

# Acting Early for Stronger Communities

A photograph of three children running away from the camera on a green rubber playground mat. The child in the middle is a girl with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a pink shirt and a grey skirt. She is holding the hands of two other children. To her left is a smaller child with curly hair wearing a light blue dress. To her right is a child wearing a white t-shirt and green shorts. In the background, there is a chain-link fence, a brick building, and some playground equipment.

RC&Y

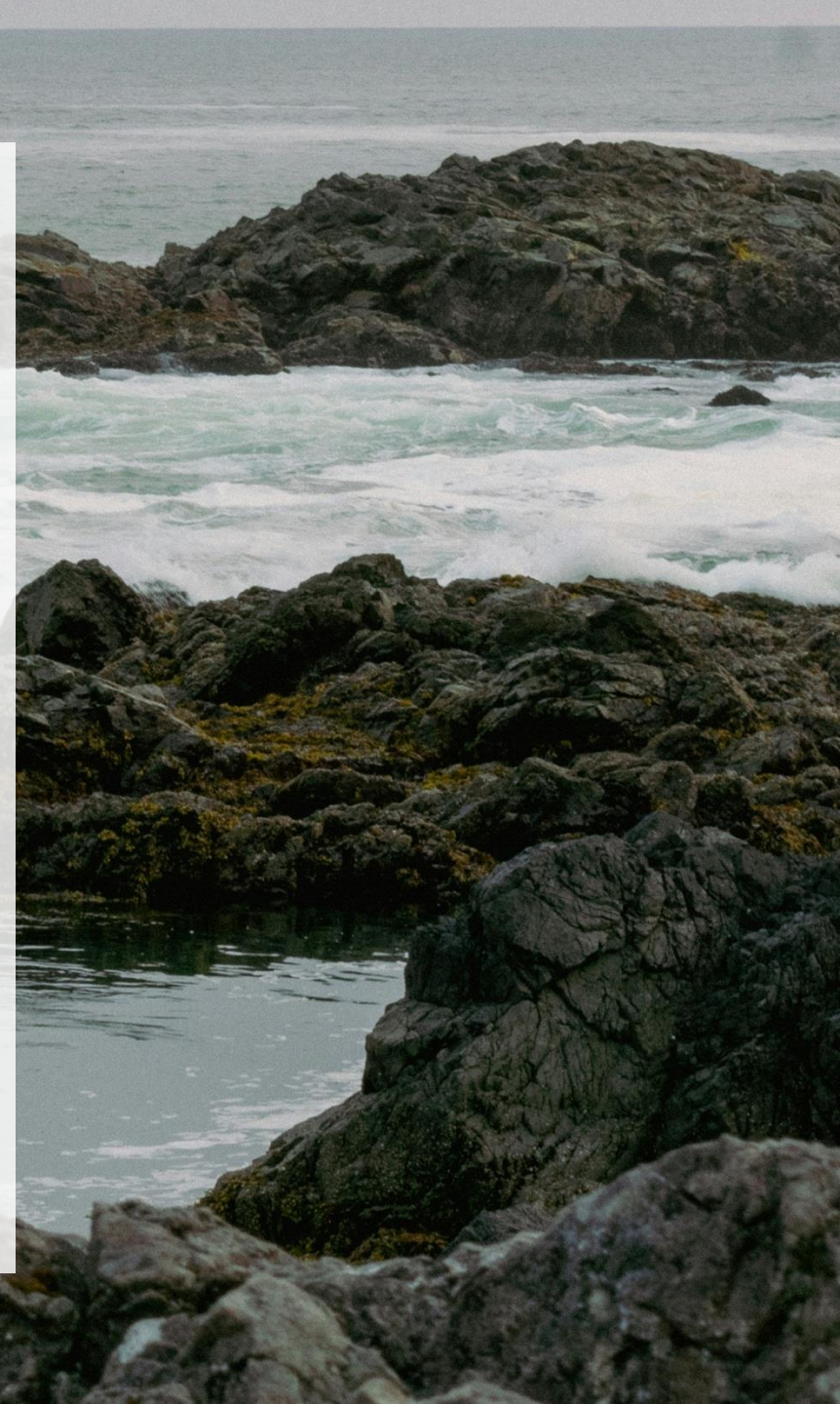
**ACTING EARLY**

for stronger communities



**The Representative and staff, working throughout the province, would like to acknowledge that we are living and working with gratitude and respect on the traditional territories of the First Nations peoples of British Columbia.**

