

## First Call's Weekly Announcements – June 30, 2010

Next ECD Roundtable: July 6

Next Coalition Meeting: September 8

Visit our [web site](#) for more information.

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We encourage you to forward and share the Weekly Announcements with your networks. If circulating excerpts from the Weekly Announcements, please acknowledge First Call as the source of the information.

We welcome your comments, suggestions and any research or event information you wish to have shared with the First Call network. Please let us know what's going on in your community so we can help spread the word!

Please visit our web site at [www.firstcallbc.org](http://www.firstcallbc.org) for further details on upcoming First Call meetings, events, new publications and more.

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**Advocacy/Calls to Action**

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## 1. National Children's Advocates Call for Aboriginal Strategy

Canada's provincial children's advocates and representatives met recently to release a position paper on Aboriginal children and youth in Canada. The advocates council is calling for a meeting of First Ministers, Aboriginals leaders and child and youth delegates to develop a national plan that will measure and report on progress and bring the voices of Aboriginal children and youth to the fore:

*Aboriginal children in Canada today are disproportionately represented in the youth justice and child welfare systems, they have poorer health status, they lag significantly in educational outcomes, and they are too often the victims of sexual exploitation and violence. Their rates of death and injury are disproportionately high.*

*Increasingly, members of the Council are concerned that today's situation has become acceptable to too many Canadians. On the eve of the G8 Summit, where Canada plans to encourage a focus on the health of children and women in the poorest countries in the world, and following the Winnipeg National Event held by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission last weekend, now is the time for Canadians and their leaders to focus energy and resources on this pressing issue.*

The Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates is also reissuing their call for a National Children's Commissioner. And congratulations to BC's Representative for Children and Youth for her recent election as President of this council!

Read the position paper [here](#).

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## 2. Child Care is a Right Project

From CCCABC:

In partnership with the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC is proud to announce our new project "Child Care is a Right". The child care movement began as a central issue of the women's rights movement so it's natural that we would return to our roots and begin to explore child care from a women's, children and family rights position.

The core of our work will be to explore Canada's international treaty obligations to women, children and families as they pertain to child care. We are focusing on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and related General Comment #7, the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Goals of the project include:

- Conducting legal research to clearly draw out the implications of BC's obligations under international treaties to protect children and women's rights for child care;

- Undertaking public education about a rights based approach to women's and children's rights based on the research – with child care as the example; and
- Advancing concrete options for legal and other reforms that support BC's compliance with its international obligations.

Together with our Integrated Early Care and Learning in BC project, these two projects are our top priorities for 2010.

Find out more at [www.cccabc.bc.ca](http://www.cccabc.bc.ca).

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### 3. Needs of Teen Parents on the Rise

From the BC Council for Families' e-news:

*There's a "good news" story making the rounds of media outlets this past week: the teen pregnancy rate in Canada is declining faster than rates in the US, Britain and Sweden, according to a study from the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada. Using data from Statistics Canada, the Sex Information Council determined that Canada's teen birth and abortion rates decreased by nearly 37% between 1996 and 2006. In BC, teen pregnancies decreased by 35% over the ten year period. Meanwhile the US saw a 25% drop, Britain a decrease of almost 5%, and Sweden experienced a 19% increase in its teen pregnancy rate.*

*This decline in the number of births to teenagers in Canada is definitely good news, but what's not such good news is that the support needs of teen parents are actually increasing, while available resources for these vulnerable families are steadily disappearing. In BC in 2007, there were 1466 live births to mothers under 20, according to the Provincial Vital Statistics Agency. As the teen parent population has decreased, attention -- and resources -- have become inadequate to address the increasingly complex risk factors of this smaller yet more vulnerable group of families. In BC, targeted services for Aboriginal young parents are almost non-existent although it is the one segment of the population where the teen birthrate continues to climb.*

*There are currently 41 Young Parent Programs in BC providing childcare, life skills education, and parenting education and support while young mothers finish their high school educations or upgrade their skills. According to a report commissioned by the BC Council for Families in 2004, "The support needs of young parents, particularly the younger ones, are often so varied and intense that a great deal of sustained effort is needed simply to maintain a minimum level of stability in their lives. Support becomes crisis management."*

*Yet as recently as April 9 of this year, the Times Colonist reported that two Vancouver Island daycares offering services to young parents will likely shut due to cuts to their provincial funding. "While the reduction may affect the extent to which they can provide enhanced supports -- such as parenting skills -- this decision should not impact the agency's ability to deliver childcare services because they are receiving the same level of funding as any other provider," the ministry said in a prepared statement.*

Visit [www.bccf.ca](http://www.bccf.ca) to sign up for the e-news.

