

New information and resources for service providers and children and youth in care

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Ombudsman's new unit helps uphold young people's rights in care

It's been three months since May 1, 2019, when the Ontario Ombudsman was given oversight of children's aid societies, residential licensees (such as foster homes and group homes) and secure mental health treatment facilities.

In that time, the Children and Youth Unit at the Ombudsman's Office has received close to 500 complaints about services affecting children in care, including more than 360 about children's aid societies and more than 40 about residential licensees.



Many of the calls involved guiding young people through the processes available to them, including reminding them of their rights, or facilitating conversations with care providers.

In one case, a 16-year-old girl living in a group home told us she had asked her children's

aid society worker to initiate a review of her placement because she felt unsafe, but the caseworker didn't follow up with her.

We contacted the caseworker, who told us she thought the teen was happy where she was living. But when we spoke again to the youth, she told us this was incorrect.

Our Office facilitated a conversation between the two to make sure the teen received a review of her placement, to which she was legally entitled.

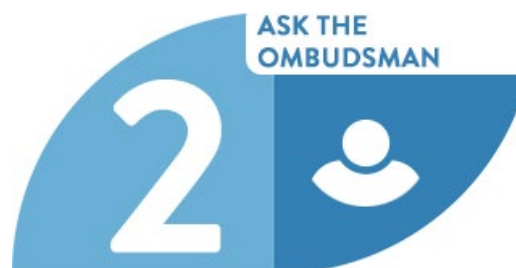
During this conversation, we also learned the caseworker was not familiar with the review process, and didn't know it was her job to assist young people in care initiate reviews of residential placements if requested. We provided her with information about the residential review process. Ombudsman staff will follow up with both the 16-year-old and the caseworker to monitor the outcome of the case.

The Children and Youth Unit has created new tools to assist young people and stakeholders understand what we do, and how we can help. Several are available online now, and over the next few months, we will make these and other items available to service providers to distribute to young people in their care. These include:



[Frequently Asked Questions](#), such as, "Will I get into trouble for calling the Ombudsman?" You can find these on the Children and Youth Unit section of the Ombudsman's website.

[A printable brochure](#) for young people and service providers on what we do, and why they should call us.



[Information outlining some of the important rights young people have in care](#), such as their right to know about the Ombudsman, and their



right to call the Ombudsman privately without delay.

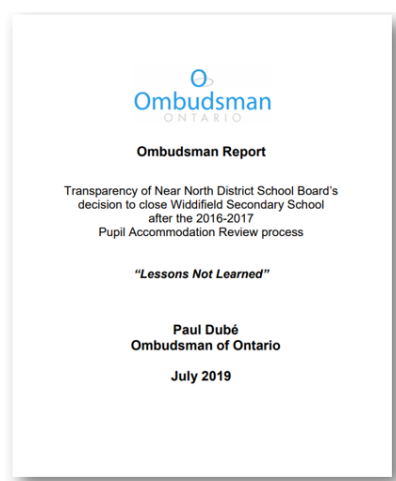
[A guidance document](#) for service providers that lays out the obligations of service providers to uphold young people's rights in care.



How else does the Ombudsman help children and youth? Watch our [new video](#) to learn more.

School consolidation process should be redone, Ombudsman tells school board

In his latest report, released July 17, 2019, Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé called on the Near North District School Board to revisit its



decision to close North Bay's Widdifield Secondary School, after his investigation determined that the board failed to follow a fair and transparent process.

"The board's failure to follow a rigorous and transparent process damaged its relationship with stakeholders," the Ombudsman writes in his report, [*Lessons Not Learned*](#), which notes that the board was advised to implement such measures in the wake of a similar situation in 2013, but never did. "The credibility of the entire consolidation process and closure process was undermined by the board's failure to share relevant information, and ultimately generated public distrust in its final decision."

This case is the second formal investigation of a school board since the Ombudsman's mandate was expanded to include them in September 2015. Of the more than 3,300 complaints we have received about school boards to date, almost all have been resolved informally by Ombudsman staff, through contact with boards and complainants, and by suggesting best practices to help boards improve their procedures.

In the news:

- [Ombudsman calls for review of Near North School Board school closure decision](#) (CBC)
- [Ombudsman findings a 'victory for the Board and citizens' says Aspin](#) (Bay Today)
- [Near North board ready to re-visit consolidation high school issue](#) (My North Bay Now)

[Read the report](#)

ICYMI: Ombudsman's 2018-2019 Annual Report

Did you hear about the auto-correct mistake that led to a typo on a birth

certificate? What about the Tesla owner who only got half of his \$14,000 rebate? These are just a couple of the complaints we received last year. Read all about these, and more, in the [Ombudsman's 2018-2019 annual report](#), released in June.



[File a complaint or contact us here](#)

The Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Ontario legislature who conducts oversight of provincial government agencies and municipalities, universities and school boards. Ombudsman Paul Dubé began his five-year term on April 1, 2016.

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