

Advocate for Children and Youth Tables 2025 Annual Report

SASKATOON – Today, the Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth, Dr. Lisa Broda, tabled her 2025 Annual Report with the Legislative Assembly. This is Dr. Broda’s first report of her second term as Advocate and highlights the complex challenges faced by young people, efforts of the office to move the needle on child well-being, and positive steps toward improving services to children and youth in Saskatchewan.

The Advocate reports a continued increase in the complexity and urgency of issues young people are experiencing today. “The issues faced by young people today are complex, layered, and multi-sectoral. Achieving resolution is getting progressively more challenging – both for our office and for those providing services in the child-serving systems,” said Dr. Broda.

In 2025, the most common theme reported to the Advocate across systems such as child welfare, education and health pertained to case management and case planning issues that did not adequately address risk factors or the needs of children. The Advocate’s office supports service providers to reach the best possible outcome for every child within the resources available. However, the report notes that the lack of existing services, combined with human resource shortages in all child-serving sectors, is contributing to delays in assessments, lengthy waitlists for services, and – at times – an inability to comply with applicable policy and legislation.

The report highlights actions taken by the Advocate to address systemic issues. One of these actions pertains to the Advocate formalizing a systemic investigation into case practice and policy compliance within the Ministry of Social Services, Child and Family Programs, and its delegated First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies. That work will continue in 2026 and will focus on Ministry oversight of and support to frontline staff to ensure they have the skills, tools and resources required to meet their mandated responsibilities to children.

The Annual Report also features preliminary findings arising from the Advocate’s systemic investigation into the impact of Saskatchewan’s toxic, illicit drug crisis on young children.

The Advocate is raising the alarm on harms caused by fentanyl, methamphetamine, and cocaine, which are noted to be the illicit substances most commonly impacting children under age five, but cautions that other substances potentially prescribed for therapeutic purposes are also a concern.

Children under age five are particularly vulnerable to unintentional exposure due to their increased contact with contaminated household surfaces (i.e. through crawling and hand-to-mouth behaviour), and their inability to protect themselves in environments where substance use is occurring.

“A single grain of fentanyl left on a table is enough to seriously injure or kill a child. These tragedies

can - and have - happened, even if there is a sober caregiver present. Children must be protected from all forms of harm, as is their right. Every person in Saskatchewan has a duty to report when a child may be at risk of exposure to toxic, illicit drugs,” said Broda.

The Advocate’s investigation into how child-serving systems can better protect children from this harm is ongoing and urges the Saskatchewan community to remain vigilant and report to the child protection system when toxic, illicit drug use is occurring near children.

The Annual Report also reflects the progress on the Advocate’s recommendations pertaining to strengthening safeguards to medically vulnerable and high-risk children in care, enhancing policy and practice applied when children are privately placed, and improving services within independent schools. “Recommendations to the entities that serve children are key for systemic change and improved outcomes in the services provided to young people. We continue to encourage the government to accept and implement our recommendations to uphold and support the rights of children to live to their full potential,” Broda stated.

The Advocate’s contributions to advancements in children’s rights and best practices at the national and international levels continue to positively impact services to young people in Saskatchewan. As President of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates, Dr. Broda’s submissions to the Senate of Canada helped to move forward a framework bill on the development of a National Strategy for Children and Youth, as well as a Senate Committee’s recommendations to better support youth aging out of care.

In 2025, the Advocate’s Youth Advisory Council also had the opportunity to make a submission to the United Nations on the right to early childhood education, as well as to the importance of free primary and secondary education. “The voices of Saskatchewan youth are being heard across the country and the globe. Their perspective and lived experience are key to understanding these issues and the critical impact these issues have on young people. We are proud of their advocacy.” said Dr. Broda.

The Advocate for Children and Youth is an independent office of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. The Advocate leads a team of professionals who work on behalf of the province’s young people. The office’s vision is that the rights, well-being, and voices of children and youth are respected, valued, and supported to assist young people to reach their full potential.

For full details visit www.saskadvocate.ca to view the 2025 Annual Report.

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