



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Honourable Minister Malcolmson  
Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions  
Room 247, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, B.C. V1V 1X4

January 20, 2021

Dear Minister Malcolmson,

On behalf of the Official Opposition, we are writing to express our concern about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of children and youth in British Columbia.

Our province's already stretched and underfunded voluntary youth mental health system is struggling to cope with not only the extra demand resulting from the stresses of COVID-19, but also the extra barriers in place for those in need of access to rapid treatment.

Many clinics such as Foundry, which offered walk-in supports to youth before the pandemic, now require appointments. These necessary pandemic safety measures are causing longer waitlists and more gaps in immediate care for youth in need. In May of 2020, only three months into the pandemic, B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth confirmed there was more than 2,500 youth in B.C. on waitlists, and that has only continued to grow. Youth who are at risk of self-harm or other mental health challenges cannot afford to wait two or more months as Ms. Charlesworth recently noted to Global News is the current average wait time.

We can't stress enough the importance of addressing mental health issues in the early stages, but there are simply not enough mental health supports available for young people in British Columbia to make this a reality. Teenagers are moving through many physical, emotional, and social changes — more than at any other time in their lives — and they have not yet developed the coping mechanisms that experiences give them.

Research conducted since the beginning of the pandemic has identified the many mental health challenges children and youth can be expected to experience during and after the pandemic, including anxiety, post-traumatic stress, depression and behavioural problems.

Mental supports for young people were already inadequate before the pandemic, which has only served to produce further stress and isolation, making it even more urgent to provide necessary prevention and treatment services.

Youth and families have been struggling with a system that lacks the capacity to address their complex needs. This is why we request and expect appropriate ministries to take immediate actions to identify barriers, close the gaps in services, reduce wait times and create systemic changes.

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BC Liberal Official Opposition  
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Victoria, BC V8V 1X4



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We are calling on you, as the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, to immediately take action to invest in the youth mental health system, reduce barriers in accessing treatment and ensure the proper supports are available to every child that needs it.

Families can't afford for government to wait any longer. For the health and mental well-being of B.C.'s children and youth, let's act to ensure everyone has timely access to the supports they need.

Sincerely,

Trevor Halford  
MLA, Surrey-White Rock  
Official Opposition Critic for Mental Health  
and Addictions

Karin Kirkpatrick  
MLA, West Vancouver-Capilano  
Official Opposition Critic for Children,  
Family Development & Childcare