



**Manitoba Advocate
for Children and Youth**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MANITOBA ADVOCATE RELEASES 2022-23 ANNUAL REPORT, CHILD DEATH DATA

Advocate calls for urgent action and a comprehensive youth mental health strategy amidst highest annual number of deaths by suicide reported to the Manitoba Advocate office.

TREATY 1 TERRITORY AND HOMELAND OF THE RED RIVER MÉTIS, Winnipeg, Man., Dec. 1, 2023 –

Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY) Sherry Gott has released her office's annual report, which summarizes the work of the office during the 2022-23 fiscal year, as well as trends in child advocacy, research, quality assurance, public education, youth engagement, and child death reviews and investigations.

Gott's first year as Manitoba Advocate marked a significant period of reflection and change for MACY, providing the office with the opportunity to assess its approaches and processes. In the spirit of reconciliation, MACY is committed to working from a strengths-based, trauma-informed perspective, that is guided by the wisdom and contributions of Elders and Knowledge Keepers. MACY looks forward to continuing to work with young people, community organizations, service providers, and the general public across our province to ensure that the office's work is well-informed, meaningful, and strategic so that it has the highest impact possible to advance children's rights.

In accordance with MACY's mandate, the Chief Medical Examiner notifies the Manitoba Advocate of all deaths of children, youth, and young adults under the age of 21 in Manitoba. As the 2022-23 fiscal year unfolded, the Advocate noticed a troubling increase in both suicides and overdose-related deaths. These rising statistics have cast a heavy shadow over communities and families across the province, demanding immediate attention. Specifically, these crises require urgent action, including a full continuum of enhanced support services, targeted education initiatives, and collaborative efforts aimed at reducing harm and saving lives.

"Last fiscal year, we tragically lost 37 young people under the age of 21 to suicide," said Manitoba Advocate Sherry Gott. As Gott explains, "this is the highest annual number of deaths by suicide MACY has been notified of by the OCME, representing a 42% increase from the 26 children, youth, and young adult deaths by suicide recorded in 2021-22. These deaths are preventable. The time for action is now. The province must act quickly. Children cannot keep waiting."

Gott is calling for the organization of emergency meetings to develop short and long-term action plans aimed at preventing youth suicides. In addition, MACY has long been calling on the province to establish a comprehensive youth mental health strategy, encompassing a range of evidence-based, culturally-sensitive, trauma-informed, and easily accessible mental health and addiction prevention and intervention services that are designed for young people. This strategy remains outstanding.



Please see the Advocate's companion statement of concern for further information about the ongoing youth suicide crisis. For those interested in speaking with the Advocate, we encourage you to get in touch with MACY using the provided media contact below.

The Manitoba Advocate's annual report highlights important outcomes and outputs achieved in the 2022-23 fiscal year, including the number of children, youth, and young adults who accessed MACY's programs, or joined the office's initiatives and events. The executive summary, available in English, French, Cree, and Oji-Cree, highlights these key statistics:

- 2,555 requests for advocacy services
- 1,012 children, youth, and young adults supported through ongoing advocacy
- 265 formal Manitoba child death notifications received
- 73 child death reviews completed
- 1 report card on government compliance with recommendations
- 1 special report based on children and youth who were exposed to intimate partner violence in Manitoba
- 7 formal recommendations issued to public bodies, based on systemic research on children's rights issues
- 19 responses to new systemic advocacy referrals
- 153 outreach activities across all departments
- 1,652 children and youth who participated in a rights-based lesson plan for National Child Day
- 34,785 Thrival Kits™ delivered to students in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association – Manitoba and Winnipeg

"We will continue to prioritize the needs and rights of young people as we strive to move Manitoba forward to a place where public policies and provincial services prioritize the safety, protection, rights, and wellbeing of all young people. I extend my sincerest gratitude to all of you for your continued support and partnership," stated Gott.

To read the Advocate's 2022-2023 annual report in English or French, visit <https://ManitobaAdvocate.ca/reports-publications/annual-reports/>

To read the Advocate's statement of concern on the ongoing suicide crisis in English or French, visit <https://manitobaadvocate.ca/reports-publications/statements-and-submission/>

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About the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth:

The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY) is an independent, non-partisan office of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. The office represents the rights, interests, and viewpoints of children, youth, and young adults throughout Manitoba who are receiving, or should be receiving, provincial public services. MACY does this by providing direct advocacy support to young people and their families, by reviewing public service delivery after the death or serious injury of a child, and by conducting child-centred research regarding the effectiveness of public services in Manitoba. The Manitoba Advocate is empowered by legislation to make recommendations to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of services provided to children, youth, and young adults. MACY is mandated through *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act*, guided by the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and acts according to the best interests of children and youth.

