



Statement

June 17, 2016

By Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond
B.C. Representative for Children and Youth

I am pleased to hear about the Integrated Youth Services Initiative announced today by the provincial government. These proposals are long overdue and have the potential to make a positive impact on youth in crisis.

However, our fundamental goal should be preventing those crisis situations from occurring by improving foster care and addressing root causes of why young people end up coming into government care.

After years of austerity measures in British Columbia, young people in crisis now have challenges navigating health care services. Making those services more accessible for these young people is a good step, but having people in their lives to make sure they make it to their appointments and follow recommended treatment – in other words, real, lasting relationships – is what so many youth say they require.

The importance of an Aboriginal, trauma-informed healing approach cannot be an afterthought, either, and I would urge the government to work with the First Nations Health Authority to ensure these services are meaningful for Aboriginal youth who are homeless and street-involved and whose families continue to be the most marginalized in BC.

Today's announcement is encouraging, but services will not be offered until next year and are limited to a few locations. Accessible hubs of care could be valuable and I hope one day we can move beyond planning phase into services for youth.

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