

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
INFORMATION NOTE**

DATE: December 3, 2021
CLIFF#: 265070

DATE OF PREVIOUS NOTE: May 26, 2021
PREVIOUS CLIFF #: 260337,255707,250039

PREPARED FOR: Honourable Mitzi Dean, Minister of Children and Family Development

ISSUE: Public Posting of Deaths of Children in Care and Children Not in Care (Received Services in Past Twelve Months) from January 1 to June 30, 2021.

BACKGROUND:

In 1996 the ministry began publishing statistics on deaths of children in care and deaths of children who had received services within the past twelve months under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA)*. The child death statistics are updated every six months and are publicly posted in June and December as a public accountability measure.

A child in care is defined as a child who is in the custody, care or guardianship of a director by court order or agreement under the *CFCSA*.

A child receiving services (not in care) is defined as a child who is not in the director's custody, care or guardianship but is receiving ministry services. These services may include: a child whose family is receiving protective or support services, (i.e., child care workers, respite or family counseling service providers); child and youth mental health services; a youth on a Youth Agreement; a family receiving services to Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN); and children placed in the custody of another person under the director's supervision.

DISCUSSION:

The ministry works with the British Columbia Coroner's Service (BCCS) to confirm its data¹ on child deaths before postings occur. The BCCS may change the classification of a death if new information is revealed during their investigation. When this happens death statistics are updated to reflect the revised classification.

Children in Care Deaths:

From January 1 to June 30, 2021, 6 children in care died. The following classifications of death is information *currently* provided by BCCS :

- 2 Natural;
- 2 Accidental²;
- 1 Suicide;
- 0 Homicide;
- 1 Undetermined - Open; and

¹ Current 2020 child death data was reviewed and reconciled by BCCS as of November 19, 2021.

² Accidental deaths may include motor vehicle accidents, drownings, choking, poisonings (including overdoses), unsafe sleeping practices, house fires or opioid overdoses.

- 0 Undetermined – Closed.

The ministry's analysis of the BCCS data confirms the following:

- 2 of the Accidental deaths were confirmed by BCCS as opioid/fentanyl overdoses;
- All 6 deaths proceeded to Case Review as required by policy - all were File Reviews. 1 of these reviews is completed and 5 are in progress.
- The legal status of the 6 deaths included: 1 Temporary Custody Order and 5 Continuing Custody Orders.
- 5 of the 6 children identified as First Nations, Métis or Inuit; for those identified as Indigenous their death classifications were: 2 Natural; 1 Accidental; 1 Suicide; and 1 Undetermined - Open BCCS investigation.

Deaths of Children who Received Services (not in care) in the previous twelve months:

Between January 1 and June 30, 2021, 43 children who had received services died. The following classifications of death is information *currently* provided by the BCCS:

- 16 Natural³;
- 8 Accidental²;
- 2 Homicide;
- 6 Suicide⁴;
- 10 Undetermined - 9 with an Open BCCS investigation and 1 is Closed.

The ministry's analysis of the BCCS data confirms the following:

- 1 death had no BCCS Classification as the child died outside the province of British Columbia.
- Of the 43 children who died, 10 identified as First Nations, Métis or Inuit; those identified as Indigenous by death classification - 1 Natural; 3 Accidental; 1 Homicide; 2 Suicide; and 3 Undetermined - 3 Open BCCS investigations and 0 Closed.
- 5 of the 8 Accidental deaths were children and youth who died of an opioid/fentanyl overdose, confirmed by BCCS.
- All deaths were reviewed to determine whether a Case Review was required, with 5 proceeding to a Case Review. All 5 are File Reviews- In progress.

SUMMARY:

Child death data from 2020 and 2021 (to date) reveals no significant variations from previous years.

ATTACHMENTS:

FATALITIES OF CHILDREN IN CARE & RECEIVING SERVICES UNDER THE CFCSA

³ The majority of children who died of *Natural* causes were receiving services from the CYSN+ program area; which comprises 37% of the total number of deaths of children receiving services for this time period.

⁴ Suicide deaths - 5 of these 6 deaths were due to hanging, with 2 youth identified as Indigenous First Nations, Métis or Inuit. According to BCCS, the proportion of children and youth who completed suicide by hanging compared to other means of suicide is consistent with historical averages.

