

Child and Youth Advocate Act Feedback from Horizon School Divison

1. Are these age limits appropriate? Please discuss your answer and provide suggestions if possible.

We believe the age limits are appropriate. It is a great benefit for children and youth to have support during their entire childhood, especially those most vulnerable. What happens when they are no longer supported by the Child and Youth Care Act? Are we properly transitioning those in need to other supports and services they could benefit from?

The Act could provide more clarity around what it means by support and financial assistance. What does this entail?

Could the age limit for legal representation for youth receiving support and family services as well as youth in custody be raised?

2. Does the Act permit the Advocate to provide appropriate services to children and youth? Should the Advocate provide services to children and youth who are receiving Government services other than what is currently indicated within the Act? Please discuss your answer and provide suggestions if possible.

The scope in what the act states that the advocate serves, in terms of designated services is limited with only three very broad indicators. Are these so broad to allow for the flexibility to include areas not mentioned such as advocacy to minority populations (refugee, LGBTQ, high risk - to self, others) Again, providing that clarity would be beneficial.

3. Should the role of the Advocate stay the same? Is the Advocate able to do enough or should the Advocate be able to do more? Please discuss your answer and provide suggestions if possible.

There needs to be more clarity about adoptive service. How much strength does the advocate have in the decision making process for that child? The role is highly participatory, however, we don't believe that decisions are made collaboratively in the best interests of the child in every situation. The advocate often has the full picture of the child and their needs which provides valuable information in the decision making process.

We think the advocate should be able to appeal and investigate issues arising from any injury they feel was preventable (not just serious injury and death). As well, we feel there should be a clause in there stating that: in the opinion of the advocate, if the child

is enduring psychological mistreatment or neglect while receiving designated services in the child and youth family enhancement act, it should be investigated further.

4. Does the Act provide the Advocate with sufficient powers to conduct the roles and functions set out in the Act? Are other powers necessary? Please discuss your answer and provide suggestions if possible.

The information provided appears to provide the advocate with a broad range of power to support the child, however, nothing specifically indicates any power over decisions or information with regard to physical and mental health advocacy. We believe this is a critical factor in supporting children and youth.

5. Is the information provided by a child to an advocate sufficiently protected? Is the information provided for an investigation sufficiently protected? Please discuss your answer and provide suggestions if possible.

Who is protecting the advocate while the advocate is protecting the child to ensure that information is kept secure and does not compromise an investigation?

6. Should the Advocate be able to investigate the same, more, less or different issues? Do you agree with how the Act enables the Advocate to conduct investigations? Please discuss your answer and provide suggestions if possible.

We think the advocate should be able to appeal and investigate issues arising from any injury they feel was preventable (not just serious injury and death). As well, we feel there should be a clause in there stating that: in the opinion of the advocate, if the child is enduring psychological mistreatment or neglect while receiving designated services in the child and youth family enhancement act, it should be investigated further.

7. Do the reports contain enough information? Should they contain the same, more or different information? Please discuss your answer and provide suggestions if possible.

What does the public body do with a report that contains no names, conclusions or findings? What is the purpose of the report? Is the advocate allowed to release more specific information to varying agencies or supports as they deem necessary?

Additions

We would like to stress the need for clarity of definitions. Eg what is serious injury? Right now the act covers welfare services, sexual exploitation, and youth justice. We would also like to stress advocates also play a role for youth struggling with mental health. We need clarity regarding the role advocates play in children's education. Youth advocates assist about 2500 youth and serve a vital role. Can the advocate role be extended to include education and the child's right to education? For example can the mandate to protect be expanded for a child who is "home schooled" but no formal schooling is being provided, be protected by an advocate advocating for their right to an education?