N. (2017). Moving Forward: Towards a rights-based paradigm for young people transitioning out of care. *International Social Work*, 60(1): 140–155. doi: 10.1177/0020872814547439
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. (2017). Nico Trocmé of McGill University discusses why identifying and treating child neglect can be so challenging. Retrieved from <http://www.oacas.org/2017/10/nico-trocme-discusses-why-identifying-and-treating-child-neglect-can-be-so-challenging/>
- 20 British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth, & British Columbia Office of the Provincial Health Officer. (2009). *Kids, crime and care: health and well-being of children in care: youth justice experiences and outcomes*. Victoria, B.C.: British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth. See also Svoboda, D.V., Shaw, T., Barth, R., & Bright, C. (2012). Pregnancy and parenting among youth in foster care: A review. *Children and Youth Services Review* 34 (5): 867-875. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.01.023>
- While youth who have been in care are often compared to the general youth population, it's important to note that this is perhaps not the best population to use as a comparison. Many youth who end up in the government care system are marginalized to begin with, due to a variety of individual and systemic factors, including poverty, discrimination, parental or familial abuse or neglect, racism, or other factors.
- 21 Malenfant, J., & Nichols, N. (2019, May 2). Education for Young People Experiencing Homelessness and Housing Precarity. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://www.homelesshub.ca/blog/education-young-people-experiencing-homelessness-and-housing-precarity>
- 22 See Beauvais, C., McKay, L., & Seddon, A. (2001). *A literature review on youth and citizenship*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Policy Research Networks;

Butler, K., & Benoit, C. (2015). Citizenship Practices Among Youth Who Have Experienced Government Care. *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 40 (1): 25-50. doi: 10.2307/canajsocicahican.40.1.25

- 23 British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth & British Columbia Office of the Provincial Health Officer. (2009). *Kids, crime and care: health and well-being of children in care: youth justice experiences and outcomes*. Victoria, B.C.: British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth.
- 24 Bala, N., De Filippis, R., & Hunter, K. (2013). *Crossover Youth: Improving Ontario's Responses*. (Report prepared for the Ontario Chapter of the Association of Family & Conciliation Courts.) Retrieved from <http://afccontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Bala-De-Filippis-Hunter-Crossover-Kids.pdf>
- 25 Khan, A., & Nichols, N. (2019). *Using Data to Enable Better Outcomes for Young People Leaving Care*. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5623f0e8e4b0126254053337/t/5cec19937817f71809d35073/1558976916181/YouthinCareAdministrativeData.pdf>
- 26 The Blueprint Report lists eight recommendations related to education and employment:
- Children and youth in and from care are supported to participate fully and successfully in elementary and secondary school.
 - Caregivers demonstrate the importance of school success to children and youth in care, and support them to meet their full educational potential.
 - Teachers and school staff are knowledgeable about mental health, emotional health, social, cultural, and educational challenges that children and youth in and from care may face and are able to connect them to appropriate programs offered in the school and community.
 - Youth in and from care and their teachers, workers, and caregivers have information about options and supports for post-secondary education, training and apprenticeships.
 - Youth in and from care and their teachers, workers, and caregivers have ongoing discussions about career plans and options starting from an early age.

- The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities make the Ontario Student Assistance Program application process as easy and accessible as possible for youth in and from care.
- Aboriginal children and youth have access to distinct and culturally appropriate educational supports in their communities.
- Youth in and from care have access to increased financial supports for post-secondary education that allow them to attend school part-time or to take more than four years to graduate.

View the full report here: <http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/documents/childrensaid/youthleavingcare.pdf>

Many of the Blueprint recommendations have begun to be addressed by CYFSA and through other initiatives. These measures go beyond education and address systemic barriers more broadly. These changes include: The Aftercare Benefits Initiative which extends benefits to young adults aged 21 to 24 who have left care (this predated CYFSA and was implemented in 2014); the Renewed Youth Support program which allows youth to enter a voluntary agreement with a society to receive supports up to the age of 18; and other programs that address the varied needs and experiences of youth such as the transition and life skills program, Registered Education Savings Plan, and the Stay Home for School Program.