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## 4. Youth Criminal Justice Act Proposed Amendments Cause Concern

The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children (CCRC) and the Child Welfare League of Canada (CWLC) are speaking out about the implications for Canadian youth if the amendments proposed in Bill C-4 become law. CWLC's Executive Director Peter Dudding presented to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, and "highlighted how previous legislation, in particular the Juvenile Delinquents Act, which focused on lengthy incarceration, proved to be detrimental to the youth who came in contact with the system. The current YCJA, which focuses on rehabilitation and reintegration, is one of the first pieces of legislation to conform to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Bill C4 will reverse the great progress Canada has made in working with young offenders." Read the full brief [here](#).

CCRC also has a brief available on their [website](#):

*Adolescents who get involved in criminal activity after they fall through the cracks of underdeveloped, sporadic, and poorly coordinated services for children in need is the primary challenge for Canada's youth justice system. Young people within the system brought that message directly to a panel of Members of Parliament from all parties at a forum hosted by the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children in 2007. If the findings from the recent consultations on implementation of the Youth Criminal Justice Act are released, prevention through early intervention would likely be the top priority. Some of our members participated in those sessions and more members work directly with young people to help them stay out or get out of the criminal justice system.*

*Unfortunately, Bill C-4 adds nothing to address the primary needs in youth justice. The solution is not incarcerating more children, as Bill C-4 would do. Canada already has a high rate of youth incarceration relative to other industrialized countries.*

Later this summer, provincial justice ministers will meet to discuss the implications of Bill C-4. You can forward these briefs to Attorney General [Mike de Jong](#) and add your comments. The full text of Bill C-4 is available [here](#).

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## 5. Support the Consumer Product Safety Act

Injuries are the leading cause of death for children and youth, and consumer product-related injuries represent 46% of the total. A new Consumer Product Safety Bill Act (C-36) was introduced into the parliament on June 9<sup>th</sup>. Bill C-36 would better protect the health and safety of Canadians as it would:

1. Prohibit the manufacture, importation, advertisement or sale of any consumer products that pose an unreasonable danger to human health or safety;
2. Require industry to report when they know about a serious incident, or death, related to their product to provide government with timely information about important product safety issues;
3. Require manufacturers or importers to provide test/study results on products when asked;
4. Allow Health Canada to recall dangerous consumer products;
5. Make it an offence to package or label consumer products that make false or deceptive health or safety claims;
6. Require companies to retain documents to help trace products throughout the supply chain; and
7. Raise fines and penalties for non-compliance.

The [Safe Kids Canada website](#) has more information about the bill, as well as a [sample letter](#) that can be adapted and sent to your MP. Read the full text of the bill [here](#).

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## Research & Resources

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### 1. Living Wage Calculator for Employers

The Living Wage for Families Campaign has recently started encouraging employers to apply to become Living Wage Employers (see [http://livingwageforfamilies.ca/?page\\_id=22](http://livingwageforfamilies.ca/?page_id=22) for more details).

So far the response has been very positive. 7 organizations have been designated as Living Wage Employers, covering 460 direct employees and numerous other indirect employees. We have had contact with about 40 other organizations about this program and about half of these have expressed an interest in applying to become a Living Wage Employer. We are hoping to publicly launch this program to the wider business community in the fall/winter of this year.