Fatalities of Children in Care By Calendar Year

YEAR	NATURAL	ACCIDENT	HOMICIDE	SUICIDE	UNDETERMINED ⁵		TOTALS
					OPEN	CLOSED	
2008	6	5	2	2	0	0	15
2009	8	1	0	1	1	0	11
2010	5	3	0	0	5	0	13
2011	6	1	0	2	0	1	10
2012	6	6	0	2	1	0	15 ⁱⁱ
2013	2	2	2	2	0	1	9 ⁱⁱ
2014 ⁱⁱ	6	3	0	4	0	1	14 ^{iv}
2015	1	4	2	3	1	0	11
2016	4	0	1	1	0	0	7 ^{iv}
2017	4	5	0	0	3	0	12
2018 ^{vi}	5	4	0	2	2	0	13
2019	5	7	1	1	0	0	15 ^{iv}
2020	2	9	0	1	3	0	15
2021	2	2	0	1	1	0	6

Fatalities of Children Receiving Services (Not in Care) By Calendar Year

YEAR	NATURAL ^v	ACCIDENT	HOMICIDE	SUICIDE	UNDETERMINED ⁱ		TOTALS
					OPEN	CLOSED	
2008	46	12	3	1	16	4	82
2009	44	11	3	3	15	2	78
2010	38	12	1	5	6	1	63
2011	40	16	2	2	6	2	69 ⁱⁱⁱ
2012	61	20	1	7	6	1	96
2013	53	10	2	7	0	8	80 ⁱⁱ
2014 ⁱⁱ	38	11	6	4	3	4	67 ^{iv}
2015 ⁱⁱ	70	17	4	11	3	2	110 ^{iv}
2016 ⁱⁱⁱ	54	17	1	9	15	0	97 ^{iv}
2017	58	26	6	12	5	0	108 ^{iv}
2018 ^{vii}	60 ⁱⁱⁱ	22 ⁱⁱ	2	7	7	2 ⁱⁱ	101 ^{vi}
2019	50	18	3	11	2	5	91 ^{iv}
2020	49 ^v	11	1	10	6	6	84 ^{iv}
2021	16	8	2	6	9	1	43 ^{iv}

ⁱ In the "Undetermined" category, "open" indicates a case is still under investigation by the Coroner; "closed" indicates the Coroner's investigation is complete and due to insufficient evidence or inability to determine, the death cannot reasonably be classified as natural, accidental, suicide or homicide.

ⁱⁱ Updated classification from the Coroner regarding cause of death.

ⁱⁱⁱ Late report of death outside of six month bi-yearly report.

^{iv} This total includes 1 fatality where there is no Coroner classification of death because the fatality occurred outside the province or country.

^v 37% of the total number of deaths for January 1 to June 30, 2021 were attributed to Natural causes.

^{vi} These numbers represent data from January 1 to December 31, 2018 - bi-yearly report.

^{vii} This total includes a child in care under the Adoption Act who received services within 12 months of death.

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**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
INFORMATION NOTE**

DATE: June 7, 2021

DATE OF PREVIOUS NOTE: November 27, 2020

CLIFF#: 260337

PREVIOUS CLIFF #: 255707, 250039, 246146

PREPARED FOR: Honourable Mitzi Dean, Minister of Children and Family Development

ISSUE: Public Posting of Deaths of Children in Care and Children Not in Care (received services in past twelve months) from January 1 to December 31, 2020.

BACKGROUND:

In 1996, the ministry began publishing statistics on deaths of children in care and deaths of children who had received services within the past twelve months under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA)*. The child death statistics are updated every six months and are publicly posted in June and December as a public accountability measure.

A child in care is defined as a child who is in the custody, care or guardianship of a director by court order or agreement under the *CFCSA*.

A child receiving services (not in care) is defined as a child who is not in the director's custody, care or guardianship but is receiving ministry services. These services may include: a child whose family is receiving protective or support services, (i.e., child care workers, respite or family counseling service providers); child and youth mental health services; a youth on a Youth Agreement; a family receiving services to Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN); and children placed in the custody of another person under the director's supervision.

DISCUSSION:

The ministry works with the British Columbia Coroner's Service (BCCS) to confirm data¹ on child deaths before postings occur. The Coroner sometimes changes the classification of a death as new information is revealed during their investigation. When this happens death statistics are updated to reflect the revised classification.

