

“HALF THE TIME I FELT LIKE NOBODY LOVED ME”:

THE COSTS OF ‘AGING OUT’ OF STATE GUARDIANSHIP IN ONTARIO

KEY FACTS AND STATISTICS

Approximately **11,700 (0.4%)** of Ontarian children and youth are under state guardianship (MCCSS, 2021). Each year, **1000** youth ‘age out’ of state guardianship in Ontario (and **6000** across the country) (Bowie cited in Doucet, 2020).

Youth under state guardianship come from poverty **80%** of the time (Brownell et al, 2010). Racialized families (**20.8%**) are more likely to experience poverty (OCASI, 2019).

Over half of children (**52.2%**) under age 15 in foster care in Canada are Indigenous, despite Indigenous children accounting for only **7.7%** of the child population (Statistics Canada, 2016).

34% of children and youth under state guardianship through the Children's Aid Society of Toronto are Black, yet only **9%** of Toronto's population under the age of 18 is Black (CAS Toronto, 2017).

56% of youth under state guardianship in Ontario drop out of high school annually (Kovarikova, 2017).

Based on the combined total of lost earnings of youth leaving state guardianship over their lifetimes, the province stands to lose approximately **\$118 to \$315.8 million** in revenue.

The median income of Ontario youth in the initial years after exiting state guardianship was only between **\$10,000 - \$19,999** (CAFC, 2018).

The lifetime cost to the province to support youth leaving state guardianship who rely on income supports like Ontario Works is **\$235 million.**

Approximately **58%** of youth leaving state guardianship each year will experience homelessness (ACTO, 2017).

Only **25%** of youth who experience homelessness after leaving state guardianship will complete their high school education (Nichols, 2014; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006).

Over their lifetime, youth leaving state guardianship who experience homelessness may cost the province approximately **\$629.8 million** for emergency shelter.

The majority of youth in custody (**75%**) cease involvement with the child welfare system while they are detained, losing access to available supports (Bala et al., 2015).

Youth who leave state guardianship and experience incarceration stand to cost the province approximately **\$19.6 to \$36 million** annually; over their lifetime, the province may incur nearly **\$1 billion** in incarceration costs.

Actual costs are likely much higher as this amount does not include other criminal justice expenses.

Two thirds of youth leaving state guardianship experience mental health challenges (Scully & Finlay, 2015) and **one third** have been formally diagnosed with a mental disorder (Kovarikova, 2017).

In Ontario, between 2013 and 2017, the coroner listed **541** deaths involving child welfare; **102** of these children were Indigenous (Jackson, 2019).

The lifetime cost to the province if even **1%** of youth leaving state guardianship require prolonged hospital care over their lifetime is approximately **\$35.6 million**.

Given the connection between adverse childhood experiences and poor health outcomes, this number is likely much higher.

**THE TOTAL ESTIMATED COSTS BORNE BY THE PROVINCE
BASED ON THE ADVERSE OUTCOMES YOUTH LEAVING
STATE GUARDIANSHIP FACE IN THEIR LIFETIME IS
MORE THAN \$2 BILLION.**