During our conversations with employers, 3 main issues surfaced. We have worked on dealing with these issues so as to make it easier for employers to participate in this program:

1. Calculating how your benefits package affects the Living Wage calculation.

If you pay non-mandatory benefits to your employees, the Living Wage hourly rate will be reduced to take account of this. We have developed a software tool in conjunction with the software company SAP to help employers calculate how their benefit package affects their ability to pay a living wage - see <http://livingwageforfamilies.ca/calculator>. If you have already signed up to be a Living Wage Employer this calculator can be used to ensure that your externally contracted staff are paid a living wage as well.

## 2. How to ensure that externally contracted staff are paid a living wage.

One of the criteria for becoming a Living Wage Employer asks employers to commit to ensuring that all externally contracted staff, who are not direct employees but provide services to the organization onsite on a regular ongoing basis, are paid a Living Wage. Many employers we have talked to have expressed concern about their ability to fulfill this condition. To meet this condition, successful applicants need to undertake the following:

If the staff are directly contracted by your organization. When the contract comes up for renewal you should include a living wage clause as part of your Request for Proposals (RFP).

If the staff are not directly contracted by you, but do provide services onsite -for example as part of a tenancy agreement. You should advocate for a living wage clause to be included in the agreement/contract when it comes up for renewal.

If after fulfilling the above you are not able to ensure that all contracted staff will be paid a living wage, you should communicate to the Living Wage for Families what efforts you have taken to have a living wage clause included in your external contracts and the reasons for the inability to comply. You will be allowed to keep your Living Wage Employer status if there is a legitimate reason for you being unable fulfill this condition, for example if there were no response to a RFP that included a living wage clause.

## 3. How do changes in the Living Wage calculation affect my status/application.

Every year the Living Wage is re-calculated to take account of cost of living and government tax/benefits changes. At the start of May the Living Wage for Metro Vancouver was recalculated based on the most up to date data available as \$18.17 (see the calculation report [here](#)). This means that any applications received after this date will be assessed based on the new \$18.17 figure. Living Wage Employers will be notified of changes to the Living Wage figure every year. We will ask Living Wage Employers to apply to be re-certified every 2 years based on the existing Living Wage figure at that time.

Please circulate this information to your manager or board of your organization if you feel they may be interested in this program. More information about the Living Wage for Families campaign can be found at [www.livingwageforfamilies.ca](http://www.livingwageforfamilies.ca).

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## 2. Resources on the Right to Play and First Nations, Inuit and Métis Play

**Society for Children and Youth** has a new article on the right to play:

### ***What is free play?***

*Free unstructured time where kids (and adults!) can imagine, build, create, and dream without distraction and stress. Free play can take place almost anywhere: outside, playgrounds, backyards, in a cardboard box ... play can happen with friends, mentors, parents, siblings, or some good old fashioned alone time. It de-stresses, is spontaneous, and is carefree.*

### ***Why free play?***

*Play and rest is a right guaranteed under article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has been included as a right because it is recognized by kids and adults that play is a part of childhood and healthy development.*

*Researchers are finding that North American children are under enormous amounts of stress from changes in family structure, not enough physical activity, a hurried, and an over programmed lifestyle (think soccer from 3:30-4:45, piano from 5:00-5:30, dinner from 5:30-5:45, homework from 5:45-6:15, judo practice from 6:30-7:15, get ready for bed 7:15-7:30, sleep, get up, go to school, do it all over again). Whoa! Exhausting!!*

*Free play makes kids smarter. Research shows it helps kids develop fine and gross motor skills, and presents opportunities for social, moral, and emotional development. Situations encountered during free play increases brain plasticity and literally expands kids' minds to create new neural pathways that increases capacity for creative thinking, stress management, and problem solving—in childhood and for the rest of their lives.*

*Yep, play does all that and more, so this summer help the kids in your life have a little play time.*

*For more information on play and advocating for play, check out [SCY's position paper on play](#).*

From the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, the **First Nations, Inuit and Métis Supplement** is an additional resource to the Everybody Gets to Play Community Mobilization Tool Kit that provides you with tools and information needed to mobilize your community to reduce barriers to recreation participation for First Nations, Inuit and Métis families. The Tool Kit can be ordered online [here](#).

