

15-YEAR-OLD MATTHEW

Serious Injury

AN INVESTIGATIVE REVIEW

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, Alberta

July 2026

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Under my authority and duty as identified in Section 9(2)(d) of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act (CYAA)*, the following is an individual investigative review regarding Matthew. His circumstances meet the criteria for a **systemic review**. Matthew and his family were receiving Child Intervention through an Apprehension Order at the time of his serious injury.

Investigative reviews are designed to improve the lives of young people by identifying ways to enhance services and supports, leading to system improvements and better outcomes for young people and their families.

The investigation process includes:

- Examination of critical issues
- Review of documentation and reports
- Review of policy and casework practice
- Personal interviews
- Other factors that may arise for consideration
- Notification and involvement of the young person's family, Band, Delegated First Nation Agency, community or cultural group, relevant Ministry, law enforcement agency, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Alberta Health Services, and any other person the Advocate considers appropriate.

In accordance with the CYAA, investigative reviews must be non-identifying. Therefore, the names used in these reports are pseudonyms (false names). Great care has been taken to protect their privacy; however, there is no guarantee that interested parties will be unable to identify them. Accordingly, readers and interested parties, including the media, should respect this privacy and not focus on identifying the individuals and locations involved in these matters.

Investigative reviews do not contain findings of legal responsibility or conclusions of law nor replace other processes that may occur, such as investigations or prosecutions under the *Criminal Code* of Canada. The intent of a review is not to find fault with specific individuals but to identify key issues and meaningful findings.

Matthew's experiences were unique, and his injury has left a lasting impression on him and his family's lives. My thoughts are with Matthew, his family, and those who care about Matthew.

Respectfully,

[Original signed by Terri Pelton]

Terri Pelton

Child and Youth Advocate (Alberta)

ABOUT MATTHEW AND HIS FAMILY

Matthew¹ was 15 years old when he was seriously injured after a suicide attempt. He and his family were receiving Child Intervention through an **Apprehension Order**² at the time of his injury.

Matthew is an insightful and energetic Métis youth. He has a strong connection to his family and culture. Before his injury, he enjoyed hunting with his father and uncles. Matthew is the oldest of Tina and Henry's three children; they separated when he was 12 years old. Matthew, his brother, Felix, and his sister, Maya, lived with their mother.

SUMMARY OF MATTHEW'S EXPERIENCES WITH GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

Matthew from Birth to 6 Years Old

Matthew had limited systems involvement in his first six years. He was born healthy and received routine medical care for minor illnesses and injuries.

When Matthew was four years old, he and his family moved to another province. Concerns were noted with his development, and he began an early education program.

He was assessed and diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and language delays but met his developmental milestones.

Matthew from 7 to 12 Years Old

When Matthew was seven years old, he and his family returned to Alberta. Soon after, his health declined, and he was diagnosed with kidney disease. He was prescribed medication and discharged to his parents' care.

In Grade 2, teachers noted that Matthew struggled with transitions and had verbal and physical outbursts. School staff supported him with quiet spaces, and he worked with the counsellor to develop skills to manage his behaviours. The following year, Matthew was assessed and received several diagnoses, including generalized anxiety disorder and Tourette's Syndrome. He was seen by a child psychiatrist who prescribed and monitored his medications. That same year, Matthew changed schools; the reason for the move is not known.

In Grade 4, Matthew had an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) that included an educational assistant and modified programming. He worked with a counsellor over the following year to develop skills to manage his emotions.

When Matthew was 10 years old, Tina was approved for Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD). Services included respite care and a community aide. FSCD caseworkers met regularly with the family, and services were adjusted to meet Matthew's evolving needs.

In Grade 5, Matthew changed schools; the reason is not known. That same year, the COVID-19 public health measures were put in place, and school transitioned to online learning, which impacted his supports. When in-person education resumed, Matthew's emotional and physical outbursts continued, and his IPP was adjusted.

When Matthew was 11 years old, Child Intervention received a report about neglect. Concerns were related to inappropriate touching between him and his younger brother, Felix. Caseworkers met with the family and developed a plan to increase supervision. It was noted that Tina and Henry were connected to various community-based supports, including FSCD. Intervention involvement ended.

Two months later, Tina contacted FSCD caseworkers and voiced that she and Henry could not manage Matthew's emotional and physical outbursts. They were approved for additional supports, including speech and language, and occupational therapy.

Matthew's behaviours did not improve, and his parents placed him in a private behavioural treatment centre, where he also went to school. While there, Tina and Henry told the school counsellor about inappropriate touching between Matthew and Felix; the outcome of the conversation is not known.

In Grade 7, Matthew was assessed by the school psychologist and was diagnosed with oppositional defiant disorder. Recommendations included remaining at the treatment centre, family counselling, continued psychiatric support and developing problem-solving and anger management skills. Matthew returned home and completed Grade 7 at his community school. His behaviours persisted, and his parents moved him to another school that specialized in working with young people who had behavioural needs.

When Matthew was 12 years old, his parents separated, and Tina became the children's primary caregiver. Matthew's mental health deteriorated, and he had suicidal ideation. Tina worked with school staff to connect him to children's mental health services, and he was prescribed medication and began working with his therapist again. While visiting his father, Matthew was taken to the hospital after attempting suicide. He voiced that life was meaningless, and Henry told medical staff that this was not Matthew's first attempt. Hospital staff confirmed that he was connected to counselling and FSCD. He was discharged to Henry's care, and they were encouraged to connect with existing supports.