**We specifically acknowledge and express our gratitude to the keepers of the lands on the traditional territories of the Lheidli T'enneh peoples (Prince George) and the Lekwungen (place to smoke herring) people of the Songhees and X<sup>w</sup>sepsəm Nations (Victoria) where our offices are located. We also acknowledge our Métis and Inuit partners and friends living in these beautiful territories.**





# Independent Oversight for B.C.'s Young People

Nearly 20 years of advocacy, accountability, and change

**Individual  
advocacy**

**Review &  
investigate**

**Recommend  
& monitor**



**HOW WE WORK**

# **WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE?**

What challenges facing young people in your community concern you most right now?

If you could answer one question about youth well-being in your municipality, what would it be?

During 2023/24, RCY received

**1,764**

requests for advocacy.



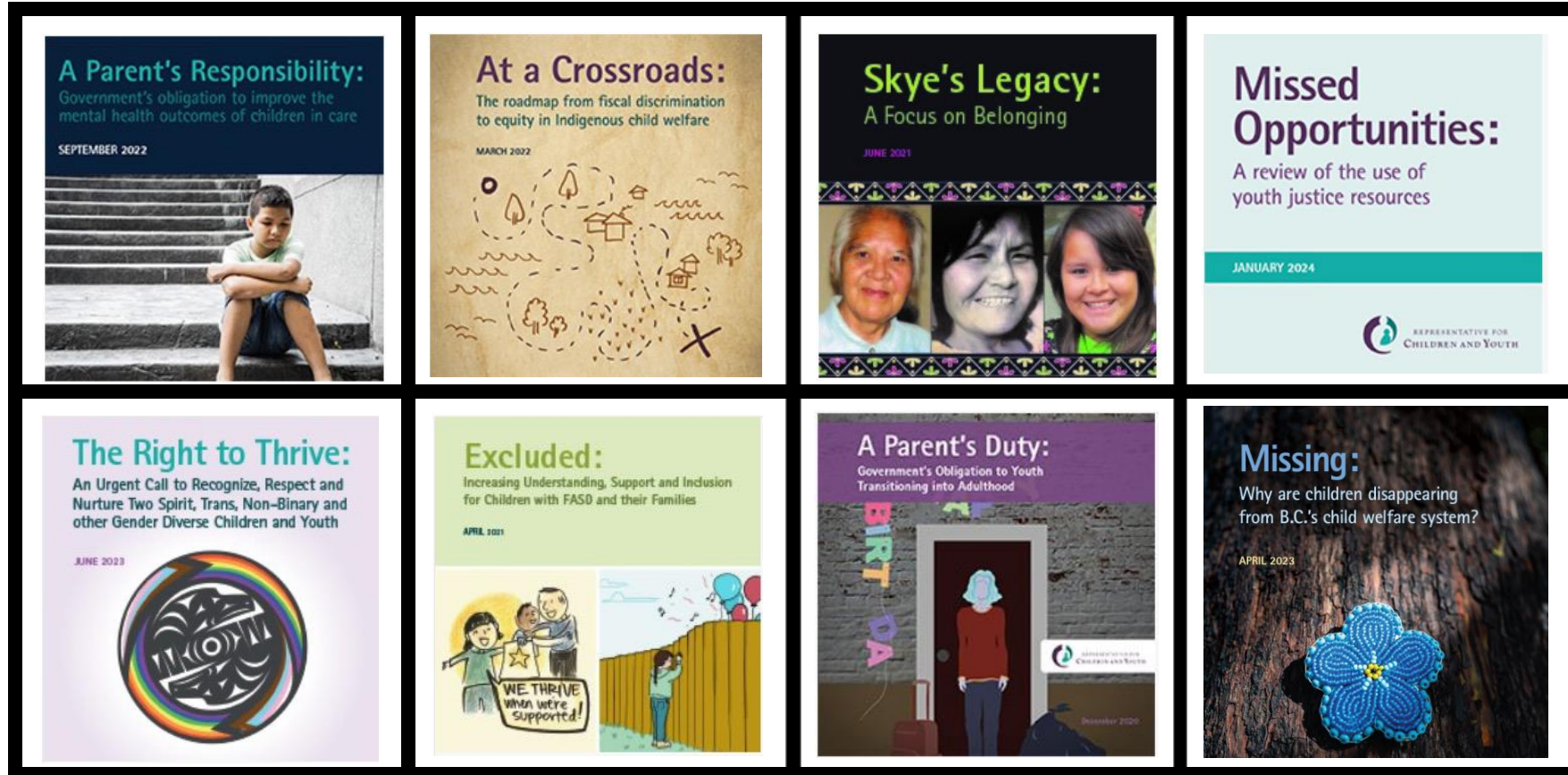
During 2023/24, RCY received

**6,905**

reportable circumstances.



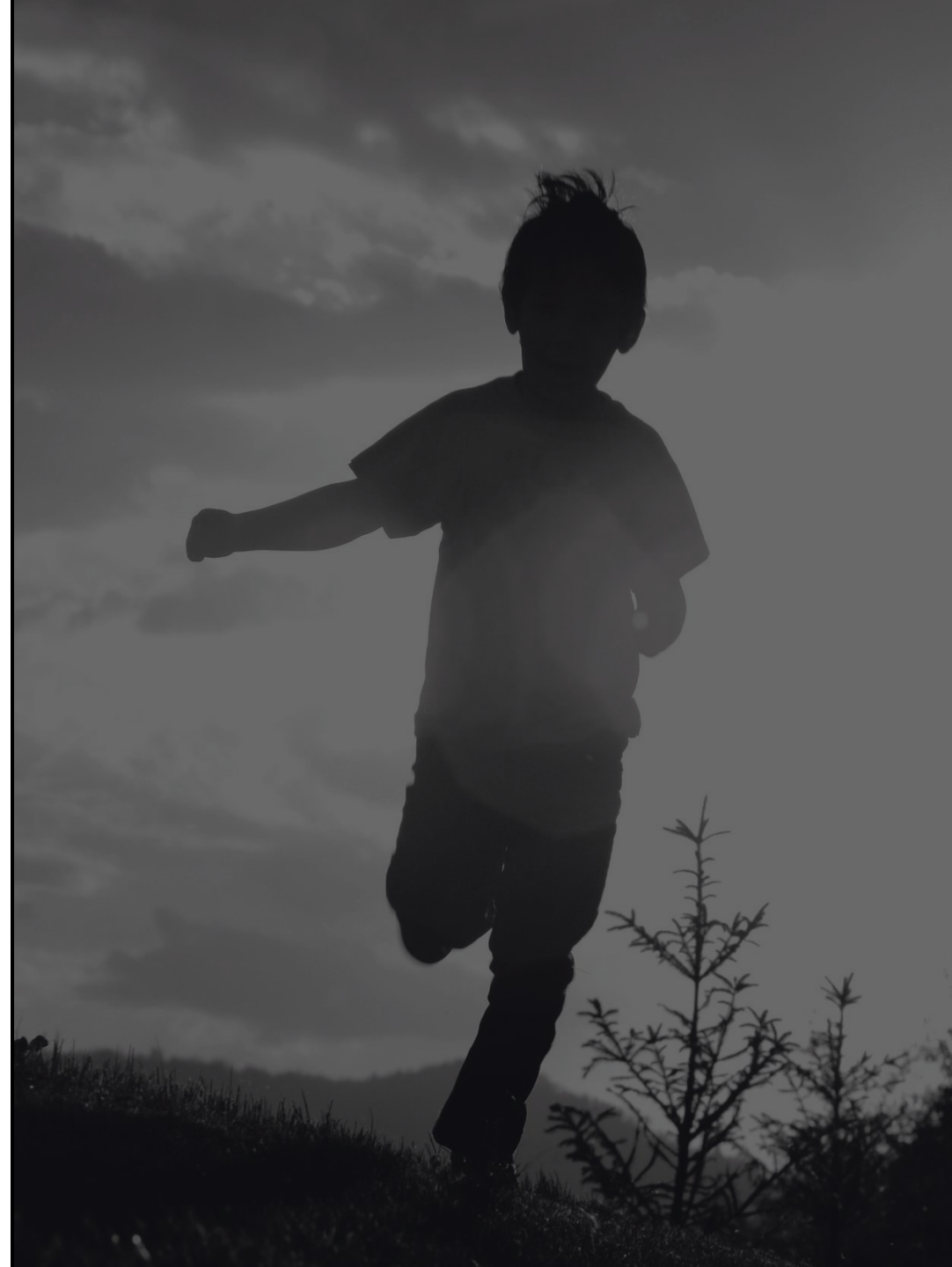
# Listening, Reporting, Calling for Change



