

Child and Youth Advocate's Message

At the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, we love meeting with young people and hearing their perspectives. And we find it very energizing to meet with community groups or professional groups to talk about children's rights. As we talk about our services, we often hear "I didn't know you did that!" So for this newsletter message, I thought I would go back to basics and explain what we do.

Our office serves as an independent provincial watchdog to investigate concerns related to services to children and youth, and to advocate with and for young people. We advocate for individual children and youth, and we also investigate when children's rights are not respected. We also educate about children's rights, and we deliver activities and workshops to young people of all ages, and to professionals and community groups.

Many of the complaints we receive are in the area of child protection. We are frequently approached about concerns related to protection, in care, foster care and youth services programs. We also hear concerns with education services, as well as health care and justice responses to young people. Sometimes housing and supports is the most critical concern, while for others it is barriers related to diversity. When young people or their families approach us, regardless of the issue, we hear them out and see how we can help.

We help young people speak up for themselves if they are able to do so, although this can be very intimidating depending on the issue. And we also speak on their behalf. Irwin Elman, Ontario's Child Advocate recently told CBC "When children have no voice, they are rendered invisible, and when they're invisible, bad things can happen". We work hard to make sure children are not invisible, and their rights and interests



**Jackie Lake Kavanagh,
Child and Youth Advocate**

are represented. They are our experts.

So if you are a young person reading this and believe you need someone to stand up for you, call us. No referral is needed, and our office is a welcoming and safe space. If you are a parent or professional and you believe a young person is not receiving the appropriate service or response, call us. And if you have conferences or workshops or classroom activities in the planning stages, call us if you would like to see if we can be involved through our outreach work on children's rights. If we can't join you, we may be able to help with some resource materials.

We look forward to hearing from you.



Review of the Child Protection System's Response to Inuit Children



We have had many discussions and travelled many miles in conducting a comprehensive review of the treatment, experiences and outcomes of Inuit children and youth in the Newfoundland and Labrador child protection system.

This review was launched on April 18, 2018 at the request of the Nunatsiavut Government and involves an extensive file review as well as discussions in Inuit communities, where we focused on identifying issues and potential changes. We believe it is essential to hear first hand experiences, and to hear what communities believe will make things better. The work will be concluded by March 31, 2019, with a public report to follow.

The initial round of community information sessions occurred during the summer in Hopedale, Makkovik, Nain, Rigolet, Postville and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. A second round of community visits occurred in the fall in these communities and also included North West River and Roddickton. The fall visits also included Advocacy Clinics in various Labrador communities. This work will continue in order to improve access to advocacy services.

The interest and participation from elders, young people, families, foster families, community leaders, extended family members, and service providers in each community has been greatly appreciated. We are truly honoured to do this work.

Terms of Reference for Review of Child Protection Services in Inuit Communities

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is an independent Statutory Office of the House of Assembly. The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate has called this review at the request of Nunatsiavut Government. This independent review is being conducted under authority of s. 15. (1) of Child and Youth Advocate Act.

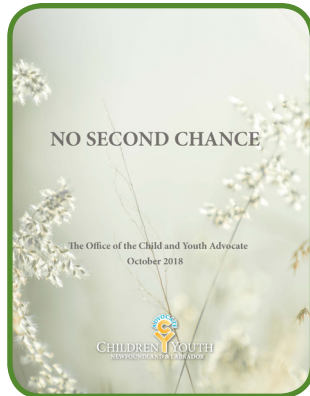
Mandate: To conduct a comprehensive Review of child protection services provided to Inuit children in Newfoundland and Labrador with a view to identifying deficiencies, exploring promising and best practices, and making recommendations for improved outcomes within an appropriate cultural framework.

Scope:

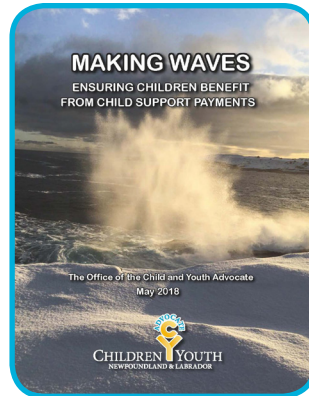
1. Inquire into why the child protection system is not producing favourable outcomes for Inuit children;
2. Review policies, case management practices, and administrative practices for delivering child protection services to Inuit children; this will include reviewing data relating to key decision points including referrals, investigations, plans, assessments, removals and placements;
3. Complete research into other Reviews, Inquiries and research findings on child protection experiences in Indigenous communities, including deficiencies, best practices and recommendations;
4. Engage Inuit communities including young people, elders, leaders, service providers, parents, extended families and foster parents to identify experiences with the child welfare system, and solicit ideas for change;
5. Make recommendations for improved child protection outcomes for Inuit children and youth within an appropriate cultural context;
6. Report back to communities on findings and recommendations at the conclusion of the Review.