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## 3. From Foster Care to Homelessness: Report on California Child Welfare

A new report from Human Rights Watch says that California is creating homeless adults by failing to ensure that youth in foster care are given the support to live

independently as adults and by ending state support abruptly. More than 20% of the youth who age out of care in California become homeless, and the state has recently proposed budget cuts to child welfare. Human Rights Watch has called on California to provide more options for foster youth as they transition out of care, which may include more time at home before moving out, a place to stay during college vacations, and other options for housing, mentoring and support. There may be lessons for BC from California's experience. Read more from the report [here](#).

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## 4. Balanced Technology Management for Schools

From a *Zone'in* article on technology overuse:

*The 21st century has borne witness to nothing short of an explosion in use of electronic technologies, both at home and in school settings. Education systems have joined the race to stock their schools with the latest and greatest new technologies, striving to provide their students with up to date learning tools and techniques. Unfortunately, there is limited research regarding the actual effectiveness of these electronic devices to facilitate learning, empirical evidence the education systems once used as the gold standard to determine teaching methods. More worrisome is the existing research regarding the long term effects of technology overuse on the developing child shows detrimental effects on physical, mental, social and academic performance. Another parameter worth considering regarding the issue of technology overuse is the fact that education systems throughout North America are experiencing whole scale financial crises. While school districts lay off teachers, close schools, and cordon off playgrounds with yellow tape due to disrepair, one has to question educators choice to continue to spend escalating amounts of money on student technologies that are antiquated before they even comes out of the box! It's time to face the facts regarding the impact of technology overuse, and work together to manage a balance between activities children need for growth and success with technology use.*

*So how much technology use is too much when considering the developing child, and what measures can the education system take to ensure children who overuse technology are still achieve optimal growth and academic performance? A quick review of the research is imperative if educators are to understand the impact of technology overuse on child health and academic performance. Children now use an average 7.5 hours per day of entertainment technologies, largely unsupervised due to the fact that 75% of children have either a TV or computer in their bedroom (Kaiser Foundation 2010). The subsequent impact of this sedentary yet chaotic technology overuse on a child's physical, mental, social and academic performance is astounding, to say the least. Child obesity is a North American epidemic (Tremblay M 2007). One third of children entering school are developmentally delayed (Kershaw P 2009) and 1 in 6 children have been diagnosed with a mental illness (Waddell C 2007). Child aggression and acts of violence in schools are at an all time high (Vancouver Sun 2010), while ability to communicate and socialize at an all time low (Christakis D 2007). Academically, literacy is declining as attention and learning disabilities escalate, leaving educators wondering how they can possibly teach children who are also sleep deprived and hard wired for high speed. [...]*

[Read more.](#)

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## 5. News from Board Voice

The latest newsletter from Board Voice highlights the work that this organization of community social services boards of directors is undertaking to raise the profile of the sector. Board Voice will hold a conference and Annual General Meeting on October 22 and 23. Visit their website to find out more at [www.boardvoice.ca](http://www.boardvoice.ca).

Here is Board Voice's update on their advocacy around provincial funding cuts:

*Board Voice has been actively discussing the impact of funding cuts with both government and community over the past six months. An OpEd article in January was followed by letters to the editor, letters to our membership, and meetings with boards and government officials. Most recently, Board Voice met with Allan Seckel, Deputy Minister to the Premier, where Anthony Ostler, Dave Duncan and Doug Hayman engaged Mr. Seckel in an interesting discussion on the social determinants of health and received considerable support for the ideas presented. We have also heard back from the Minister of Finance, to whom we had directed a letter about the impact of the HST on already strained agency budgets. He suggested that the rebate for social service agencies (57%) was assessed as ensuring that the impact would be revenue neutral. We shall see! The board also weighed in on the Municipal Pension Plan and heard back from the Finance Minister.*

*MCFD cuts are only now being disclosed to agencies across the province. The good news is that the original intent to cut 10 million dollars has been reduced to 5 million in cuts to community agencies. (This is in addition to a 5 million dollar transfer of funds to Aboriginal agencies and cuts related to regional deficits). Obviously, no one is happy about these cuts, but for the most part, agencies report that the process seems to be a respectful one.*

*Health Authorities, on the other hand, are making cuts to mental health and addictions programs with little discussion. The compounded impact of these cuts is devastating for some agencies and will have unintended consequences. Both Board Voice and the Federation of Community Social Services are asking that a broader social policy framework be put in place and, if cuts must happen, a process developed whereby the impact of cuts can be assessed across ministries prior to operationalizing them.*

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## Announcements

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## 1. Save the Date for First Call's Annual Dinner!

