



POLICY BRIEF 2024

Strengthening Monitoring and Compliance in the BC Foster Care System

Khatira Daryabi

The LEVEL Youth Policy Program takes place on the traditional and unceded territories of the *xʷməθkʷəjəm* (Musqueam), *Sḵwxwú7mesh* (Squamish) & *səlilwətaʔ* (Tsleil-Waututh) Coast Salish peoples.

GRAPHIC DESIGN

And Also Too

COVER ILLUSTRATION

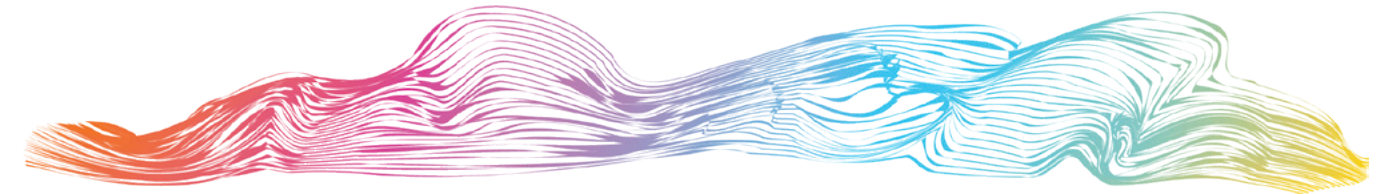
Jessica Joseph

HEADSHOT PHOTOGRAPHY

Naybu Taw Photography

Contents

- 3 About the LEVEL Initiative
- 4 Biography
- 5 Executive Summary
- 6 Background
- 8 Proposal
- 9 Conclusion
- 10 Endnotes
- 11 Bibliography
- 11 Acknowledgements



About the LEVEL Initiative

LEVEL is a youth engagement initiative of Vancouver Foundation that aims to address racial inequity. We do this by investing in the leadership capacity of Indigenous, racialized, immigrant, and refugee youth to create more opportunities throughout the non-profit and charitable sector.

Despite being the fastest-growing youth populations in British Columbia, Indigenous, immigrant, and refugee youth don't have the same opportunities as other young people. Race continues to be a factor that hinders their ability to have a say in decisions that impact their lives.

LEVEL empowers these youth by building their capacity to challenge and change those systems that hinder their ability to build a more just world.

LEVEL consists of three pillars of work to advance racial equity

1. LEVEL Youth Policy Program
2. LEVEL Youth Organizing
3. LEVEL BIPOC Granting

About the LEVEL Youth Policy Program (LEVEL YPP)

The LEVEL Youth Policy Program (LEVEL YPP) brings together young people between the ages of 19 and 29 from across British Columbia who identify as being Indigenous or racialized immigrants or refugees. Indigenous and racialized newcomer youth are dispropor-

tionately impacted by certain public policies but are rarely included in the development and implementation of public policy process. The LEVEL YPP aims to provide these youth with equitable training and leadership opportunities to better navigate the public policy landscape, and to develop new tools and skills to influence, shape, and advocate for policy changes that are relevant in their own communities. Having young people directly involved in shaping policies that impact their lives is essential to creating systemic, meaningful change. The LEVEL YPP's training is grounded from and within Indigenous peoples' worldviews, which the program acknowledges, could vary from person-to-person or nation-to-nation. Indigenous worldviews place a large emphasis on connections to the land. This perspective views the land as sacred; where everything and everyone is related and connected; where the quality of the relationships formed are key in life; where what matters is the success and well-being of the community, and where there can be many truths as they are based on individual lived experiences.¹ As such, an important premise of this training is to centre and place a particular focus on the fact that the work that has gone into developing this training, as well as the training itself, has taken and will take place on unceded (never given away/stolen) territories of the *hə́nq'ə́min* 'ə́m̓-speaking Musqueam peoples, of the *Halkomelem*-speaking Tsleil-Waututh peoples, and of the *sníichim*-speaking *Sḵwxwú7mesh* (Squamish) peoples.

