

2005/06 Strategic Plan

Who is the Child and Youth Officer? Jane Morley, Q.C. The Child and Youth Officer for British Columbia is a provincial government-funded officer with authority under legislation to serve children and youth in British Columbia. She is **independent** of the ministries responsible for providing services to children and youth.

Under the *Office for Children and Youth Act*, the Child and Youth Officer is mandated to **support** access to relevant services, to **observe** independently their effectiveness, responsiveness and relevance, and to **advise** government how to improve them.

The Child and Youth Officer has the **authority** to access confidential government information and to comment publicly on matters affecting children and youth.

The Child and Youth Officer works with a **team** of about 20, and **partners** with other individuals and organizations.

As Child and Youth Officer, Jane Morley sees herself and her team as **Champions** for children and youth, **Critics** (both positive and negative) of services for children and youth, and **Catalysts** for positive change in the system in BC that serves children and youth.

What vision does the Child and Youth Officer have for children and youth in British Columbia?

A civil society in which the fundamental human rights of children and youth are realized, and children and youth are supported in their development to adulthood by their families, communities and governments.

This vision is based on the underlying principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

What goals does the Child and Youth Officer support for British Columbia to achieve this Vision?

1. Communities throughout British Columbia have sufficient resources and decision-making power to effectively share with government responsibility for the service delivery system in those communities.
2. The communities of indigenous peoples in British Columbia have sufficient resources and capacity and the necessary autonomy to provide culturally affirmative and effective services for their children, youth and families.

3. Government funded services and strategies achieve improved outcomes for children in government care, and for other children and youth at risk.
4. Children, youth and their families in British Columbia meaningfully participate in decisions affecting them.
5. Governments, communities and the public know about the effectiveness, responsiveness and relevance of services in British Columbia for children, youth and families, and use that knowledge to improve services.

What are the Child and Youth Officer's strategies for her organization to contribute to the achievement of these goals?

1. To promote and support, as an integral part of an effective child welfare system, effective advocacy by, and for, children, youth and families on issues affecting them personally.
2. To promote and support the involvement and participation of children and youth as active citizens in their communities, and in the development of policy, programs and services.
3. To promote dialogue, collaborative relationships and joint action among those who share responsibility for achieving the goals.
4. To gather information and insights into the state of services and the progress towards the goals by:
 - o participating in joint projects with others who share common goals;
 - o engaging in conversations with policy makers, service providers and other community members;
 - o engaging in conversations with children, youth and families; and
 - o looking at and analyzing relevant information (e.g. data, research, reports) available within and outside government.
5. To formulate and communicate to the public, government and communities, observations and advice about the state of child, youth and family services and the progress towards the goals through
 - o the annual report,
 - o special reports,
 - o issues papers, and
 - o media commentary.

What do the Child and Youth Officer and her team seek to achieve through these strategies?

The objectives of the Child and Youth Officer and her team in pursuing these strategies are to contribute to:

1. Increased participation of children and youth in decision-making processes related to issues affecting them personally, and acceptance of advocacy for and by children and youth as integral to their meaningful participation.
2. Increased involvement of children and youth in the development of policy, programs and services affecting children and youth generally.
3. Increased dialogue, collaborative relationships and joint action among those who share responsibility for achieving the goals.
4. Increased government, community and public knowledge of the effectiveness, responsiveness and relevance of services for children, youth and families in British Columbia and British Columbia's progress towards achieving the goals.
5. Generation and implementation of recommendations about how to achieve the goals.

When pursuing these strategies, the Child and Youth Officer and her team ask themselves whether the following have been considered:

- The relevant cultural, historical context of Aboriginal children
 - The ethno-cultural composition of communities
 - The needs of children with disabilities
 - The particular challenges for children in government care
 - The opportunities for children and youth to participate
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