

## New Protection Services for 16 and 17 year olds

On January 1, 2018 the age of protection increased to age eighteen. Youth who are 16 and 17 and are experiencing or at risk of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect or abandonment are eligible for the full range of services offered by BGCFS. Youth who have left home or are homeless due to safety concerns or risk of harm at home may be eligible to receive service. It is hoped with better support, youth will have better outcomes as they transition to adulthood.

Anyone may now make a report if they have reasonable suspicion that a 16 or 17 year old is in need of protection. BGCFS will assess the report using the Ontario Child Welfare Eligibility Spectrum to determine the appropriate response.

BGCFS will work with the youth and their family to help improve things at home. If at any point in time it is determined the youth is in need of protection and needs an out of home placement, BGCFS will consider the following options:

- Kinship Service – is there anyone in the youth's extended family or community who could care for the youth
- Customary Care – for Indigenous youth, a placement can be arranged according to the custom of the youth's band or native community
- Voluntary Youth Service Agreement – an agreement between the youth and BGCFS which will determine the supports and services provided to the youth
- Temporary Care Agreement – an agreement between the youth's parents and BGCFS in which BGCFS agrees to care for the youth for a temporary period of time. The youth must be consulted and agree.
- Admission by Court Order – this is only an option if less disruptive options are not available

The Voluntary Youth Service Agreement is a new support BGCFS can offer to youth age 16 and 17. In order to be eligible the youth must be in need of protection, cannot be protected through any other means and want to enter into the agreement. Through the VYSA, the youth and BGCFS will develop a plan to assist the youth in securing a living arrangement that best meets the needs of the youth. It will also determine the times of support the youth needs to be successful. As it is a voluntary agreement, the youth can chose to terminate it at any time.

BGCFS is ready to serve the youth in our community age 16 and 17 who are in need of protection. If you know of a youth this age who requires our services please contact us at 519-371-4453 or 1-855-322-4453.