

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Children and Youth in Care Day: Provincial Child and Youth Advocate to focus on helping youth living in group homes reach their full potential

TORONTO, May 14, 2014 -- Today marks the first Children and Youth in Care Day in Ontario and another major milestone for Our Voice Our Turn, an initiative supported by the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth to examine the challenges youth face when they age out of the care system.

“Children and Youth in Care Day is an annual opportunity for young people in and from care to be heard and to send a clear message to organizations, government and citizens: From the moment they begin their journey in care, to the moment they leave, you need to be there for them,” said Paul, Youth Amplifier, Our Voice Our Turn. “Each year, we plan to use this day to continue to push for changes to the child welfare system, so that all young people in care are supported to become successful adults.”

On May 14, 2012, Our Voice Our Turn released *My REAL Life Book*, a report on the Youth Leaving Care Hearings that called for fundamental change to the existing child welfare system. The report also included a recommendation to declare a Children and Youth in Care Day to raise awareness of the issues children and youth face, reduce stigma and recognize children and youth in the care of the province so that they are no longer invisible.

“The declaration of May 14 as Children and Youth in Care Day is a tribute to the tireless efforts of the dedicated young people from across the province whose strength and courage to talk openly about their experience in care continues to have an impact today,” said Irwin Elman, Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

In *MY REAL Life Book*, young people wrote poignantly about the debilitating effects of being left out of their own lives. From the moment they are brought into care, to the events that sometimes take place once they are in the system, they experience a loss of control that leaves some young people rudderless when they leave care.

While some young people have positive experiences in care, others find that care can be unpredictable in some settings, leaving them feeling vulnerable, isolated and alone. Some young people who live in group care wrote about witnessing violence, the use of physical restraints and medication to manage youth behaviour. They also wrote about how police are sometimes called to respond to situations, when perhaps there are other skills and tools that can be used to prevent and defuse conflict.

In the coming year, the Provincial Advocate will be speaking to young people about their experience in group care to determine how often these incidents occur, the circumstances and the extent. The Advocate will also partner with young people to find ways to ensure that care providers offer a more consistent experience for young people that focuses on the best

outcomes for youth. This includes a supportive and stable environment that focuses on personal growth and takes into account the needs and preferences of children and youth.

For more information about The Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, [Our Voice Our Turn](#) or to read [My REAL Life Book](#), please visit our [website](#) or connect with us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

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