

Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates National Advocacy Standards

THE CANADIAN COUNCIL OF CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATES

The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA) is an alliance of legislatively mandated advocates for the rights of children and youth. These advocates may operate under various titles (e.g. Advocate, Representative, Ombudsman, Commissioner), but all are official representatives in their particular provinces and territories.

All CCCYA Members are independent statutory offices that report directly to the Legislative Assembly of their respective jurisdictions. Each CCCYA Member is established by legislation to operate in a manner that is independent from government authority or control.

PURPOSES OF THE CCCYA NATIONAL ADVOCACY STANDARDS

The CCCYA National Advocacy Standards describe the minimum expected level of service in member organizations. The standards are implementable and measurable service targets. The means by which the standards are met and the criteria used to determine compliance with the standards are to be established by each CCCYA Member individually, in accordance with their provincial or territorial mandate.

The CCCYA National Advocacy Standards provide a guiding framework for operations, to ensure consistent quality of work. They also provide: a basis for accountability; a direction for staff training; and a means to evaluate service.

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE CCCYA NATIONAL ADVOCACY STANDARDS

Operationalization of the CCCYA National Advocacy Standards must be in accord with the foundational legal norms of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC).

The Guiding Principles of the UNCRC provide interpretive direction for the CCCYA National Advocacy Standards. Specifically:

- The right to provision and protection of rights without discrimination (Article 2).
- The right to have the best interests of the child be a primary consideration in all actions and decisions affecting children (Article 3).
- The right to life, survival and development of the child to the maximum extent possible (Article 6).

- The right of the child to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting the child, and for those views to be given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity (Article 12).

NATIONAL ADVOCACY STANDARDS

1. Clarity of Purpose

The CCCYA Member shall have clearly articulated objectives and purposes that are outlined in the governing framework. The CCCYA Member shall ensure that accurate information related to the Member's scope, limitations and jurisdiction is readily available to the public.

2. Putting Children First

The CCCYA Member shall ensure that advocacy staff in the Member's Office consider the views of the children they are advocating for to the maximum extent possible for guidance. Advocacy staff shall be non-judgmental and respectful of the child's experiences and viewpoints. In all matters, including those where it is not possible for children to communicate their needs and opinions, the CCCYA Member will advocate with the best interests of the child as the paramount consideration.

3. Empowerment

The CCCYA Member shall endeavor to increase the capacity of individual children and/or groups of children to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Advocacy staff shall strive to enhance children's knowledge and understanding of their rights, skills and strengths for the purpose of increasing self-sufficiency and enabling them to gain power over their lives. Advocacy staff shall act as supports and partners who have knowledge and skills which can be used in finding solutions and driving positive change.

4. Equal Opportunity

The CCCYA Member shall treat every individual in a positive and non-discriminatory manner, considering all aspects of the individual, including but not limited to their sex, sexual orientation, gender-identity, nationality, ethnic origin, race, religion, marital or family status, physical or cognitive disability, culture, and social disadvantage.

5. Accountability

The CCCYA Member shall be accountable to the children they serve and answerable for the full range of responsibilities assigned to it given the public resources, private information and legislative authority with which it has been entrusted.

6. Accessibility

The CCCYA Member shall ensure that its premises, publications, service delivery and outreach initiatives are publicly available throughout their geographic jurisdiction, and are accessible to all children within their mandate to the maximum extent possible.

7. Support for Advocates

The CCCYA Member shall ensure that children they serve receive services from staff who are supported in their roles through the provision of ongoing supervision and organizational support, with access to professional development, especially as related to children's rights.

8. Confidentiality

The CCCYA Member shall keep confidential all information obtained in the course and performance of its work, except when required to disclose the information by law or in the furtherance of its mandate.

9. Complaints

The CCCYA Member shall have a publicly available written policy regarding its process for providing feedback or the making of a complaint concerning its provision of services.