

TIME FOR CHANGE

TACCALUSA INSTITUTE SUBMISSION TO THE ALBERTA
LEGISLATURE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE
OFFICES - CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE ACT REVIEW

Brief prepared by:

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Forward Thinking Leadership

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Taccalusa Institute is a non-profit organization that is founded to researches, analyzes, educates and advocates for positions with a view to influence social policy and regulations. The idea is to provide a catalyst for social policy changes. The aim is to create positive, meaningful and sustainable systemic change for the benefit of the community and particularly for those that are disadvantage as a result of complex, long-term systemic issues. Through our research, teaching, events and advocacy, we aim to ensure the efforts translate into social impact.

Submission

African Canadian communities in Alberta are suffering caused by the systemic racism in Child welfare system and the Alberta's CFS undermines the stability of African Canadian families and can, in fact destroys them.

The community call for changes in the child welfare system to better serve the community and they want OCYA to reflect the diverse communities they serve.

During two public consultations, the community called for changes in the OCYA Act to better serve the community and recommended that the Act must direct the OCYA the following recommendations, listed in their rank of important, in order ensure achieve equitable in outcomes for the children and families:

1) *Must put our weight on the culture and race piece*

Perhaps the OCYA may be expanded to advocate that children and youth have a fundamental right to have ongoing and sustainable access to their cultural supports and identity. There have been significant efforts with the Indigenous community, we would like that to be emulated to children of different culture identities including children from Africa.

2) *Community advocate for the child in courts, not in foster system*

Would like the policy of the OCYA not being at court reversed. There is much disclosure and significant information impacting the child, and allowing the OCYA attendance in court would be beneficial.

3) *Foster relationship between parents and child*

Younger children in our opinion are more intrusively impacted by Children and Family Services. Compounding this that young children have a hard time articulating their needs, many of our children, English is a second language. We would support that OCYA being appointed to assist small children and babies when there is an apprehension, supervision order, or other intrusive measure taken by Children and Family Services.

4) *Obligation of OCYA to work with community-group that support the child*

The OCYA must work with community and family to support the child in the family and community - We have noticed that the OCYA has not been engaged with day to day situations involving African Canadian children and the child welfare system. For whatever reason, the case conferences and meetings involving children and youth, have not included the OCYA.

5) *An independent oversight capacity; an independent commissioner*

Need to strengthen capacity to be independent from CFS and to have human rights investigators - Understand the OCYA can call an inquiry, and we would like this to be considered on a more liberal basis. From our perspective, we have had significant tragedy where children are not only removed from their guardians, but their culture and community.

6) Diversity staffing is a necessity within OCYA and Diversity should be reflecting same percentage of the children being represented.

7) Educate the settlement agencies about the right of the child

The OCYA should be encouraged and expanded to meet with cultural agencies on a regular basis including those representing the African Canadian.

Final Word

The Institute wishes to thank the committee for the opportunity to present the views and priorities of the community members. In closing, we recall to your attention the community primary recommendations:

- 1) The OCYA act must put our weight on the culture and race pieces.**
- 2) The community recommends creating community advocate for the child in courts.**
- 3) The community recommends OCYA work toward fostering relationship between parents and child.**
- 4) The community recommends requirement of OCYA to work with community-group that support the child**
- 5) The community recommends the creation of an independent oversight capacity; an independent commissioner.**
- 6) The community recommends diversity staffing within OCYA and that diversity should be reflecting same percentage of the children being represented.**
- 7) The community recommends OCYA to inform the settlement agencies for immigrant refugees about the right of the child.**