1. <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-peoples-worldviews-vs-western-worldviews>



Biography

Khatira Daryabi



Khatira Daryabi is a passionate advocate for Afghan women and refugee rights. Born and raised in Afghanistan, she faced significant challenges, including the violation of children's and women's rights and discrimination against her Hazara ethnic group. These experiences inspired her to bike to school and encourage other girls to do the same, organizing biking protests for peace and equality in Kabul.

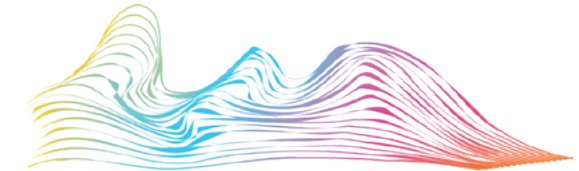
At the age of 14, Khatira left Afghanistan alone and moved to Canada, where she overcame cultural shocks and language barriers while placed in Foster Care. She is now pursuing a dual degree in Political Science and a minor in Economics along with a Master of Business Management at Sauder School of Business on a full scholarship. Despite the hardships, Khatira remains dedicated to advocating for the rights and dreams of Afghan girls and now children in the Foster Care System to live and thrive in a safe and supportive environment.

Executive Summary

The BC Foster Care System faces significant challenges, primarily due to inadequate monitoring and compliance with established care standards.

This policy brief identifies three critical issues: lack of regular inspections, insufficient data tracking, and inconsistent enforcement.

Each of these issues compromises the safety and well-being of foster children, leading to variable care quality and increased risk of abuse and neglect. To address these issues, this brief proposes a series of policy recommendations, including implementing regular, unannounced inspections, developing a comprehensive data tracking system, and ensuring consistent enforcement of standards. By addressing these gaps, the BC Foster Care System can become more accountable and effective, ultimately improving outcomes for children in care.^{1,2,3}



This brief proposes a series of policy recommendations, including implementing regular, unannounced inspections, developing a comprehensive data tracking system, and ensuring consistent enforcement of standards.

Background

The BC Foster Care system is designed to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children who cannot live with their biological families and children from a diverse background who require a safe homestay, including refugee children and Indigenous children who are being taken away from their families.

However, numerous reports and audits have highlighted systemic failures that jeopardize the well-being of these children.

One of the most significant issues is the lack of regular inspections. Regular and thorough inspections are essential to ensure foster homes adhere to care standards and provide a safe environment for children. However, audits have revealed that many foster homes are not inspected frequently enough, and some regions show zero percent compliance for ongoing monitoring. For example, the East Fraser audit found seven files without documentation of in-person visits over three years, indicating serious oversight issues.⁴ Such lapses can lead to unchecked environments where abuse and neglect can go unnoticed, as evidenced by the tragic case of child abuse in Lake Errock, where children were not checked on for seven months, resulting in severe abuse and the death of a child. The Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) staff who were

responsible for these failures were dismissed, highlighting the severe consequences of inadequate monitoring.⁵

Furthermore, the BC Foster Care System needs more data tracking. Comprehensive data tracking is crucial for monitoring the quality of care and outcomes for foster children. Audits must show better documentation practices, with many social workers relying on memory and notes rather than formal records.⁶ This lack of formal records makes it challenging to track the performance of foster homes and the outcomes for children in care.⁷ The 2013 audit on plans of care found that only five out of 100 files had compliant care plans, and many needed to be updated or completed.⁸ This systemic issue with data management hampers the ability to identify trends, address systemic problems, and make informed decisions. The *Relationships Matter* report emphasizes the importance of consistent and thorough data collection to support youth aging out of care.⁹ Proper data tracking can identify the need for long-term supportive relationships and better outcomes for youth transitioning out of care rather than cutting off the resources and unexplainably asking the youth to figure out what is next without full support.



Regular and thorough inspections are essential to ensure foster homes adhere to care standards and provide a safe environment for children.