First Call is pleased to announce that our annual celebration and fundraising dinner will take place on Thursday, October 28! Watch this space for news on our special guest soon.

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## 2. Champions for Children and Youth Summit

From the Representative for Children and Youth:

The 2010 Champions for Children and Youth Summit is a two-day conference to educate, challenge and inspire us all to prepare a better path for B.C.'s children and youth. We celebrate progress and encourage excellence in those individuals and organizations who are working intensely towards that goal.

The children and youth of B.C. live in an exciting yet challenging time. Champions for Children and Youth provides us with an opportunity to tap into the great potential for opening hearts and provoking the ripple effects of change.

As B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth, I and the Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Perry Kendall, will be publicly releasing a report titled Growing Up in B.C. The report will provide the results of an in-depth look at how we are doing as a province, with respect to the rights of our children to be safe, healthy, and educated, and to have positive connections and equal opportunities throughout the province and across cultures. It will also highlight where we need to work harder to make a difference in the lives of our young people.

We will hear from and have discussions with national and international experts, rooted in the findings of Growing Up in B.C. – what's working, what's not working and what we can be striving for. We will also hear from children and youth, ensuring that their sometimes soft voices play a meaningful role.

Champions for Children and Youth 2010 has great potential to inspire all who attend in finding and encouraging real ways to positively impact the lives of those B.C. children most deserving of our support and protection. Our great hope is that those who attend will take this inspiration and new knowledge forward, into their workplaces and communities, and multiply the effect of the Summit.

The summit will take place on October 18 and 19 at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre. Find out more and register [here](#).

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## 3. FASD Collaboration Roundtables Fall Conference Brochure

The Surrey & Vancouver FASD Collaboration Roundtables is pleased to announce the 3rd Annual FASD "Creating Change" Fall Conference on Oct 22nd and 23rd 2010 at Douglas College New Westminster Campus.

The conference brochure and registration form are available [here](#). Please fill out and mail completed registration forms to:

FASD Fall Conference  
C/O The Centre for Child Development  
9460 140th Street  
Surrey BC V3V 5Z4

Please send any inquires to [mailbox@pcrs.ca](mailto:mailbox@pcrs.ca) with the subject line FASD Fall Conference.

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#### 4. Community School Partnerships Conference

The 2010 CSP - Community School Partnerships Conference will take place on Thursday, October 21 and Friday, October 22 at the Bell Performing Arts Centre in Surrey. Registration is now open – click [here](#) for more information.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

- Thursday Evening with Stephen Lewis
- Friday morning with Dr. Ruby Payne

IN ADDITION:

- 30 Friday afternoon workshops with featured local speakers
- Panel discussion
- Community Marketplace

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#### 5. RSVP Healthy Relationships Summer Group - Vancouver

Do you know a child or youth in grades 5-7 who could benefit from feeling better about themselves, learning how to express their feelings in healthy ways and/or learning how to be assertive this summer? The Respect, Safety and Violence Prevention Program (RSVP) is offering 5 half-day sessions full of expressive arts, games and other activities in a one week summer intensive.

WHEN: July 12-16 from 9AM – 12 PM. An additional week may be added if there is enough interest.

WHERE: Family Services of Greater Vancouver, Kingsway Office, 202-1193 Kingsway, Vancouver, BC

COST: \$175.00 for the week. This includes all supplies and snacks!

Who is going to facilitate the group? Trained counsellors will facilitate the group.

How many children/youth will be in the group? A maximum of 10 children can be in the group, so please send in your registration as soon as possible!

How do I register my child? Contact Jennifer Westoby, Coordinator of the RSVP Program, at 604-874-2938 or [jwestoby@fsgv.ca](mailto:jwestoby@fsgv.ca).

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