Timeline: This Review will be completed by March 31, 2019. A public report will be released.

Recent Reports, Reviews and Investigations

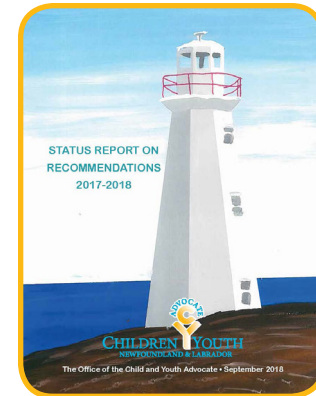


No Second Chance (October 2018) is the story of a young child who endured many tragic events in a short life, and whose involvement with child protection and mental health services did not see the child's needs met before an untimely and tragic death. The Advocate identified three primary systemic areas for improvement. The first involves ensuring appropriate and timely monitoring, assessment, and reporting of court ordered conditions, as well as keeping to policy and documentation standards. The second addresses the timely access to mental health services for children and youth. The third involves the appropriateness of placing older grandparents in protective roles with their grandchildren without appropriate risk assessments, and without clearly defined and understood plans for the child's safety.



In **Making Waves: Ensuring Children Benefit from Child Support Payments** (May 2018), the Advocate made only one recommendation that the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour eliminate the recovery of child support payments from Income Support Program calculations. Under the policy in Newfoundland and Labrador, child support payments are treated as income when calculating eligibility for Income Support benefits. There is growing dialogue and legal actions throughout the country criticizing such policies as regressive and infringing on the rights of children. As a result of this report, a departmental review is underway.

When we issue reports and make recommendations, we follow them until they are all addressed.



In September 2018, the Advocate released **Status Report on Recommendations 2017-2018**. This type of report is issued annually and reports progress and status on our recommendations. Government departments and agencies have made significant progress on the recommendations outlined in this report. And while there has been significant progress to March 31, 2018, five percent of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate's recommendations remain outstanding.

We would like to acknowledge the considerable effort and significant progress made by government departments and agencies to make important improvements that benefit young people in Newfoundland and Labrador. This is not accidental, and we appreciate the seriousness and commitment with which our recommendations are received.

Out and About in the Community

We continue to travel around the province meeting with children, youth, community groups and professionals to conduct education and engagement sessions. Outreach has included visits to the eastern, central and western parts of the island and Labrador, as well as many child and youth summer and leadership camps, including two additional camps and a forum focused on the needs of gender diverse youth.

