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'Every two hours': Manitoba Advocate releases first-ever report on children exposed to intimate partner violence

Advocate makes 7 recommendations to address systemic gaps in service responses and intergenerational cycles of violence.

WINNIPEG, TREATY ONE TERRITORY, HOME OF THE RED RIVER METIS – The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY) is releasing a new special report today, the first of its kind in the province. *Every Two Hours: A Special Report on Children and Youth Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence in Manitoba* follows 671 children exposed to intimate partner violence (IPV) in the month of April 2019, to understand their pathways through service responses from police, Victim Services, and Child and Family Services.

Research conducted by MACY revealed that over a period of just one month in Manitoba, there were 1,943 police-reported cases of IPV, which translates to **one police-reported incident every 20 minutes**. Of those incidents, 342 were witnessed by at least one child or youth under the age of 18 years old. This means **every two hours a child in Manitoba witnesses a police-reported incident of intimate partner violence**.

"This finding is deeply concerning because it is well established that exposure to IPV in childhood can be traumatic for young people. Growing up around violence can shatter feelings of safety and lead to mental health and other challenges that can be lifelong. Sometimes the experience reinforces cycles of intergenerational violence," said Ainsley Krone, Acting Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth. "Importantly, these data are an under-count since many incidents of IPV are never reported to police," Krone added.

The special report found that in April 2019 alone, 671 unique children or youth were exposed to IPV, and Indigenous children and youth were overrepresented (76% First Nation, 5% Metis, and 1% Inuit). Guided by the Knowledge Keeper and Elders Council at MACY, the report includes in-depth interviews with young adults who were exposed to intimate partner violence in childhood. Most young adults interviewed indicated that IPV was intergenerational in their families and often tied to experiences of relatives in residential schools – a finding also articulated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry. Concerningly, the stories shared with us by young adult survivors echoed the picture painted by the data wherein children are not acknowledged as victims, rarely offered direct supports, and frequently carried their trauma silently until finally seeking out services for themselves once they reached adulthood.

Because research tells us that most cases of IPV remain unreported, *Every Two Hours* presents only a small snapshot of a much larger problem in our province. Still, “by any estimate, it is clear that exposure to IPV is widespread in Manitoba with far-reaching consequences for children and youth,” noted Krone. For this reason, she believes, “As a province we need to recognize children who witness IPV are also victims and ensure we provide the services and interventions they need to feel safe and protected.”

While children and youth exposed to IPV are entitled to services that protect them from further violence and support their healing, MACY’s research revealed an enormous gap in the service responses available. **Most children exposed to police-reported IPV (58%) received no service and no therapeutic supports to recover from their trauma**, as is their right under Article 39 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

The seven recommendations issued by the Manitoba Advocate today reposition children as centrally-impacted in cases of IPV. They call on the Government of Manitoba to recognize children as primary victims of IPV, enhance the immediate response for children, develop a coordinated response across multiple departments and service areas, create specialized therapeutic and culturally safe supports for children, and promote healthy relationships in schools to break the cycles of violence.

“Fundamentally, the findings from this report indicate that Manitoba children need us all to commit to providing better trauma care for them so these persistent cycles of violence can be broken,” added Krone. “This special report reflects the voices and wisdom of service providers, system experts, young adults, and Elders, and what they told us backs up the comprehensive research we conducted. The good news is that the recommendations, once implemented, can be the positive change children need so that families are strengthened and all Manitoba children can grow up feeling safe and protected.”

To read the *Every Two Hours* report, [click here](#). To read MACY’s past special reports, recommendations, and to view recommendation compliance tracking, visit our website: ManitobaAdvocate.ca.

About MACY: MACY is an independent, non-partisan office of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. It represents the rights, interests, and viewpoints of children, youth, and young adults throughout Manitoba who are receiving or entitled to public services, including child and family, adoption, disability, mental health, addictions, education, victim supports, or youth justice. The office does this by advocating directly with children and youth, or on their behalf with caregivers and other stakeholders. Advocacy also involves reviewing public services after the death of any young person when that young person or their family was involved with a reviewable service as defined in *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act* (the ACYA). Additionally, the Manitoba Advocate is empowered under provincial law to make recommendations to government and other public bodies, conduct child-centred research, disseminate findings, and educate the public on children’s rights and any other matter under the ACYA.

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