



**About The Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth**

The work of the Advocate’s Office is guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We have a mandate to work with children and youth in the following groups;

- Special Needs
- Child Welfare
- Children’s Mental Health
- Youth Justice
- Provincial and Demonstration Schools
- First Nations

The Advocate’s Office acts on behalf of individual children and youth, or groups of young people – in response to a request, a complaint, or on its own initiative. Our office conducts reviews, makes recommendations, and provides advice to governments, agencies and service providers.

Individual Rights Advocacy

When a child or youth in our mandate has a concern about their rights they can contact us through our toll free line 1-800-263-2841, and are connected with an Individual Rights Advocate. This advocate can provide the young person with rights advice and will work with them to resolve their issue. Young people contact our office for many different reasons, below are just a few examples.

Mandate Area	Concern
Special Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I need a case manager to help me access and navigate services.</li> <li>- I have more than one diagnosis and I am not getting the support and services I need at my school.</li> </ul>
Child Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No one talked to me about my plan of care.</li> <li>- I am not allowed to talk to my biological parents and no one will tell me why.</li> <li>- I am being moved to a new group home and I don’t know why.</li> </ul>
Children’s Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I want to have a say in my treatment plan and medications but no one is listening to me.</li> <li>- I don’t have access to mental health supports when I am at school.</li> </ul>
Youth Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I have been in secure isolation for days, how do I get out of here?</li> <li>- I am not getting the mental health supports I need in secure custody/detention .</li> </ul>
Provincial Demonstration Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I am not being treated fairly in the school’s residence.</li> </ul>
First Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I feel like I am being treated differently in a youth justice facility because I am First Nations.</li> <li>- I had to leave my community to go to high school, but I miss my family and community.</li> </ul>



## FEATHERS OF HOPE

## Provincial Advocate for Children & Youth

### Systemic Advocacy

When we notice patterns or trends in the calls we receive from young people we may choose to take a closer look at an issue through systemic advocacy. This might involve recommendations for policy or funding change, or changes in how a specific facility or program is run.

### Outreach

We partner with communities and organizations to host outreach events with the goal of educating young people, families and services providers about children's rights. If you would like to arrange an outreach visit in your community please contact us at (807) 624-1456.

### Community Development Projects

The Advocate's Office partners with large groups of young people in order to raise their concerns and hear their recommendations for change. Currently our office has active projects partnering with Black youth in systems of care, children and youth with special needs, youth in care, and First Nations youth.

## **Feathers of Hope**

Feathers of Hope is a growing movement that is providing First Nations youth with a powerful voice to share their views and concerns with decision-makers on matters that affect their future. At the first Feathers of Hope forum in 2013, more than 100 youth (representing 62 of the 91 northern First Nations communities in Ontario) came to Thunder Bay to talk about the realities of life in their communities (i.e. mental and physical health, culture and identity, the legacy of residential schools, employment and opportunities for youth). Their voices and ideas for change were captured in a ground-breaking report entitled, Feathers of Hope: A First Nations Youth Action Plan. This report was shared with provincial, federal and First Nations leadership and stakeholders. One of the main recommendations in the report was that young people continue to have opportunities to come together to talk and form recommendations. As a result, the Office of the Provincial Advocate has committed to continue to host annual Feathers of Hope forums, each one addressing a specific topic identified as important by First Nations youth.

### Feathers of Hope Outreach

Each community visit looks a little bit different based on the needs and goals identified by the community. Some potential goals could be to;

- Provide an opportunity for children and youth to learn about children's rights
- Provide an opportunity for young people to learn about Feathers of Hope, what the movement is, what it has accomplished and to meet and speak with our youth amplifiers
- Facilitate youth workshops to encourage young people to share concerns and recommendations about an identified topic

If you would like to arrange to have members of the Feathers of Hope team visit your community, please contact our Thunder Bay office at (807) 624-1456. Additional information about The Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, including the full Feathers of Hope Youth Action Plan can be accessed on our website [www.provincialadvocate.on.ca](http://www.provincialadvocate.on.ca).