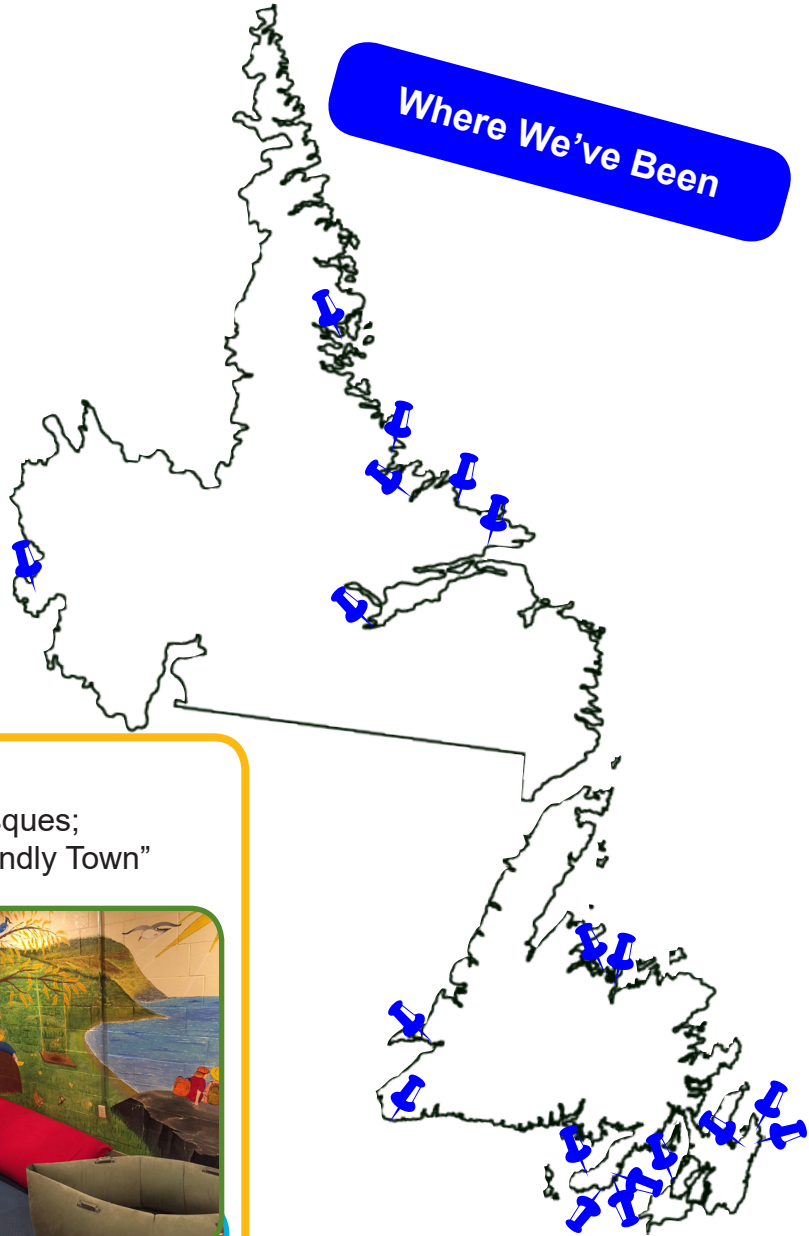
Central

Thanks to the Boys and Girls Club and Community Youth Network of Botwood as well as Point Leamington Academy.



West Coast

We were delighted to visit Channel-Port aux Basques; otherwise known as “Canada’s most Autism Friendly Town” and meet with some of the driving forces of Autism Involves Me (AIM). On the west coast we were also very pleased to go to Stephenville and visit with the Bay St. George Women’s Centre and to meet with the Community Education Network/ Community Youth Network along with a host of other community service providers.



Out and About in the Community

Labrador City

Sincere thanks to the fine folks in Labrador City of the Housing and Homelessness Coalition, First Steps Family Resource Centre, Indigenous Service Centre, Menihek High School's Social Justice Committee, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development and Labrador - Grenfell Regional Health Authority. We had a fabulous week with you all.



Eastern

Huge thanks to Allied Youth, Laval High School in Placentia, Holy Heart of Mary Gender Sexuality Alliance in St. John's, Radhoc, Camp Rainbow, Camp Eclipse, the Fluvarium, Vanier Elementary School in St. John's, the Town of Holyrood, LGBTQ Youth Council, the Janeway Children's Health and Rehabilitation Centre and to the City of St. John's for inviting us to your many camps around St. John's and in Shea Heights.

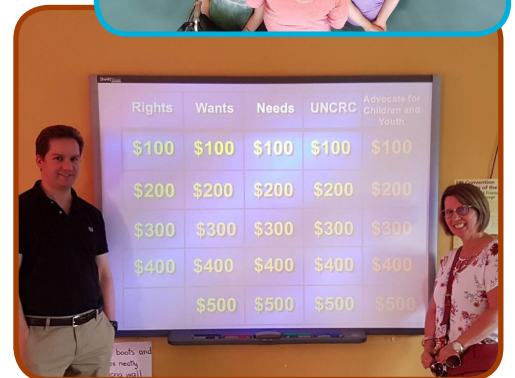
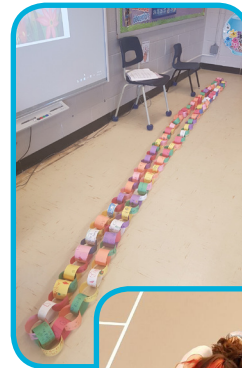
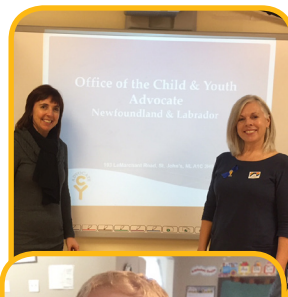
Community Events

We attended the City of St. John's Youth Luncheon, as well as multiple Annual General Meetings of child and youth serving organizations. It was also amazing to participate in Buckmaster Circle Community Centre's 25th Anniversary this summer.



