



Media Statement
May 2, 2022

Advocate Encourages Empathy to Improve Services During Mental Health Week

SASKATOON – Lisa Broda, Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth, encourages everyone to remember the power of empathy during Mental Health Week (#GetReal) – May 2-8, 2022. “This year’s focus is on using empathy to better understand what is happening for an individual suffering from mental health issues. Hearing from young people on their experiences in dealing with mental health was key in our approach with our recently released report, [*Desperately Waiting*](#), in which we amplified the voices of young people who struggle with mental health and addictions,” said Broda.

Many children and youth involved in the research behind *Desperately Waiting* described being heard and understood as key to reducing stigma and getting the help they need. Without a genuine attempt to empathize with the experiences of young people who are at a crisis point in trying to access mental health and addictions services, efforts to ensure effective change will be compromised.

In *Desperately Waiting*, the Advocate made 14 cross-government recommendations to improve mental health and addictions services to young people including effectively understanding the experiences of children and youth. This includes implementing Youth Advisory Councils within the Ministry of Health and Health Authorities, developing an integrative service-delivery model to enhance communication and coordination of services, and creating a province-wide ‘Children’s Strategy’ to mitigate the social and environmental factors that negatively impact the well-being of children and youth. It is unclear whether the Advocate’s recommendations will be implemented.

“We cannot expect better outcomes without listening to young people and fully appreciating their lived experiences. This will be critical for the change required to ensure every child and youth in Saskatchewan can access service,” said Broda.

The Advocate for Children and Youth is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. She leads a team of professionals who work on behalf of the province’s young people. Our 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. Follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook @saskadvocate.ca

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