Lastly, inconsistent enforcement of regulations and standards is a significant problem in the BC Foster Care System. Consistent enforcement is vital to ensure uniform care quality across the system. However, audits have revealed that MCFD workers often fail to conduct required visits within mandated timeframes, and necessary background checks are frequently not completed before placing children in foster homes. For instance, a 2022 audit found that only 18 percent of files contained a care plan created within 30 days of a child entering care, highlighting significant enforcement gaps.¹⁰ The *Don't Look Away* report showcases the need for rigorous enforcement of care standards to protect children from abuse and neglect.¹¹ Consistent enforcement can prevent cases like that of Alex Gervais, whose tragic death highlighted severe systemic failures in the foster care system.¹²



Audits have revealed that Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) workers often fail to conduct required visits within mandated timeframes, and necessary background checks are frequently not completed before placing children in foster homes.

Don't Look Away

How one boy's story has the power to shift a system of care for children and youth

A Summary



Cover of the *Don't Look Away* report, by The Representative for Children and Youth's (RCY).

Proposal

To address the identified issues, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

1 Implement Regular, Unannounced Inspections.

- **Frequency and Scope:** Increase the frequency of inspections to at least twice a year for all foster homes and child welfare agencies. Ensure these inspections are comprehensive and unannounced.¹³
- **Inspection Teams:** Form specialized inspection teams with expertise in child welfare to conduct these inspections, ensuring a thorough and consistent approach.¹⁴

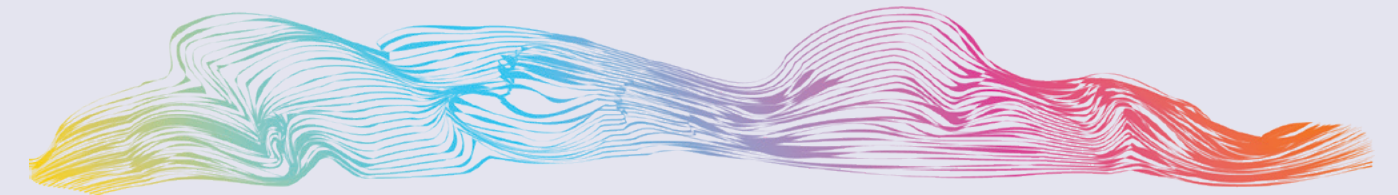
2 Develop a Comprehensive Data Tracking System.

- **Centralized Database:** Create a centralized database to track the performance and outcomes of foster care placements. This database should include information on health, education, and emotional well-being of foster children.¹⁵
- **Data Analytics:** Utilize data analytics to identify patterns and trends in the care provided, enabling targeted interventions and continuous improvement.¹⁶

3 Ensure Consistent Enforcement of Standards.

- **Standardized Protocols:** Develop and enforce standardized protocols for all aspects of foster care, including placement, support, and monitoring.¹⁷
- **Accountability Mechanisms:** Establish clear accountability mechanisms for non-compliance, including penalties for agencies and foster homes that do not meet standards.¹⁸

Conclusion



Inadequate monitoring and compliance in the BC Foster Care System is a critical issue that compromises the quality of care for foster children. By implementing regular inspections, developing a comprehensive data tracking system, and ensuring consistent enforcement of standards, British Columbia can significantly improve its foster care system. These policy solutions aim to create a more accountable and effective foster care environment, ultimately leading to better outcomes for children in care.¹⁹

By implementing regular inspections, developing a comprehensive data tracking system, and ensuring consistent enforcement of standards, British Columbia can significantly improve its foster care system.

