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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Children and Family Development

### **Supports extended for youth from care**

VICTORIA – Eligible youth and young adults who have transitioned from government care will continue to benefit from more flexible access to the Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) program, as government extends COVID-19 emergency measures to March 2022.

“All youth transitioning to adulthood need support and strong relationships to help them thrive, and young adults from care can benefit from additional support to set them on a positive path,” said Mitzi Dean, Minister of Children and Family Development. “We know what a tough time this has been for young people, and that’s why, in response to feedback from youth, we are extending our pandemic measures and making access to mental-health services more flexible so that more youth can get the help they need.”

The Province is providing easier access to life-skills, education, mental-health and rehabilitation supports through AYA and extending the emergency measures until March 31, 2022. These measures allow eligible young adults to take part in a wider range of programs to support their goals, like learning how to manage their money, connecting Indigenous peoples with Elders in their community, or working on their mental well-being, all with fewer required hours of participation per week.

“The pandemic has increased the need for mental-health services, but many young adults said it was hard to find 10 hours a week to dedicate to mental health,” Dean said. “Based on this feedback and to ensure more young adults can receive support, the hourly requirement has now been reduced to five hours a week.”

In addition, all youth who are transitioning to adulthood can continue to access housing supports to stay in their homes until March 31, 2022. Those who are eligible for the AYA program can apply to participate in both programs at the same time. Eligible young adults using the emergency housing support may be eligible to receive up to \$350 per month through AYA, based on their needs and the length of their program. Social workers continue to work with youth to transition to adult services as appropriate, including Community Living BC.

“We are so glad that the flexible access to the AYA program has been extended again,” said Lorena Bishop, executive director, Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks. “Young people transitioning from care, like all young people, need a safety net as they enter adulthood. It has been very beneficial for youth from government care to have some of these essential supports that they need. This is an important step to creating a comprehensive support system for youth leaving government care.”

Ministry staff and delegated Aboriginal agency workers are ready to help any young adults who have questions about their eligibility for the AYA program or need additional flexibility in their

services.

These interim measures further complement government's Economic Recovery Plan, as well as its COVID-19 Action Plan to provide income supports, tax relief and direct funding for people, businesses and services.

### **Quick Facts:**

- Between March 2020 and March 2022, an estimated 1,730 young adults will be eligible to benefit from housing and AYA emergency measures.
- Life-skills programs provide guidance for things such as handling finances, grocery shopping, meal planning and writing a résumé to help young people achieve their goals.
- Cultural learning can include things such as language learning, learning land-based practices, family mapping, or connecting with cultural knowledge keepers, Elders or cultural mentors.
- Government announced emergency measures in March 2020 and has extended these measures several times.
- In March 2021, government announced AYA supports would be available until Sept. 30, 2021, and emergency housing supports would be extended to March 31, 2022.

### **Learn More:**

Agreements with Young Adults program: [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/youth-and-family-services/teens-in-foster-care/agreements-with-young-adults](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/youth-and-family-services/teens-in-foster-care/agreements-with-young-adults)

Ministry response to COVID-19: [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/covid-19-information](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/covid-19-information)

Further resources for former youth in care: <https://agedout.com/>

Know your rights as a young person in care: [www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/foster-parenting/know\\_your\\_rights.pdf](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/foster-parenting/know_your_rights.pdf)

Complaints process for young people in care: [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/data-monitoring-quality-assurance/child-family-service-complaints/children-teen-complaint-process](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/data-monitoring-quality-assurance/child-family-service-complaints/children-teen-complaint-process)

For information on B.C.'s COVID-19 Action Plan and other government resources and updates, visit: [www.gov.bc.ca/covid19](http://www.gov.bc.ca/covid19)

For non-medical-related information on COVID-19, visit: [www.gov.bc.ca/covid19](http://www.gov.bc.ca/covid19) or call 1-888-COVID-19

For medical-related information on COVID-19, visit [www.bccdc.ca](http://www.bccdc.ca)  
Or call 811

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