



Backgrounder

Health and Well-Being of Children in Care in British Columbia: Educational Experience and Outcomes

STUDY FINDINGS:

School Readiness

- Children in care are two to three times more likely than children in the general population to be unprepared for entering Kindergarten.
- Fewer than half of children in care meet provincial standards on reading and numeracy when measured in grades 4 and 7.
- A growing portion of children in vulnerable populations, including children in care, is not being assessed on reading, writing and numeracy. There are increasingly no benchmarks to determine how well these children are doing within the school system.

School Completion

- Almost 80 per cent of children in care do not graduate from high school.
- Of the 21 per cent who graduate, few graduate with the courses or grade point averages required to directly enter post-secondary institutions.

Aboriginal Children in Care

- 16 per cent of Aboriginal children in care graduate from high school—a rate slightly lower than the overall graduation rate for children in care.
- Aboriginal children in care are identified with special needs at a slightly higher rate (64 per cent) than non-Aboriginal children in care (58 per cent).
- When measured at grades 4 and 7, Aboriginal children in care show lower reading, numeracy and writing scores than other children in care.

Children in Care with Special Needs

- 61 per cent of children in care have been identified with special needs by the age of 16, compared to 13 per cent of children who have never been in care.

- Educational outcomes for children in care with special needs are worse than for most children in care: only 12 per cent of special needs children in care graduate from high school, in contrast with 36 per cent of special needs children from the general population.
- While the most common special-needs category for the general school-age population is the gifted category, the most common special needs category for children in care is intensive behavioural intervention/serious mental illness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some study recommendations are highlighted below. Recommendations call for action to be taken by the ministries of Children and Family Development, Education, and Advanced Education, along with BC's schools, post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities:

- Plan the educational progress for each child in care and collect personal education numbers to support this planning.
- Assess all children on reading, writing and numeracy.
- Reduce school moves and help children attach to new schools.
- Education and MCFD prepare a report card accountability protocol to ensure that all children in care are meeting education targets and expectations. Where they are not, account for this in a systemic annual review.
- Devise a strategy to support and better education outcomes for Aboriginal children who have been in care.
- Pilot and evaluate innovative programs for children in care and other vulnerable children.

The full report and complete list of recommendations are available for viewing at www.rcybc.ca

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