# Don't Look Away

---

- Pervasiveness of Violence
- Lack of Family Supports
- Significant Gaps for Family Caregivers
- Challenges with Interagency collaboration/communication
- Confusion over Accountability





A close-up, low-angle shot of several children's legs and feet sitting on a wooden bench. The children are wearing various styles of sneakers, including red Converse-style shoes and white sneakers. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day outdoors. The text "TOO MANY CHILDREN" is overlaid in large orange letters, and "too much harm" is overlaid in smaller white letters below it.

**TOO MANY CHILDREN**  
too much harm

# What We Know About the Toxic Drug Crisis

B.C.'s leading cause of death for ages 10–29

Thousands of young people are surviving overdoses/exposure, many with lasting trauma, fear, or injury. All ages!

Young people are losing parents, siblings, and peers, often becoming caregivers or entering care themselves.

Stigma keeps young people silent, even when they need help. Use is often a coping mechanism in absence of healing opportunities.



# Unregulated Drugs: #1 Killer of Youth

**159** lives lost

**73%** died at home

**66%** were in care or receiving government services

**67%** had a mental health condition

# **Ripple Effects**

Losing Parents

Losing Stability

Losing Trust

**Grief disrupts school, identity, and belonging.**



# What's fueling this fire?



MENTAL HEALTH

VIOLENCE

SILOED SYSTEMS

LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT

# 1 in 3

B.C. children start kindergarten developmentally vulnerable (HELP, Wave 8).

126,000 children and youth are living in poverty. That is approximately

# 17%

of young people. (First Call).



# 20%

of children are vulnerable in emotional maturity or social competence.



# **EARLY YEARS & FAMILY SUPPORT**

## **the roots of prevention**





**What We're Doing**

# Where can municipalities step in on Early Help/Family Supports?

1. Expand access to affordable, quality childcare and early learning spaces
2. Support family resource and parenting programs in community hubs
3. Partner with schools, health, and Nations to connect families earlier
4. Ensure community services and spaces are culturally safe and inclusive, focusing on belonging
5. Use municipal planning and policy tools to reduce family stress (housing, transit, recreation)

# **Collaboration**

## **Let's Talk to Each Other**

What are you  
doing for young  
people in your  
communities that  
you are excited  
about?



# YOU ARE NOT ALONE: REACH OUT



## Phone

1-800-476-3933



## Email

rcy@rcybc.ca



## Website

rcybc.ca



@rcybc and  
@rcybcyouth



Rep4Youth



@rcybcyouth



BC's Representative for Children  
and Youth and RCYBC Youth