

AR 346

Abid Mavani
Fatality Inquiry Coordinator
Justice, Legal Services Division
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Dear Abid Mavani:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Honourable Judge B.R. Hougestol's Public Fatality Inquiry into the death of Haley Marie Penney and his recommendation that the Government continue to study the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs (PChAD) program and consider how it might be better coupled with after PChAD therapy.

Alberta Mental Health and Addiction reviewed the report and accepts the recommendation. Improving access to addiction and mental health services, supports and treatment for children and youth is an ongoing priority for the Ministry, and in the time that has passed since her death significant work has been undertaken towards advancing this priority.

This recommendation aligns well those of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate's 2018 investigative report, "Into Focus: Calling Attention to Youth Opioid Use in Alberta," which recommended Alberta Health undertake a review of the PChAD Act and policies. Alberta Health conducted this review in 2020/2021. The review incorporated input from Alberta Health Services (AHS), partner ministries and community stakeholders through MLA-led engagements. Alberta Mental Health and Addiction retained accountability for the review in the recent split from Alberta Health and is working with AHS to implement the recommendations from this review.

Although PChAD is an involuntary, court-mandated program, the Inquiry report notes it is not obligatory for youth leaving PChAD to access treatment and community service programs recommended in their discharge plan. Similarly, the recommendations arising from the Alberta Health PChAD review indicate the need for warm hand-offs for youth in PChAD to post-discharge treatment and community services, and Mental Health and Addiction is working with AHS in this area.

Beyond PChAD-specific efforts, the Ministry is engaged in work to improve access to child and youth addiction and mental health services as an important component of Alberta's transition to

a recovery-oriented system of care for those Albertans struggling with addiction and mental health issues. I anticipate being able to share details about this work as the year progresses.

Again, thank you for bringing the public fatality inquiry report and recommendations to my attention.

Sincerely,

Original Signed

Evan Romanow
Deputy Minister (Acting)
Mental Health and Addiction