



BC Association of Social Workers
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For immediate release

BC SOCIAL WORKERS DON'T LOOK AWAY AND CALL ON GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT CALLS FOR A BETTER CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

(Vancouver) BC's professional association for social workers supports BC's child advocate's recommendations in a report released today regarding the heart-wrenching story of Colby, an 11-year-old boy who was killed after enduring months of torture and abuse at the hands of extended family caregivers.

Jennifer Charlesworth, BC's Representative for Children and Youth, released "Don't Look Away – How one boy's story has the power to shift a system of care for children and youth". The report examines the child and family serving systems in BC and promotes systemic change to improve the care and safety of children and youth.

"BC social workers welcome this report and recognize the historical importance it holds" said Michael Crawford, President of the BC Association of Social Workers. "The Representative highlights the need for change at the organizational culture, current practice, as well as the system of delivery of services levels."

Although the report is clear that the child care system fails all, it points out the disproportional impact on Indigenous children and youth noting that two-thirds of children in care are Indigenous despite representing less than 10% of BC's children.

"We thank the Representative for challenging the implicit colonial and racist mindsets that underpin current systems and that influenced the way Colby and his family were treated by the systems of care" said Crawford. "Lessons learned from this systemic review led to recommendations that, if followed, will significantly improve care for children and youth."

The report calls for a significant shift in all child and family serving systems to move away from child protection/child welfare to child well-being. The Representative recommendations include establishing a child and youth well-being action plan, requiring that the Ministry of Children and Family Development immediately implement actions to address the unsustainable and

unhealthy conditions for their child protection and family service staff, and requiring that staff in all child and youth serving ministries undertake shared anti-racism learning and development work to illuminate, disrupt and dismantle the pervasive colonial systems, mental models and assumptions that sustain bias in public services.

Don't Look Away – How one boy's story has the power to shift a system of care for children and youth - <https://rcybc.ca/hfaq/dont-look-away/>

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BC Association of Social Workers

BCASW is a voluntary, not-for-profit membership association that supports and promotes the profession of social work and advocates for social justice. BCASW is one of the provincial/territorial social work associations in partnership with the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW). Through CASW we support the work of the International Federation of Social Workers. BCASW was incorporated in 1956 and has branches and members (including students) throughout BC.

BCASW acknowledges that our office is in the unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations and that our members live and work in unceded territories across British Columbia. We also express appreciation to Métis and Inuit peoples across British Columbia.