ENDNOTES

1. Representative for Children and Youth, *Joint Special Report: Hearing the Voices of Children and Youth*, January 2010.
2. Government of British Columbia, "Data, Monitoring and Quality Assurance," July 11, 2024.
3. Melanie Doucet et al., *Relationships Matter for Youth 'Aging Out' of Care*, Fall 2018.
4. Representative for Children and Youth. *Much More than Paperwork: Proper Planning Essential to Better Lives for B.C.'s Children in Care*. March 2013.
5. Global News. "Staff Lose Jobs after Abused Foster Child Dies in Care, Opposition Parties Want Dean Sacked." January 2022.
6. Indigenous Watchdog, "Exclusive Audit Reveals Major Failures in MCFD Region Where Boy Died," October 18, 2023.
7. Representative for Children and Youth, *Much More than Paperwork*, March 2013.
8. Indigenous Watchdog, "Exclusive Audit," October 18, 2023
9. Doucet et al., *Relationships Matter*, Fall 2018.
10. Ibid.
11. Representative for Children and Youth, *Joint Special Report*, January 2010.
12. Representative for Children and Youth, *Much More than Paperwork*, March 2013.
13. Representative for Children and Youth. *Don't Look Away*. July 2024.
14. Ibid.
15. Representative for Children and Youth, *Joint Special Report*, January 2010.
16. Government of British Columbia, "Data, Monitoring and Quality Assurance," July 11, 2024.
17. Representative for Children and Youth, *Much More than Paperwork*, March 2013.
18. Melanie Doucet et al., *Relationships Matter for Youth 'Aging Out' of Care*, Fall 2018.
19. Representative for Children and Youth. *Don't Look Away*. July 2024.
20. Indigenous Watchdog, "Exclusive Audit," October 18, 2023
21. Representative for Children and Youth, *Joint Special Report*, January 2010.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Doucet, Melanie, et al. *Relationships Matter for Youth 'Aging Out' of Care*. Fall 2018.

Global News. "Staff Lose Jobs after Abused Foster Child Dies in Care, Opposition Parties Want Dean Sacked." January 2022.

Government of British Columbia. "Data, Monitoring and Quality Assurance." July 11, 2024. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/data-monitoring-quality-assurance/reporting-monitoring>.

Indigenous Watchdog. "Exclusive Audit Reveals Major Failures in MCFD Region Where Boy Died." October 18, 2023. <https://www.indigenouswatchdog.org/update/exclusive-audit-reveals-major-failures-in-mcfd-region-where-boy-died/>.

Policy Options. "Putting the Care Back into Foster Care." March 2017. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/march-2017/putting-the-care-back-into-foster-care/>.

Representative for Children and Youth. *A Tragedy in Waiting: How B.C.'s child welfare system failed one First Nations youth*. February 2016.

Representative for Children and Youth. *Don't Look Away*. July 2024. Representative for Children and Youth. *Joint Special Report: Hearing the Voices of Children and Youth*. January 2010.

Representative for Children and Youth. *Much More than Paperwork: Proper Planning Essential to Better Lives for B.C.'s Children in Care*. March 2013.


Representative for Children and Youth. *Who Cares?* October 2017.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This policy brief was developed with the guidance and support of numerous individuals and organizations committed to improving the foster care system in British Columbia. Special thanks to the Representative for Children and Youth for their comprehensive reports and audits that provided valuable insights into the systemic issues plaguing the BC Foster Care System.

Additionally, gratitude is extended to Global News for their investigative journalism and reporting, highlighting critical neglect and abuse cases, demonstrating the urgent need for reform. Finally, appreciation is extended to Vancouver Foundation

(VF) and VF staff for all of the unconditional support with resources, as well as positive-energy encouragement. They believe immensely in the change the young generation, like the participants in this program, will bring. Additionally, all child welfare workers, foster caregivers, and advocates who tirelessly work to ensure the safety and well-being of BC's foster children.



*Inadequate monitoring
and compliance in the BC Foster
Care System is a critical issue that
compromises the quality of care
for foster children.*

Vancouver Foundation is Community Inspired. We are a community foundation that connects the generosity of donors with the energy, ideas, and time of people in the community. Together, we've been making meaningful and lasting impacts in neighborhoods and communities since 1943. We work with individuals, corporations, and charitable agencies to create permanent endowment funds and then use the income to support thousands of charities. We recognize that communities are complex and that collaboration between multiple stakeholders is needed to help everyone thrive and evolve. Vancouver Foundation brings together donors, non-profits and charities, government, media and academic institutions, local leaders, and passionate individuals to build meaningful and lasting change in the province of British Columbia. We see young people, their voices and experiences as part of that vision to building meaningful change.

200-475 W. Georgia Street
Vancouver, BC, V6B 4M9

ypp@vancouverfoundation.ca www.levelvf.ca 604.688.2204

[f @LEVELVF](https://www.facebook.com/LEVELVF) [t @LEVEL_VF](https://twitter.com/LEVEL_VF) [@LEVEL_VF](https://www.instagram.com/LEVEL_VF)



AN INITIATIVE OF

vancouver
foundation