Burin Peninsula

To acknowledge National Child Day we had a fabulous week visiting with the Burin Peninsula Voice Against Violence, the Mental Health and Addictions Team, Smallwood Community Centre, and with Grade 6's at Sacred Heart Academy in Marystown. We also visited the Brighter Futures playgroup in Burin, the junior and senior high students at Holy Name of Mary in Lawn and a youth group at the Main Street Youth Centre Community Youth Network in Grand Bank.



Name the Bear

In our last Newsletter we announced our Name the Bear contest. Thanks to all of you who submitted names for our office bear. We received a lot of great ideas so we had a hard time picking a winner.

Two young people won our Name the Bear contest. We would like to thank Avery Jackman and Brianna Keefe for the winning name, Charlie.

Avery used the following description for the name:

- C - children**
- H - have**
- A - a**
- R - right to be**
- L - loved &**
- I - included**
- E - everyday**

We awarded the two winners of the contest on National Child Day in our travels to Marystown and Botwood on November 20, 2018.



Welcome to Staff

We are delighted to welcome some new temporary staff to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

Nicole Withers returned to our office over the summer as an Individual Advocacy Specialist after completing her Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree. We were quite lucky to have had Nicole work with us as a summer student in 2017 and then as a BSW student.

Rosalind Squires joined us as a Systemic Advocacy Consultant and Chantal Walsh Dodge as a Communications and Policy Officer.

As well we are delighted to have Marissa Van Harmelen with us this semester as she completes her first Bachelor of Social Work field placement.



Ros



Nicole



Chantal



Marissa

National Child Day

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate celebrated National Child Day on Tuesday, November 20th and throughout the week. Canada established National Child Day to recognize that every child and youth in Canada has fundamental rights which are identified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Some of these include rights to health, safety, protection, education, justice, culture, and children's right to be heard in decisions affecting them. People throughout the province are encouraged to recognize and learn more about children's rights.

While Canada ratified this human rights treaty in 1991, much remains to be done to support, protect and advance children's rights in Canada and in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate works hard every day to advocate for the rights of children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador and to also help children and adults understand these rights.

The Office hosted many activities throughout the week to celebrate and create awareness about children's rights:



- On Tuesday, November 20th we visited the Brighter Futures playgroup in Shea Heights. The Child and Youth Advocate read a book to the children, and a very special surprise guest (Charlie Bear) helped cut a celebration cake.
- Advocacy staff were on the Burin Peninsula and in the Central Region visiting schools and community organizations.
- Winners of our "Name the Bear" contest were announced
- Daily tweets (@OCYANL) highlighted specific child rights.
- Launched a poster contest for children and youth.
- The week's activities ended in a very fun way on Saturday when we participated in the City of St. John's Get Moving Family Event at the Power Plex.

The blue ribbon is the symbol for National Child Day and the Office encouraged everyone to wear it to show support for children.

Information on the UNCRC can be found at https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf.



Gender Diversity

Pride Parade

On July 15, 2018 we participated in the St. John's Pride Parade for the first time. What an amazing experience. Despite rainy weather, it was great to see the fabulous turnout and tremendous support in the community.



Do you have a copy of our diversity poster?

The poster has an important message "This is a Positive Space that Welcomes and Supports Everyone". We also have a translated version in French, Innu-aimun and Inuktitut.

LGBTQ2S members of our communities are sometimes unsure which spaces are safe and supportive. We understand this is especially true for young people, and we want you and the community to understand that our space and our advocacy work is supportive and welcoming.

Contact us to get your copy.

