

Challenges and successes of young people transitioning out of government care highlighted in new report

McCreary Centre Society's Youth Research Academy (YRA) today released the first report of their longitudinal study following young people aging out of government care.

Members of the Academy are all young people age 16 to 24 with experience of the government care system. They are trained in community-based research and are conducting a study which surveys youth who are in care (e.g., a foster home or group home) or an alternative to care (such as on a Youth Agreement) as they approach their 19th birthday and then at six-month intervals through their early 20s.

Academy participants plan to release a report annually. The first report is focused primarily on young people approaching the transition out of care, but also includes some information from youth who had recently transitioned out, as well as an insight into young people's experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

McCreary Centre Society's Executive Director, Annie Smith, commented: *"Although the sample is relatively small at this point, the results of the survey give us some important information about how we can support young people who are transitioning out of care and starting to live independently. Personally, I was concerned by the percentage of young people that were struggling with housing issues and also who did not know their tenancy rights or feel that they were in a position to find housing. I think the report also really highlights the incredible resiliency of these young people who have often experienced multiple care placements, and been through so much yet remain optimistic for the future, and determined to successfully transition into independent living."*

Smith went on to say *"I also want to take my hat off to the YRA for all their work developing and sharing the survey, and the amazing insight that they bring to the results. Their first report focuses on the preliminary findings, and I look forward to seeing the analysis that they will be able to do as the sample size grows for this really unique and important youth-led study."*

Copies of the report are available at www.mcs.bc.ca.

A webinar presentation of the results by members of the Youth Research Academy is scheduled for July 29th at 1 PM:

Webinar details:

Join from your computer, tablet or smartphone:
<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/283669373>

Join via phone: 1-888-455-1389 (Toll free). Access code: 283-669-373

For interviews contact Annie Smith at 604-728-9494 or email annie@mcs.bc.ca

BACKGROUND

The YRA are conducting a longitudinal study of BC youth transitioning out of government care, including youth transitioning out of the services of Delegated Agencies. The results of the study are intended to provide policy makers and service providers with up-to-date and relevant information which can identify what is working well and what is challenging for these young people, and ensure youth are supported to experience the most successful transition possible.

These results are from the preliminary data collected from 107 youth approaching their transition out of government care, and from 38 youth approximately six months after that transition:

Some key findings from the report:

Most youth preparing to transition out of government care had experienced multiple types of care placements, including almost half (48%) who had experienced three or more types of care (e.g., had been in a foster home, group home, and on a Youth Agreement).

Half of youth preparing to transition out of care reported a decrease in their access to professional supports (50%) and access to health care (50%) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, over half of those who completed a survey after April 2020 reported a decline in their relationships with friends, access to mental health care, and job stability.

Most youth (77%) who were approaching the transition out of care felt prepared to live independently. However, less than half felt prepared to pay their bills/budget (43%) and find housing (43%). Among those who had recently left care, less than a third (29%) reported that with hindsight they had been prepared for the transition they experienced.

Around two thirds (68%) of youth preparing to transition out of care felt quite or very prepared to cook healthy meals for themselves. However, food security was a challenge. For example, among youth who had recently transitioned out of care, 15% always ate three meals a day, and 68% went to bed hungry at least sometimes because there was not enough money for food at home.

Youth accessed a range of services and supports, and 59% of those who had transitioned out of care continued to receive care through MCFD or a Delegated Agency for a period past their 19th birthday.

Among youth who had recently transitioned out of care, 25% had moved at least twice in the past six months.

Despite the challenges young people experienced before and after leaving care, the survey results highlighted youth's strengths and resiliency. For example, among youth preparing to leave care, 95% had at least one goal for the next six months, 95% identified something they were passionate about, and 79% could name something they were good at. Many youth also shared personal accomplishments they were particularly proud of, including academic achievements, independent living skills, sobriety, and having overcoming obstacles in their life.