

# THE DROP

[On Your **PRIVACY** Rights!]

The Office of the Children's Advocate Newsletter for Youth

**SPRING 2013**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international agreement between many countries around the world. The UNCRC has been in place since 1989 and gives children and youth all over the world more than 40 major human rights. Canada was one country that agreed to protect and promote the rights of all children & youth under 18.

In this newsletter, we explore UNCRC Article 16 –  
**YOUR RIGHT TO PRIVACY.**

## ARTICLE 16

**Right to privacy:** Children have a right to privacy. The law should protect them from attacks against their way of life, their good name, their families and their homes.

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**“The basic idea behind the UNCRC is that children and youth are equals and their rights must be protected.”**  
— Darlene MacDonald, Manitoba Children's Advocate

## inside this issue:

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# the mini drop: Privacy is your right!

OCA Contributor: Bethany Zeitner, practicum student

Privacy is a big deal. Everyone should have the right to some privacy. And as a young person in care, trying to keep things on the down low might get you labeled as “suspicious” but the truth is that we understand that there are just some things that you don’t want the whole world to know. It could be something that you only want to talk about with your family, or concerns about your case plan that you want to talk to an advocate about.

It’s important for you to know that you have the right to speak to a member of our staff without having someone else listening in.

**You have the right to speak to a member of our staff without having someone else listening in.**

Whether you’re living at a friend’s house, in a group home, foster home, shelter, correctional facility - or wherever you’re living - it’s important to talk with the adults around you to figure out how much privacy you can expect and when your privacy might be restricted. Every place you live will probably have slightly different rules but

there are some rules that are the same no matter where you live. Like, you have the right to live in an environment where you have your own personal space and privacy. This could include not having your foster parents or group home staff going through your bedroom or your personal things unless there are safety concerns. You also have the right to make a private phone call or send a private letter to the Office of the Children’s Advocate. So drop us a line ☺

A 15 year old youth in care talks to us about privacy and support:

**“i’m Limited on WHO i can confide in and trust.”**



# Safe Surfing!

Guest contributor, Sarah Hodge Lacroix

We exchange an abundance of information. We are plugged in, connected, and tuned in to the world around us, giving us access to an infinite number of possibilities and opportunities. Music can be recommended to us based on what we've already listened to and we can be texted when the next bus is coming, based on our location. We can get an answer to any question within seconds by simple searches. We are connected virtually everywhere we go. But we need to ask: what is connected to us? And do we want it to be?

Everything we do online is built on a cycle of sending and receiving information, which can be easily stolen. Profile updates, contest entries that ask for our email addresses - there's no guarantee that our information won't be used against us later. Our phones and cameras often automatically tag the exact location a picture is taken. Social networks routinely post your location when you update your profile, making it easier to find you. If trouble happens in that time frame, whether or not you're involved, you can be implicated in that.

Be careful about what information you are sharing. Don't put information like your phone number or address on your profile, even if you set it to private. Privacy policies change so often that what may be private today could be public tomorrow. Putting a password on your phone, enabling encryption, keeping your software up to date and turning off Bluetooth, GPS, and Wi-Fi when not in use will help reduce the chances of your information being stolen.

## A note to caregivers and adults:

Depending on the nature of a young person's vulnerabilities, it may be safer for them to have a simple talk and text phone or Blackberry, both of which are known to be more secure and leak less information. A lack of awareness can lead to vulnerabilities, so talk to young people about their online posts. Tell them what information you are able to see. Awareness makes everyone safer. *Sarah Hodge Lacroix is an alumni member of Voices: Manitoba's Youth in Care Network and System Kidz Co-host. She is the media coordinator at Cyber Defence Challenge, a Canada-wide online safety group.*



Manitoba Children's Advocate, Darlene MacDonald, answers questions about privacy rights for children & youth

## ask the advocate!

**Q: I'm in care – what can my foster parent tell my school about me?**

A: You have the right to reasonable privacy and to have information about you kept confidential. Your foster parent has the responsibility to respect the confidentiality of information about you and your biological family. Your foster parent is responsible for daily contact with the school and for supporting you in your educational goals. Information can be shared that will help the school with your education, for example, whether you are having difficulty with Math, whether you have a hard time getting settled at school. Your social worker is responsible for deciding whether it is necessary to share any personal or family information with the school.

**Q: Can my shelter worker search my room anytime they want?**

A: Being safe and feeling safe is really important and if your shelter worker believes that you, other residents, or any staff are at risk as a result of something they believe you have brought into the residence, this may be reasonable grounds to search your room. You should be told what your shelter worker is worried you have in your room, and if you don't know, you can ask them to explain to you what they are looking for. Each residential care facility should have written policies about safety and security. If you don't agree with the reasons you are given for a search, talk to the shelter supervisor, your worker or contact the Office of the Children's Advocate.



# WORD SEARCH!

Find the words in the list below!

T E R R I A O T S C C T R T  
 Y C O L T U R C R K H I E Y  
 Y C T R R A I T C N P T T G  
 O T C E P S E R N R C R Y E  
 U E I K R R C I I C L B T A  
 T S U R T N R V Y G T I E E  
 H I P O U A A U I S H N F Y  
 C A C W N C O D C R N T A Y  
 I L I E Y L E G V I C I S U  
 Y T I L I B I S N O P S E R  
 N S N S P T A N T P C O S R  
 H I U H N T I O E N Y A D H  
 E O A U T T O S E Y S T R  
 A C O R N N E E O C S E O E

- \* PRIVACY \* YOUTH \* SAFETY \*
- \* RESPONSIBILITY \* ONLINE \* UNCRC \*
- \* ADVOCATE \* WORKER \* TRUST \*
- \* RIGHTS \* RESPECT \* SECURITY \*

Thanks to all of the **Friends of the Newsletter**,  
 who contributed to this edition! ☺ Ainsley



# WAVY GUY ADVENTURES!

We love getting into the community as we work with children, youth, and adults all over the province. We also get requests to present to a wide range of groups and facilities about the work we do for children and youth.

Over the past few months we've been in Gimli, Steinbach, Thompson, Waywayseecappo, The Pas, Portage, Brandon, Hollow Water, Beausejour, God's Lake, St. Theresa Point, Red Sucker Lake, Selkirk, and more!

We take every opportunity we can to meet with children, youth, and adults in order to promote the rights of young people, and advocate for their best interests.

**As a child or youth, you have the RIGHT to:**

- Be Safe,**
- Feel Safe,**
- Have a Say,**
- Have adults listen to you,**
- And to talk to the Children's Advocate.**

If you want to learn more about us, ask us questions, or tell us about any concerns you have in your own situation, or that of another young person you know, get in touch with us!

**We are here to help.**

## Office of the Children's Advocate

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