

## Message from the Advocate

Hello and welcome to our sixth newsletter. Another busy quarter has passed for us as we continue to provide our advocacy services to children and youth throughout the province.



Carol A. Chafe

Individual Advocacy is one type of advocacy that we provide and this newsletter will focus on just what that means and how you can contact us. We provide advocacy in many ways from providing information to attending meetings and actively being involved in addressing issues for children and youth. Anyone can contact us to request our assistance.

All children and youth have rights. We must all ensure that their voices are heard and that the best interest of the child is always the focus of services provided by government departments and agencies.

I wish everyone a very happy and safe summer. Enjoy our newsletter and good luck in finding all 14 words in our Word Find!

## Enjoy Your Summer!



## What We Do

This newsletter will focus on the Individual Advocacy portion of our work.

### Why would you contact us for Individual Advocacy?

As a child or youth, you would contact the Advocate for Children and Youth when:

- You have a question or complaint about a provincial government service.
- You believe your viewpoint is not being heard or that your rights are not being upheld.
- You believe that all the information about your needs has not been gathered or given the proper consideration.

### Who can contact us?

We encourage children and youth to contact the office for assistance; however anyone can contact the office on behalf of a child or youth. You can contact us by phone, email, letter, fax or drop in and see us in person.

### What happens then?

When you contact the office, one of the Individual Advocacy Specialists will listen to your story. That person then brings the information to an intake panel of our directors. There it is decided how to proceed with your advocacy request. Like all other areas of our work, decisions around Individual Advocacy services are based on the rights of children and youth as set out by the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

The Individual Advocacy Specialist will provide a prompt response after meeting with the intake panel to discuss your request. We will work to provide you with the required information. Depending on the situation, we may talk to service providers on your behalf.

The length of time involved with Individual Advocacy often depends on the complexity of the issue. Throughout this process you will be involved and your confidentiality will be upheld.

## Out & About

The Advocate for Children and Youth has one office located in St. John's that serves the entire province. Our office receives individual advocacy requests from all across Newfoundland and Labrador which is why a large part of our advocacy work is done by phone. As we have one location, each year we travel to areas outside the St. John's metro region.

We make a special effort to present to children and youth during our travels. It is important for children and youth to know what we do and that they can contact us; as one of our core principles is that children and youth have a right to speak, be heard and to participate in decision-making processes.

This spring, staff from the Advocate for Children and Youth visited Conne River, Harbour Breton and St. Alban's. We had the pleasure of meeting with staff and participants from several child-and-youth-serving organizations and schools.

### We would like to thank everyone who took the opportunity to meet with us:

Child, Youth and Family Services - *representing Conne River, Harbour Breton, and St. Alban's*

Community Youth Network – *Harbour Breton*

Community Youth Network - *St. Alban's*

Department of Health and Social Services – *Conne River*

Department of Education – *Conne River*

Gerard Benoit Youth Centre - *Conne River*

St Anne's School (staff and students) – *Conne River*



Photo taken at the Community Youth Network – St. Alban's, NL  
Jordan Collier – CYN member and Grade 12 student at Bay d'Espoir Academy

**Next up on the outreach schedule is Springdale;  
keep an eye out for our team!**

## We Need Your Help!

To ensure we reach children and youth and the public, please contact us to add your name to our distribution list and we will send copies as requested.



## The "Rights" Stuff



### Word Find

This year, we celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Find the Rights listed by searching forward, backward or diagonally.

X R E B Z G C J K X D R H D  
L R N O I S U L C N I H T V  
H A N A M E Y A L P I E H X  
S T N O I T A C U D E A Q O  
A P L G Q F R G M I I A F J  
Y Y R A U H P M L D Z I F I  
V B I O E A U V E E X C N N  
M F J V T H G M Y N L H O X  
B B R V K E T E C T A K I O  
X G G E L Z C N A I W V G V  
U Q I X E W Z T V T Y X I X  
L A K S T D A P I Y E F L N  
X I F N H H O Q R O R P E N  
Y L I M A F C M P M N W R G

Education	Lawyer	Family	Media	Freedom
Play	Privacy	Inclusion	Protection	Identity
Language	Name	Religion	Health	

**United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:**

**Article 3– Best Interest Principle**

**“In all actions concerning children...the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration.”**

### Who decides what is best?

The best interest of the child is one of the basic principles of the Convention. As adults, we often feel it is up to us to decide what is best for children and youth. Any interpretation of a child's best interests must be consistent with the whole Convention, with the emphasis on the child as an individual with views and feelings of his or her own. Any decision regarding their best interests must include consultations with the child or youth affected by the decision.

“People need to really listen to kids.”

“Young people look to adults for guidance, but want to make decisions for themselves.”

“Young people can make good decisions if they have enough, correct information.”

These statements by young people reflect the importance of active participation in any process to determine what is in the best interest of a child or children as a group (*Best Interests of the Child: Meaning and Application in Canada, 2009.*) When determining if a decision is in a child's best interest, you must ask yourself: Did those affected have a say?

**“You should listen to even the smallest voice; someday it could be the one that makes a difference.” ~ Crystal Marcos**

Contact the Advocate for Children & Youth

if you or someone you know is in need of help:

Phone: (709) 753-3888 • Toll Free: 1-877-753-3888

TTY: (709) 753-4366 • Fax: (709) 753-3988 • Email: office@ocya.nl.ca

WebSite: www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca

Or drop by and speak with someone in our office:

193 LeMarchant Road, St. John's, NL • A1C 2H5 • Mon-Fri 8:30 am - 4:30 pm