Email: office@ocya.nl.ca

Phone: 1-877-753-3888

TRANS Support NL

In March 2018 we had the sincere pleasure of meeting Tj Jones and Dr. Julie Temple from Trans Support NL who facilitated a session on gender diversity and the issues facing trans youth. Following that session, we wanted to learn more and make further connections with children and youth. Over the summer we presented at Camp Rainbow and then with the assistance of Trans Support NL we supported two facilitated discussions with gender diverse youth. These sessions focused on needs and experiences of these youth and addressed various government and community systems as well as suggested changes. Session feedback will be composed into a report on the youth's behalf.



Camp Rainbow leaders, Sara and Tj, with our paper chain of kindness.

WE ARE A
COMMUNITY



Giving Back

We have been very pleased to give back to the community and create awareness.

Volunteering with the School Breakfast Program at Larkhall Academy and St. Andrew's Elementary



Participation in the Big Brothers-Big Sisters Bowl For Kids Sake



Donations of footwear to THRIVE



Donations of food to the Bridges For Hope Thanksgiving drive



Donations of school supplies to the Single Parents Association



Professional Development

We believe continuing education is a vital piece of our advocacy role. Staff have participated in a variety of professional development sessions since June 2018. Some of these topics include youth engagement, family based care, conflict resolution, youth homelessness, the Blue Door Program, Kids Help Phone, integrated models of care, harassment free workplaces, restorative justice, mental health, gender diversity, cultural humility, autism, occupational health and safety, cannabis legalization and information management.

We were delighted to also have staff represent the Office at the National Gathering in Saskatchewan, Allies 4 Youth Conference in Calgary, the International Summer Course on The Rights of the Child in Moncton, the Jordan's Principle Summit in Winnipeg and the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse in Inuit Nunangat Forum in Ottawa.

Sherry McNeil-Mulak and David Korgak (both from Nunavut Office) with Louise Mercer in Moncton, NB.



Dr. Mari-Lynne Sinnott and Jackie Lake Kavanagh



Bonnie Poole and Lynn Matte, colleague from Nunavut, at the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse in Inuit Nunangat Forum



National Gathering in Saskatchewan



Our staff with Kids Help Phone



Social Work Student - Marissa Van Harmelen

I started my placement at Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA) in September 2018. During my Social Work studies at Memorial University, I became fascinated by social policy and advocacy work. Therefore, when deciding where to pursue my first placement, I decided that OCYA would be a great fit. As it turns out, it has been a great learning experience. During my placement, I have been mentored by Individual Advocacy Specialists, listened in on various intake calls, completed documentation for many of these calls and had the opportunity to do the follow up for a few calls. Additionally, I have been present at case conferences for clients and have participated in OCYA outreach events.

I wanted my first placement to be an experience that forced me out of my comfort zone. The tasks I have carried out at OCYA have often done so; and, as a result, I have learned to apply social work theory in the field and have honed important skills, such as active listening. My greatest take-away from my placement has been a new awareness of my privileges. Throughout my studies, I have learned about the importance of acknowledging privilege and oppression. However, being in the field and hearing clients'



stories has shown me how to put this knowledge into action. In my life, I always had access to a loving family that supports me, an education that suits my needs, a home, and more. I always had these resources at my fingertips, and recognize how privileged I was during my childhood to have never been denied access to basic rights. This has been an important learning for me, and my involvement at the OCYA has made me aware of the rights a child is entitled to and how to advocate on behalf of children whose rights are being violated. OCYA works with a broad range of agencies, schools, and government services, and has therefore educated me greatly on the local resources

available to children and the policies that apply to them.

The staff team at OCYA has a wealth of knowledge and experience, and I have learned so much from each one of them. It

has been a privilege to work alongside of them. Overall, I am extremely grateful for the time I have spent at OCYA. My learnings and experiences here will be ones I carry with me throughout the rest of my education and my future career as a social worker.

Did you know it's
your right to:

a good quality
Education
and be
supported to go
to school



Article 28: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA)



played throughout the country in child advocacy and its success in engaging young people.

At the most recent meeting, Council elected a new executive. Del Graff, Alberta's Advocate was elected President; Jackie Lake Kavanagh,

Newfoundland and Labrador's Advocate was elected Vice-President; and Norm Bossé, New Brunswick's Advocate was elected Treasurer. All hold two year terms.