- 27 *Children, Youth and Family Services Act 2017*, S.O.2017, c.14, Sched. 1. Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17c14#BK2>
- 28 Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. (n.d.). About Ontario's children's aid societies. Retrieved from <http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/childwelfare/societies/index.aspx>
- 29 Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Standing Committee on Justice Policy. (2017, March 30). *Official Report of Debates (Hansard)*. [Transcript]. 41st Parliament, 2nd session. Retrieved from https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/committees/justice-policy/parliament-41/transcripts/committee-transcript-2017-mar-30#P123_8735
- 30 Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. (2017). *OACAS Annual Report 2016-2017*. Retrieved from <http://www.oacas.org/annual-report-2016-2017-2/>

31 In July 2012, the Youth Leaving Care Working Group was established by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. The purpose of the group was to act on the first recommendation of the Report of the Youth Leave Care Hearings, entitled *My REAL Life Book*, released in May 2012. The recommendation stated: “The Province of Ontario should recognize that the current system needs to fundamentally change to better prepare young people in care to succeed. To this end, the Province should work with young people in and from care and other stakeholders to complete an Action Plan for Fundamental Change by November 2012.” See the full report here: https://cwrp.ca/sites/default/files/publications/en/YLC_REPORT_ENG.pdf

The working group included nine youth in and from care from a range of places, identities, and experiences within the child welfare system, and seven community representatives from youth-serving organizations across the province.

32 See the template for a JPSA at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/memos/feb2015/JPSA2015appA.pdf>

33 For more information, see the initiative’s call for applications here: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/memos/feb2018/transport-criteria-application-en.pdf>

34 See, for example, the 11 Race Equity Practices developed by One Vision One Voice to be used by child welfare staff across the province: <http://www.oacas.org/what-we-do/onevisiononevoice/>

35 Kovarikova, J. (2018). *Review of Policy and Practice for Youth Leaving Care*. (White Paper funded by the Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada). Retrieved from http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/6548f4_7ba391d9a4b54e7a972c1314de2cefca.pdf

36 For a list of resources supporting youth transitioning out of care, see: http://ontarioyouthcan.org/rsyt.youth/?page_id=20

37 The Provincial Advocate’s Office was formed in 2007 to deal with children receiving services under the Child & Family Services Act, and under the Education Act (Provincial and Demonstration Schools). The Advocate’s Office has been able to respond effectively on issues of youth leaving care, and has pointed out some of the major challenges for these youth as they

relate to health, education, work, financial and social support, and the criminal justice system. Some new supports have come out of the Advocate's work, including support in the areas of education, social and other support, and health. However, with the recent decision by the Ontario government to move the Advocate's office into the Ombudsman's office (and cut many staff positions), accountability mechanisms have been removed.

- 38 View the full report of the Residential Services Review Panel here:
<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/documents/childrensaidd/residential-services-review-panel-report-feb2016.pdf>
- 39 View the full report of the Expert Panel on the Deaths of Children and Youth in Residential Placements here: <https://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/Deathinvestigations/OfficeChiefCoroner/Publicationsandreports/SafeIntervention.html>
- 40 People for Education. (2018). Skills for work and for life. Retrieved from <https://peopleforeducation.ca/our-work/skills-for-work-and-for-life/>
- 41 Learn more about the report's key findings or view the full report here: <https://mowatcentre.ca/a-different-ontario-education/>
- 42 Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children. (2018). *The System Needs Fixing: Children's Rights and Provincial Child Welfare Systems*. (Discussion Paper, November 2018). Retrieved from <http://rightsofchildren.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Child-Welfare-Systems-and-Childrens-Rights-CCRC-Discussion-Paper.pdf>
- 43 See Rutman, D., & Hubberstey, C. (2016). *Fostering Success: Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth In/from Care*. Victoria, B.C.: University of Victoria.
- 44 For instance, see examples such as the Provincial Advocate & Children's Aid Foundation's The Bus Ride Home (<https://www.provincialadvocate.on.ca/reports/advocacy-reports/english-reports/The-Bus-Ride-Home-Project.pdf>), and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies Youth CAN (<http://www.oacas.org/what-we-do/youthcan/>).