

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
February 8, 2011

Child and Youth Advocate Expresses Concern About Privacy of Children

The Child and Youth Advocate, Carol Chafe, expressed concern today about the recent media coverage and public discourse related to the removal of children by the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services from a family on the west coast of the Province.

Ms. Chafe recognizes the right of the public to information respecting the programs and services offered by Government departments and the role of the media to inform the public on issues that arise from the delivery of these programs and services. Ms. Chafe further recognizes the delicate balance that reporters try to maintain in serving the public interest without compromising the rights of children in any way. However, when children are the central part of the story their right to confidentiality, privacy and safety must trump all other interests.

The principles for reporting on at-risk children as developed by UNICEF state that "the dignity and rights of every child must be respected", "the best interests of each child are to be protected over any other consideration" and "that there should be no further stigmatization of the child".

Ms. Chafe noted "While most of us readily recognize the risk in providing children's names and personal information in such circumstances, we may not be aware of other information which, if provided, points to the identity of the children. The names of family members, names of communities, and other personal information can lead to the disclosure of the identity of the children involved."

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate was established to ensure that the rights and interests of children and youth are protected and advanced and their views are heard and considered.

Ms. Chafe said "The removal of children from a home is a very difficult, highly-charged, emotional situation and must be handled with sensitivity by all concerned. My role as the Child and Youth Advocate is to ensure that the protection of children is always the greatest priority"

The Child and Youth Advocate is currently reviewing the information related to this matter.

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