1. All names in the report are pseudonyms.

2. Bolded terms are defined in Appendix A.

Matthew from 13 to 15 Years Old

Matthew continued to have physical and emotional outbursts. Tina asked FSCD caseworkers for additional support and was reminded that she had unused respite services available. Matthew continued to work with his therapist and psychiatrist.

That same year, Child Intervention received a report about the inability to protect from sexual abuse. Concerns were related to inappropriate touching between 13-year-old Matthew and 9-year-old Felix. The police investigated, and Matthew was charged and received a Probation Order that included no contact with Felix and attending a rehabilitation program, which was arranged. Health care professionals, probation officers, and Child Intervention and FSCD caseworkers met to discuss planning. Tina and Henry decided that Matthew would live with his father until the Probation Order ended. Matthew began court-ordered individual and group therapy. Child Intervention involvement ended.

Matthew had several school moves in junior high school because of his unstable circumstances; however, his school-based supports continued with each move. When Matthew was 15 years old, FSCD caseworkers began planning to explore transitions to adult disability services. They helped Tina and Henry begin the application process, arranged for updated assessments, and connected them to community-based agencies that provided supports for young people.

That same year, Matthew called Child Intervention for support. He said that he was concerned about his father's alcohol use and the conflict between them. Within days, Henry brought Matthew to their office and said that he could no longer provide care. Caseworkers contacted Tina, who said that she did not have the capacity to meet Matthew's needs. He was apprehended and placed in group care.

Days later, Matthew attempted suicide. He was taken to the hospital, treated, and discharged to group care staff. He was connected to psychiatric support, but his situation remained unstable.

That same week, 15-year-old Matthew was found unresponsive in the community after a suicide attempt. He was admitted to the hospital, was treated, and has since recovered. Matthew and his family continue to receive Child Intervention under an **Enhancement Agreement**.

TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Birth to 6 Years Old	7 to 12 Years Old	13 to 15 Years Old
• Born healthy • 4 – 6 Years Old · Moved to another province · Assessed · Diagnosed with attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder and language delays	• 7 Years Old · Returned to Alberta · Health declined · Diagnosed with kidney disease • 8 – 9 Years Old · Several school moves · Assessed · Diagnoses included generalized anxiety disorder and Tourette’s Syndrome · Pharmaceutical, psychiatric and therapeutic supports · Individualized Program Plan · Educational assistant and modified programming • 10 – 11 Years Old · Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) · Child Intervention involvement • 12 Years Old · Private behavioural treatment centre · Assessed · Diagnosed with oppositional defiance disorder · Several school moves · Suicidal ideation · Medication and counselling support · 2 suicide attempts	• 13 – 14 Years Old · Child Intervention involvement · Police investigation · Charged · Probation Order · Several school moves • 15 Years Old · Transition to adulthood planning through FSCD · Child Intervention involvement · Apprehended · Group care · Suicide attempt · Psychiatric support 15-year-old Matthew seriously injured

FINDINGS

Children and Family Services

Child Intervention was involved with Matthew and his family 3 times, beginning when he was 11 years old. Concerns were related to neglect, emotional injury, and inability to protect from sexual abuse. Caseworkers shared information and collaborated with other service providers, developed safety plans with the family, and arranged for community-based supports. Interventions evolved to address the escalating concerns.

Health and Mental Health and Addiction

Matthew received routine medical care for minor illnesses and injuries. As his mental health needs escalated, he received timely pharmaceutical, psychiatric, and therapeutic supports. Health care providers shared information and collaborated with other professionals to inform planning.

Education

Matthew moved schools frequently; however, his supports continued with each move. When concerns were noted for his educational and social development, he had timely assessments and received several diagnoses. Recommendations informed Individualized Program Plans, and supports were promptly implemented. Educators shared information and collaborated with professionals to inform planning.

Justice

Matthew became involved with the youth justice system at 13 years old and received probation. Justice staff shared information and collaborated with other professionals to inform planning and promptly arranged supports so he could meet his probation conditions.

Assisted Living and Social Services

Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) began supporting Matthew and his family when he was 10 years old. FSCD caseworkers met with them regularly and supports were adapted to meet their evolving needs. FSCD staff shared information and collaborated with professionals to inform planning.

THEMES TO TRACK

1. Information sharing and collaboration

Professionals involved with Matthew and his family shared information and collaborated to inform planning.

2. Suicide

Matthew first attempted suicide at 12 years old, and was seriously injured after his fourth attempt at 15 years old.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

Apprehension Order

The court grants the “Director” as defined in the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* (CYFEA) temporary custody of the child on reasonable and probable grounds that the child needs intervention in accordance with CYFEA.

Enhancement Agreement (EA)

A voluntary agreement under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* to provide services and support to a family or a young person who is 16 or 17 years old. It is intended to address protection concerns while the child remains with a guardian or lives independently.

Systemic Review

Under the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, the Advocate may conduct a public review when a young person is seriously injured or dies while (or within two years of) receiving designated services (*Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* intakes, assessments, post-18 supports, was in open or closed custody under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, and/or involvement under the *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act*) to determine if systemic issues are present.

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NORTH OFFICE

600, 9925 109 Street NW
Edmonton AB T5K 2J8



SOUTH OFFICE

2420, 801 6 Avenue SW
Calgary AB T2P 3W3