The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates is an association of children's advocates from across Canada who have mandates to address and advance the rights, interests and well-being of children and youth. Although the names of the offices vary, Advocates are independent officers of their respective legislatures. Through this Council, Advocates identify areas of mutual concern and develop ways to address issues at a national level. The work of all Advocates and the Council is grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Canada is a signatory to this convention and ratified it in 1991.

Indigenous children's rights continues to be a priority for Council. It is very concerned about Indigenous children in Canada and recognizes this

concern as a broad systemic issue throughout the country. Indigenous children are disproportionately involved in child welfare systems at staggering rates. Many struggle with access to health services, education services that are not culturally grounded, and timely responses in the justice system. Council will continue to demand improved responses for vulnerable children and youth in Canada.

Council has taken a stand on the Ontario Government's recent announcement to repeal its Child and Youth Advocate legislation. Council has issued a public statement indicating that a lack of specialized advocacy and investigative services for vulnerable children is extremely concerning and has asked for a reconsideration of this decision. Council recognizes the leadership role Ontario has





CHILDREN
& YOUTH
NEW FOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

What Happens When I Contact the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate?

Step 1

Call us and ask for help



If you are a young person, you can call, email or drop in to our office. There is no referral needed. We offer a friendly, accepting and supportive space. You can bring a support person with you if it makes you feel more comfortable.

Call Us: 1-877-753-3888

Email Us: Office@ocy.ni.ca

Visit Us: 193 LeMarchant Rd,
St. John's

Step 2

We'll ask you for some information



We need to know a few things so we can help you:

- the reason you are calling;
- if you have contacted anyone else and what happened;
- what you would like to happen; and
- your contact information.

Step 3

We'll talk to you about how we can help



We can:

- help you get heard;
- help you learn about your rights;
- help you prepare for meetings;
- find you someone who can help;
- contact others involved; and
- help you to identify options.

Anyone can contact us!

Light it Up Green

In recognition of Mental Health Week we “Lit it Up Green” for Mental Health and tied green ribbons with supportive messages at our entrance.



Young Artist Program

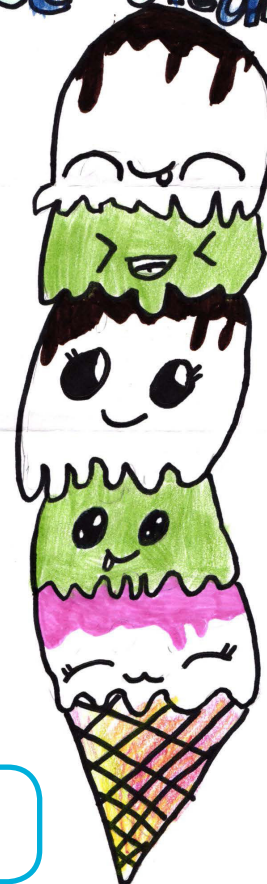
We are always looking for new artwork for our Young Artist Program. We love to use this art for reports, brochures, social media and our website.

We provide a prize pack for every art submission.

To submit your artwork for the Young Artist Program visit: www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca/



Ice Cream!



By Young Artist:
Casey

FIRST EVER

Child and Youth Advocate



Poster Contest

Do you like to create art?

To celebrate "National Child Day" we want you to design a poster about your **Right to Education**. Create a poster that tells us what school means to you! Think about the things you like best about school, such as your favourite subject, activities you enjoy, having fun with your friends, or how your teacher helps you. Use your imagination!

Who can enter?

Children and Youth under 21 years of age.

How do you enter?

Send us your art work with your name, address, age and phone number.

By email to:

Office@ocya.nl.ca
(with subject "Poster Contest")

In Person or by Mail at:

Poster Contest
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
193 LeMarchant Road, St. John's, NL A1C 2H5

Prize?

The winner will receive a prize package and have their winning entry featured on a poster and a limited number of the Child and Youth Advocate t-shirts.

Entries due
January 31,
2019

Call Toll Free: 1-877-753-3888

Advocacy Works!

Contact the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate if you or someone you know needs our help:

Phone: (709) 753-3888

Toll Free: 1-877-753-3888

Fax: (709) 753-3988

Email: office@ocya.nl.ca

WebSite: www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca

Twitter: @OCYANL

**To receive a copy of the newsletter, which is published twice a year, please contact us and request to be added to our distribution list.*

Or drop by our office:

193 LeMarchant Road, St. John's, NL

Monday - Friday from 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

