

Message from the Advocate

Hello and welcome to our fourth newsletter. It has been another busy quarter for our Office advocating in many ways for the children and youth of Newfoundland and Labrador. This quarter ended with the release of a very complex investigative report SIXTEEN on December 3, 2013.



Carol A. Chafe

A question I am often asked is why do I release these reports publicly? The decision to conduct an investigation and to publicly release the report is one that involves a great deal of thought and is never taken lightly.

Our mandate is to ensure that the voices of children and youth are heard, their rights respected and their right to services upheld. Therefore, when I become aware of a poor outcome or incident regarding a child or youth, I review all relevant information and assess the need to investigate. An investigation can identify what may have gone wrong and what needs to change to prevent it from happening again.

Through public release of a report we ensure that every child's story is told and that government departments, agencies and professionals who provide services are made aware of how things can and do go wrong when policy and standards are not followed. A public report also ensures that everyone is aware of issues affecting children and youth in our community and when there is a need for change.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone all the best in 2014.

What's New

This quarter has been a busy time at the Advocate's office with the public release of the investigative report SIXTEEN which tells the story of a young person crying for help.

In 2011, the Advocate became aware of a tragic and fatal fire and the resulting arrest of 16-year-old "John," and called an investigation into the circumstances surrounding this terrible event. The purpose of the investigation was to determine whether the services provided by the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Community Services and the Eastern Regional Integrated Health Authority met the needs of this young person and whether his rights were upheld.

The investigative process was comprehensive, and included forty interviews with the youth, family members and various professionals involved in his life. There were two out-of-province psychiatrists contracted to provide their expert opinion on child and youth mental health and there was an intensive review of all applicable policies, procedures and legislation.

The investigation uncovered many deficiencies in the system and produced thirty recommendations to departments and agencies to address deficiencies moving forward, stating "there were times when his voice was not heard, his needs were not

met and his right to services were not upheld." The report also highlighted the harsh realities for youth living on their own at such a young age, without adequate supports. The Advocate is expecting that these recommendations will create positive changes in policies and practice preventing this from happening again to youth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The ACY encourages you to read the full text of this important report which is available on our website at www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca



Photo credit Rhonda Hayward/The Telegram

Out and About

The ACY provincial office is located in St. John's, so we make it a priority for ACY staff to travel across Newfoundland and Labrador. Four times a year, the Advocate and a team of her staff visit a different area of the Province to build awareness about the Office and children's rights and to learn more about issues occurring in different regions in the province. While we set out to inform professionals and the public about our office, it is always exciting to learn about the great initiatives for children and youth happening across the Province!

This fall, the Advocate and a team of her staff visited Labrador City/Wabush. During this visit, we had the pleasure of meeting with 14 groups of professionals from multiple provincial government departments and community organizations.

The ACY would like to thank everyone who took the opportunity to meet with us:

Child, Youth and Family Services
J.R. Smallwood Middle School
A.P. Low Primary School
Labrador-Grenfell Health
Public Health and Community Services
Labrador West Status of Women Centre
Family Justice Services
Legal Aid
Mental Health and Addictions Services
Newfoundland and Labrador Housing
First Steps Family Resource Centre
Royal Newfoundland Constabulary
Hope Haven Shelter



A visit with Child, Youth and Family Services on an Outreach trip to Labrador in October 2013

The ACY will be out and about in Placentia in the spring of 2014, keep an eye out for our team in the New Year!

We Need Your Help!

To ensure we reach children and youth and the public, please contact us to add your name to our distribution list and we will send copies as requested.

Contact the Advocate for Children & Youth

if you or someone you know is in need of help:

Phone: (709) 753-3888 • Toll Free: 1-877-753-3888

TTY: (709) 753-4366 • Fax: (709) 753-3988 • Email: office@ocya.nl.ca

WebSite: www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca

Or drop by and speak with someone in our office:

193 LeMarchant Road, St. John's, NL • A1C 2H5 • Mon-Fri 8:30 am - 4:30 pm



To celebrate National Child Day, on November 20th, the ACY set up a booth at the Avalon Mall to raise awareness about children's rights and the work of the office. National Child Day is celebrated in Canada on November 20 to commemorate the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child!

The "Rights" Stuff



Colouring Page

Rights are things every child should have or be able to do. All children have the same rights. Children's rights are listed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Almost every country has agreed to these rights. All your rights are important.

Colour the picture above showing one of the rights all children have under the Convention.

You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have your basic needs met.

Article 27, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child In Child Friendly Language