

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

January 10, 2019

Child and Youth Advocate Releases Report on Chronic Absenteeism

Child and Youth Advocate Jackie Lake Kavanagh today released *Chronic Absenteeism: When Children Disappear*. This systemic review focuses on chronic absenteeism, factors influencing it, impacts on students, and promising strategies to address the problem. The report also makes four recommendations to government departments and agencies that have shared responsibility for solutions.

In Newfoundland and Labrador many children and youth are routinely absent from school without reason. Once they become disconnected from school, it can be hard to reverse. These children often lose their social connections, they drop behind in the curriculum, they miss opportunities to participate in school activities, and eventually they may disappear from school completely. Although this is not a new issue, it is a very troubling one, affecting students across all grades and throughout the province.

Children's absences are often the symptom of a deeper issue and need. This review shows how children who are absent have needs and require responses from many different government services, and not just schools. Child and Youth Advocate Jackie Lake Kavanagh states "We must stop defining this solely as a school problem. The issue truly demands a comprehensive approach that also involves the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, the Department of Health and Community Services and the Regional Health Authorities". All four recommendations focus on the collaborative work of all these service providers. This report shows that there is research and practice to guide action now.

The report is on the OCYA website: www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca

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