



The Ontario Association of Child and Youth Care Statement on Safe and Caring Places for Children and Youth: Ontario's Blueprint for Building a New System of Licensed Residential Services

The [Blueprint](#) for residential care services in Ontario, was released on July 19, 2017.

The OACYC recognizes the work that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services has done to ensure youth involvement in the development of the blueprint. It is time that young people have a voice in the care they are receiving and the decisions that affect their lives. The commitment to unscheduled inspections is one that the young people have requested to improve their safety. We are encouraged that the Ministry is making a commitment to safety and to improving the standards of care across the Province.

While many elements of the Blueprint are encouraging, serious concerns remain. The blueprint makes no time commitments nor does it mention any increase in funding. The OACYC remains concerned by the lack of standards in place, the lack of immediate efforts to improve residential care for young people who are living in these spaces right now, and the lack of investment in the workforce.

It is the position of the OACYC that investment in the workforce would result in immediate and substantial improvements in the quality of care. While inspections are carried out to ensure standards are being met, the government should also ensure that only qualified professionals are hired to work in residential care facilities. Our College and University Child and Youth Care Programs graduate over 1000 qualified practitioners each year. Ontario has the qualified workforce, the workforce that was developed specifically to work in these environments; we now need an immediate standard, and the appropriate financial investment, to ensure that every provider is mandated to hire only qualified practitioners and is able to provide adequate support to their Child and Youth Care teams.

While the Ministry of Children and Youth Services has made a commitment to regulate ABA practitioners to ensure safe autism services to families in Ontario, they have not made any similar commitments to provide the same level of safeguarding, accountability and consistent high quality services to children and youth in care; vulnerable children and youth, who must rely on the government to provide for them and ensure their safety. As the legal guardian and care providers of these young people, entrusted with children and youth from our communities whose parents may be unable to care and



advocate for them, the government has an even greater responsibility to act to ensure their care is the very best possible. The Government, with the mandate and resources to provide care, safety and support, like any parent, should be demanding and facilitating this.

The OACYC continues to advocate for regulation of Child and Youth Care Practice to ensure that all those hired as Child and Youth Care Practitioners across sectors, including residential care, are trained professionals who are accountable to a professional college, committed to a code of ethics and responsible to work within their scope of practice. Young people requested the governments support for regulation of Child and Youth Care Practice in the report *Searching For Home: Reimagining Residential Care (Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, 2016)*. With regulation in place, the public could be assured that all those working in this capacity with young people would have pre-service qualifications and ongoing responsibility to meet standards of care. We also call on the government to invest to ensure there is ongoing professional development and supervision, improving retention of the workforce to provide greater stability, longer lasting relationships and high quality care.

This government has been willing to regulate those who provide counseling in an office for 50 minutes at a time and those who provide early childhood education and care. It is time now to ensure that those who are; caring and advocating day-to-day for some of our most vulnerable children and youth in the care of our government, intervening in crisis and high risk situations daily, responding to the complex needs of young people who have experienced trauma to facilitate their optimal development, have their expertise realized while being held accountable to be caring, skilled, educated and responsible professionals. This standard can only reduce risk and increase the quality of care being provided.

Our young people deserve nothing less.

Please read our report *Safeguarding the Other 23 Hours: Legislation of Child and Youth Care Practice in Ontario*.

http://oacyc.org/attachments/article/65/Safeguarding_FINAL_WEB_VERSION.pdf