Children in Care Deaths:

From January 1 to December 31, 2020, 15 children in care died. The following classifications of death is information *currently* provided by BCCS :

- 2 Natural;
- 9 Accidental²;
- 1 Suicide;
- 0 Homicide;

¹ Current 2020 child death data was reviewed and reconciled by BCCS as of May 20, 2021.

² Accidental deaths may include motor vehicle accidents, drownings, choking, poisonings (including overdoses), unsafe sleeping practices, house fires or opioid overdoses.

- 3 Undetermined - Open; and
- 0 Undetermined - Closed.
- 5 of the accidental deaths were confirmed by BCCS as opioid/fentanyl overdoses;
- All 15 deaths proceeded to Case Review as required by policy - all were File Reviews. 7 of these reviews are completed and 8 are in progress.
- The legal status of the 15 deaths included: 2 Under Removal; 2 Interim Custody Orders; 2 Temporary Custody Orders; 5 Continuing Custody Orders; 3 Special Needs Agreements; and, 1 Voluntary Care Agreement.
- 9 of the 15 children identified as Indigenous, Métis or Inuit; for those identified as Indigenous their death classifications were: 1 Natural; 5 Accidental; 1 Suicide; and 2 Undetermined - Open BCCS investigation.

Deaths of Children who Received Services (not in care) in the previous twelve months:

Between January 1 and December 31, 2020, 84 children who had received services died. The following classifications of death is information *currently* provided by the British Columbia Coroner's Service:

- 49 Natural³;
- 11 Accidental²;
- 1 Homicide;
- 10 Suicide⁴; and
- 12 Undetermined - 6 with an Open BCCS investigation and 6 are Closed; and
- 1 with no BCCS Classification as the child died outside the province of British Columbia.
- Of the 84 children who died, 25 identified as Indigenous, Métis or Inuit; for those identified as Indigenous their death classifications were: 12 Natural; 6 Accidental; 1 Homicide; 3 Suicide; and 3 Undetermined- Open BCCS investigation.
- 7 of the 11 Accidental deaths were children and youth who died of an opioid/fentanyl overdose, confirmed by BCCS.
- All fatalities were reviewed to determine whether a Case Review was required, with 6 proceeding to a Case Review. Of the 6, all are File Reviews, with 5 in progress and 1 completed.

SUMMARY:

Child deaths data from 2019 and 2020 (to date) reveals no significant variations from previous years.

ATTACHMENTS:

FATALITIES OF CHILDREN IN CARE & RECEIVING SERVICES UNDER THE CFCSA

³ The majority of children who died of *Natural* causes were receiving services from the CYSN program area; which comprises 58% of the total number of deaths of children receiving services for this time period.

⁴ Suicide deaths - 5 of these 10 deaths were due to hanging, with 3 identified as Indigenous, Métis or Inuit. According to BCCS, the proportion of children and youth who completed suicide by hanging compared to other means of suicide is consistent with historical averages.

Fatalities of Children in Care By Calendar Year

YEAR	NATURAL	ACCIDENT	HOMICIDE	SUICIDE	UNDETERMINED ⁵		TOTALS
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2010	5	3	0	0	5	0	13
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2013	2	2	2	2	0	1	9 ⁱⁱ
2014 ⁱⁱ	6	3	0	4	0	1	14 ^{iv}
2015	1	4	2	3	1	0	11
2016	4	0	1	1	0	0	7 ^{iv}
2017	4	5	0	0	3	0	12
2018 ^{vi}	5	4	0	2	2	0	13
2019	5	7	1	1	0	0	15 ^{iv}
2020	2	9	0	1	3	0	15

Fatalities of Children Receiving Services (Not in Care) By Calendar Year

YEAR	NATURAL ^v	ACCIDENT	HOMICIDE	SUICIDE	UNDETERMINED ⁱ		TOTALS
					OPEN	CLOSED	
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^{iv} This total includes 1 fatality where there is no Coroner classification of death because the fatality occurred outside the province or country.

^v 58% of the total number of deaths for January 1 to December 31, 2020 were attributed to Natural causes.

^{vi} These numbers represent data from January 1 to December 31, 2018 - bi-yearly report.

^{vii} This total includes a child in care under the Adoption Act who received services within 12 months of death.

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