

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

August 23, 2017

The Child and Youth Advocate Releases Investigative Report

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate released an investigative report today entitled *The Case for Specialized Health Care Responses to Recognize and Prevent Child Sexual Abuse*. The focus is a 12 year old girl who was sexually assaulted by her stepfather, became pregnant and sought to terminate the pregnancy. The child and her siblings were also the focus of multiple separate reports to the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development regarding supervision and safety concerns.

The Child and Youth Advocate identified several systemic areas for improvement. For the health care system:

1. The need for child-focused screening and coordination of services;
2. The need for improved knowledge among health care professionals on relevant protection legislation;
3. The need for a review of policies and practices on consent for minors;

For the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development:

4. The need for appropriate protective intervention and follow up.

This report makes seven recommendations. While not all entities to whom recommendations have been made were involved with the family, or with the investigation, they have significant roles to play in creating a stronger and more responsive health care system for children and youth.

The Child and Youth Advocate is unequivocal that a child who presents at a community agency or Regional Health Authority to terminate a pregnancy should not be treated as an adult. Jackie Lake Kavanagh, Child and Youth Advocate, stated, "A collective effort is required to do better for and by these children. Some of this work has already begun and where brand new efforts are required, they should be undertaken without delay."

This report can also be viewed on our website: www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca

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