



**Media Statement**  
**May 1, 2023**

## **Advocate Encourages Sharing Mental Health Experiences During Mental Health Week**

**SASKATOON** – The Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth, Dr. Lisa Broda, encourages adults to listen to youth when they want to share their experiences about the impact of mental health issues in their lives. May 1 to 7 is the Canadian Mental Health Association’s Mental Health Week, with a focus on sharing stories to help build connections and strong communities.

“As we learned in preparing our 2022 report, *Desperately Waiting*, youth want their voices and stories heard as part of their mental health care journey, to reduce the ongoing stigma, and to improve access to meaningful services,” said Broda. The focus of the recommendations in *Desperately Waiting* relate to prevention and healing. It urges systems to come together in a provincial Children’s Strategy where all child-serving bodies work together to lessen the social and environmental factors that negatively impact the well-being of children and youth.

The government has agreed to implement a Children's Strategy and has committed to filling a gap identified in the health system by opening three residential homes to support youth with significant mental health and addictions issues. “While these steps are being taken, there is more to do. Our report and these issues are a significant priority for our office as we continue to witness the ongoing desperation experienced by youth as they struggle to access mental health services,” stated Broda.

Children and youth involved in the research behind *Desperately Waiting* described being heard and understood by the adults in their lives as essential to reducing stigma and as part of the mental health care they need. “Without genuinely embracing the experiences of young people who are at a crisis point in trying to access appropriate and timely mental health and addictions services, efforts to improve systems will flounder,” said Broda.

“The voices of young people are powerful. During and beyond Mental Health Week, let’s hear them, and let’s work toward compassionate and effective solutions to providing mental health care,” said Broda.

*The Advocate for Children and Youth is an Officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. She leads a team of professionals who work on behalf of the province’s young people independent and apart from government. 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.*

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