



THE FEDERATION
of COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES of BC

Altogether better.

Life in BC Snapshot: 2017

Children and youth

Things aren't getting better for the people of BC

Two years ago, The Federation of Community Social Services of BC scoured the news, research, and literature to take a snapshot of what life in BC was like. We wanted to understand how good things were for the people of our province. We also wanted to investigate important aspects of day-to-day life that get overlooked by a government focused on economic prosperity.

Things didn't look that great. And two years later, they are no better. We have updated these snapshots to prove that point and to help you talk about the state of our province and the things that need to change in order for the people of British Columbia to actually prosper and thrive.

News headlines about children and youth in BC

- ⇒ Were you ready to 'adult' at 19? Should we expect foster kids to be? - *The Tyee*, 6/8/2016 (1)
- ⇒ BC children's rep Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond issues to-do list on departure - *City News*, 10/24/2016 (2)
- ⇒ Our children need and deserve a better system of care - *Vancouver Sun*, 10/7/2016 (3)
- ⇒ Vulnerable youth living in BC hotels hard to monitor - *Globe & Mail*, 6/30/2016
- ⇒ BC child poverty rate higher than national average - *CBC News*, 11/23/2016
- ⇒ As youth count continues in Kamloops, aging out cited as major factor in homelessness - *Kamloops This Week*, 10/18/2016
- ⇒ Checkup on BC children's health finds 'concerning' disparities between regions and genders - *CBC News*, 11/3/2016

Case study: Youth-in-care Jill is running out of time

“ Jill has been in the care of the province for her whole life: 18 years. Last year, she was moved four different times in ten months. It was really hard and, as a result, Jill's grades dropped a lot. To make things worse, last month, Jill's youth program at the community centre lost its temporary funding. Now Jill has nowhere to go and no one to talk to. Plus, she keeps seeing two of the kids from her last group home who aged-out of care at 19 and they are now living on the streets. Jill really doesn't want that to happen to her but there's not much she can do. She's scared about what will happen to her when she turns 19 next year.

7200

There are over 7200 children and youth in government care in British Columbia.⁸

60%

Over 60% of children and youth in government care in BC are aboriginal.⁵



42%

Percentage of youth in care in BC that reported having to move three or more times in one year.⁶

Why these issues matter

Too many children in BC are falling through the cracks, especially children in government care. Wait lists for counsellors, youth living in hotels, a rash of suicides—these are symptoms of an underfunded system of care. One-time-only grant funding and “targeted investments, as funding becomes available”³ are not enough. Our children need, and deserve a better, well-funded system of care. It’s time for real, substantial change. It’s time to help the children of BC when and where they need it and in culturally appropriate ways.

700

Approximate number of youth who turn 19 and ‘age out’ of government care every year in BC.⁷

Raising awareness about these issues

- Most young adults are not ready for independence at 19 and only 50% of youth in care between the ages of 16 and 18 felt ready to leave.⁶
- Only 1 in 4 children who need mental health treatment can get it.⁴
- At any give time throughout 2015/16, more than 10,000 BC children were living somewhere other than with their parents.⁷
- 64% of youth transitioning out of care said housing support is what would help (or what would have helped) them the most.⁶

117

Between November 2014 and October 2015 there were 117 children or youth in care placed in hotels in BC.⁵

Talking points about children and youth in BC

“Children have not been the focus of government in BC for many years.”²
- **Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond**, former Children’s Representative

“There’s a gap between what BC’s kids in care are promised, and what actually happens.”¹
- **Shae-Lynn Noskye**, former youth in care.

“71% of British Columbians favour the government supporting young people who have aged out of foster care.”⁶
- **Jules Wilson**, FBCYICN Executive Director.



About The Federation

The **Federation of Community Social Services of BC** is a social justice umbrella organization. We work tirelessly to improve the social conditions in BC on behalf of our members: community social service organizations across the province. We believe that:

- ⇒ Healthy, happy, and supported communities make good economic sense.
- ⇒ For your family to succeed, all families must succeed.
- ⇒ Job creation alone is not the solution to our province’s social problems.

Learn more at www.fcssbc.ca or email us at info@fcssbc.ca

153,000

The number of children and youth and their families that received some form of service or support from MCFD in 2015/16.⁷

ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

- (4) *Confident Parents Thriving Kids: A year in review*. Canadian Mental Health Association. 2015.
- (5) *10 Years of Advocacy: Representative’s Report Card*. Representative for Children and Youth. October 2016.
- (6) *2016 Youth Speak Report*. Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks. June 2016.
- (7) *Annual Report 2015/16 and Service Plan 2016/17 to 2017/18*. Representative for Children and Youth. 2016.
- (8) *Child and Youth in Care Week: BC Representative’s Statement*. MCFD Press Release. June 2016.