

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

**DATE:** June 10, 2022  
**CLIFF#:** 269928

**DATE OF PREVIOUS NOTE:** December 03, 2021  
**PREVIOUS CLIFF #:** 265070, 260337, 255707

**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, 2021.

**BACKGROUND:**

In 1996 the ministry began publishing statistics on deaths of children in care and deaths of children who had received services under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA)* or Children and Youth Mental Health services with the past twelve months. 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 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 data<sup>1</sup> 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 statistics are updated to reflect the revised classification.

*Children in Care Deaths:*

From January 1 to December 31, 2021, 10 children in care died. The following classifications of death is *currently* provided by BCCS :

- 3 Natural;
- 3 Accidental<sup>2</sup>;
- 1 Suicide;
- 0 Homicide;

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<sup>1</sup> Current 2021 child death data was reviewed and reconciled by BCCS as of May 11, 2022.

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

- 2 Undetermined - Open; and
- 1 Undetermined – Closed.

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

- All 3 of the Accidental deaths were confirmed by BCCS as opioid/fentanyl overdoses;
- All 10 deaths proceeded to Case Review as required by policy - all 10 are File Reviews; 3 of these reviews are completed and 7 are in progress.
- The legal status of the 10 deaths include: 1 Under Removal (after a Supervision Order); 2 by Temporary Custody Order; and 7 by Continuing Custody Orders.
- 7 of the 10 children identified as First Nations, Métis or Inuit; for those children who identified as Indigenous their death classifications are: 2 Natural; 1 Accidental; 1 Suicide; 2 Undetermined - Open; and 1 Undetermined - Closed.

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

Between January 1 and December 31, 2021, 90 children who had received services died. The following classifications of death is *currently* provided by the BCCS:

- 36 Natural<sup>3</sup>;
- 26 Accidental<sup>2</sup>;
- 9 Suicide<sup>4</sup>;
- 3 Homicide;
- 13 Undetermined - Open; and
- 1 Undetermined - Closed.

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

- 2 deaths had no BCCS Classification as the children died outside the province of British Columbia.
- Of the 90 children who died, 31 children identified as First Nations, Métis or Inuit; those identified as Indigenous children by death classification – 8 Natural; 9 Accidental; 1 Homicide; 4 Suicide; and 8 Undetermined - Open and 1 Undetermined - Closed.
- 4 of the 26 Accidental deaths were children and youth who died of an opioid/fentanyl overdose, confirmed by BCCS.
- 10 of the 26 Accidental deaths, have yet to be confirmed as a result of an opioid/fentanyl overdose, pending a final BCCS Coroner's Report.
- 12 of the 26 Accidental deaths were children and youth who died by other types of accidents, confirmed by BCCS.
- All deaths were reviewed to determine whether a Case Review was required with 15 proceeding to a Case Review. All 15 are File Reviews – 2 are completed; 10 are in progress; 3 are pending case review decisions.

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<sup>3</sup> The majority of children who died of *Natural* causes were receiving services from the CYSN program area; which comprises 41% of the total number of deaths of children receiving services for this time period.

<sup>4</sup> Suicide deaths - 8 of these 9 deaths were due to hanging/asphyxia, with 4 youth 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.

**SUMMARY:**

Child death data from 2020 and 2021 reveals no significant variations from previous years.

**ATTACHMENTS:****FATALITIES OF CHILDREN IN CARE & RECEIVING SERVICES UNDER THE CFCSA****Fatalities of Children in Care By Calendar Year**

YEAR	NATURAL	ACCIDENT	HOMICIDE	SUICIDE	UNDETERMINED <sup>i</sup>		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 <sup>ii</sup>
2013	2	2	2	2	0	1	9 <sup>ii</sup>
2014 <sup>ii</sup>	6	3	0	3	0	1	14 <sup>iii</sup>
2015	1	4	2	3	1	0	11
2016	4	0	1	1	0	0	7 <sup>iii</sup>
2017	4	5	0	0	3	0	12
2018	5	4	0	2	2	0	13
2019	5	7	1	1	0	0	15 <sup>iii</sup>
2020	2	9	0	1	3	0	15
2021	3	3	0	1	2	1	10

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

YEAR	NATURAL <sup>v</sup>	ACCIDENT	HOMICIDE	SUICIDE	UNDETERMINED <sup>i</sup>		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	68
2012	61	20	1	7	6	1	96
2013	53	10	2	7	0	8	80 <sup>ii</sup>
2014 <sup>ii</sup>	38	11	6	4	3	4	67 <sup>iii</sup>
2015 <sup>ii</sup>	70	17	4	11	3	2	110 <sup>iii</sup>
2016	54	17	1	9	15	0	97 <sup>iii</sup>
2017	58	26	6	12	5	0	108 <sup>iii</sup>
2018	65 <sup>iv</sup>	23	2	7	1	2	101 <sup>iii</sup>
2019	50	18	3	11	2	5	91 <sup>iii</sup>
2020	49	11	1	10	6	6	84 <sup>iii</sup>
2021	36 <sup>v</sup>	26	3	9	13	1	90 <sup>iii</sup>

<sup>i</sup> 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.

<sup>ii</sup> Updated classification from the Coroner regarding cause of death.

<sup>iii</sup> This total includes fatality/fatalities where there is no Coroner classification of death because the fatality occurred outside the province or country.

<sup>iv</sup> This total includes a child in care under the Adoption Act who received services within 12 months of death.

<sup>v</sup> 41 % of the total number of deaths for January 1 to December 30, 2021 were attributed to Natural causes.

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