

From: [Marie Geraci-Sharp](#)
To: [CYAA Review](#)
Cc: [Gary Strother](#); [Andrea Holowka](#); [Joyce Allan](#)
Subject: CCSD Submission for Child and Youth Advocate Act
Date: Friday, October 14, 2016 8:27:56 AM



CALGARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

TO: The Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

FROM: Gary Strother
Chief Superintendent

Andrea Holowka
Superintendent,
Specialized Program Schools/Instruction/Religious Education

DATE: October 14, 2016

SUBJECT: Response to the Child and Youth Advocate Act Discussion Guide

Please accept the submission below and attached, on behalf of the Calgary Catholic School District, in response to the Child and Youth Advocate Act Discussion Guide for your committee.

Submission regarding review of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*:

1. Are the age limits appropriate?
 - Yes. The highest number of children served by OCYA in 2012-13 were between 12-17 years old.
 - It is positive to see in the Act that there is assistance for youth after the age of 18 especially children in care (i.e. foster children).
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 explain if possible.

- Yes, we believe there is appropriate services provided, including: Advocacy services, Investigations and Legal representation, Engagement and Education, and Strategic Support
- Question - Are there services provided in the Act specifically for children and youth with mental health issues?
- Question – Is AHS considered a government service? If youth are in the hospital under AHS care (particularly for mental health concerns), are they eligible to access services?

3. What the Advocate can do is made possible by the Child and Youth Advocate Act. In your opinion, 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 explain if possible.

- Yes – it would appear so.
- There is access to an Advocate to discuss if legal representation is needed, and if possible, access to legal representation is then provided.
- There is a newsletter for Youth – it includes an invitation to a Youth Advisory Panel.

4. Does the Act provide the Advocate with sufficient powers to conduct the roles and functions as stated in the Act? Are other powers necessary?

- Yes, it does seem to have sufficient powers, but it is unclear as to the requirements of other ministries to follow up on the recommendations from the investigations.

5. Is the information provided by a child to an advocate sufficiently protected? Is the information provided for an investigation sufficiently protected?

- Yes, to our current knowledge.
- Questions - What about children changing provinces? Is there communication between provinces? The “Child First Act” – does it include the Advocate?

6. What the Advocate can investigate is made possible by the Act. 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 and provide suggestions.

- The investigations seem to be of value.
- Question - The Act states “...if, in the opinion of the Advocate, an investigation is warranted...” What is the evidence that is needed to make an opinion?
- Question - Should the Advocate be involved with children due to emotional / mental abuse?

7. What the Advocate can report after an investigation is set by the Act. Do these reports contain enough information? Should these reports contain the same, more of or different information? Please explain your answer and provide suggestions.
 - The reports appear to have ample information. There are many posted on the OCYA website.
 - Who follows up to make sure the recommendations are implemented? Does the Act only allow for recommendations to be made? Who receives the report? Is there an accountable in each government sector responsible for acting on the recommendations?

8. Do you have any other suggestions or comments about the Child and Youth Advocate Act? Please comment on any topic related to the Act not addressed by this discussion guide.
 - If the child / family does not like what the advocate does – then what? In other words who provides oversight of the work of each advocate? This is not clear in the Act.
 - How is the role of the OCYA communicated to children / youth? To educators? To practitioners?
 - Does the OCYA remain independent and not attached to any ministry directly?

Our foremost concerns as an Educational jurisdiction are our lack of awareness of the Act. As educators, we have had limited connection with this Office, although since providing this review, we have taken measures to increase our knowledge and connection with the Office. To determine the ability for appropriate students to gain access to this service, we will be exploring this further with the Office, as well as talking with other agencies (such as Child and Family Services) and ensuring that our school counsellors are aware of the services this office can provide.