

15-YEAR-OLD MIVA

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 Miva. Her circumstances meet the criteria for a **systemic review**. Miva was receiving Child Intervention through a Permanent Guardianship Order at the time of her 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. Releasing individual reviews ensures that each young person's circumstance is reported in a consistent manner and provides increased transparency and public accountability. I believe that this is in the public interest. I will review and report annually on themes identified across the investigative reviews and include recommendations.

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.

Miva's experiences were unique, and her injury has left a lasting impact on her. My thoughts are with Miva, her family, and those who care about Miva.

Respectfully,

[Original signed by Terri Pelton]

Terri Pelton

Child and Youth Advocate (Alberta)

ABOUT MIVA AND HER FAMILY

Miva¹ was 15 years old when she was seriously injured following a suicide attempt. She was receiving Child Intervention through a **Permanent Guardianship Order² (PGO)** at the time of her injury.

Miva is a creative, loyal, and passionate young woman who cares deeply about her friends. She loves animals, nature, and science, and hopes to work in the veterinary field. Miva is the oldest of Alain and Delphine's two children. At times, her parents used substances, and their relationship was violent. They separated when she was a year old. She and her brother lived with Delphine until she was nine years old.

SUMMARY OF MIVA'S EXPERIENCES WITH GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

Miva from Birth to 7 Years Old

Miva was prenatally exposed to substances and was born premature. She was hospitalized and discharged to her parents' care at 11 days old. Child Intervention received a report about neglect and emotional injury related to her parents' substance use and mental health concerns. A **Supervision Order (SO)** was obtained, and Alain and Delphine received in-home supports. Soon after, he was incarcerated for threats of violence, and at the conclusion of the SO, Delphine entered into an **Enhancement Agreement (EA)**. Caseworkers received confirmation that she used methamphetamine, and eight-month-old Miva was **apprehended** and placed in foster care.

The following month, Miva was returned to Delphine's care under an SO. Terms included the family living with their maternal aunt, Lisa, and relatives providing supervision. Their demanding work schedules impacted their ability to do so, and when alternate arrangements could not be made, Miva was apprehended and placed in foster care.

Within days, Miva was moved to a new foster home because her caregivers said that they could not manage her excessive crying; they declined respite care. Her new caregivers indicated that they were unable to provide long-term care due to work obligations. Miva remained there for four months before the placement ended abruptly because the foster family's circumstances changed. She was moved to her fourth foster home.

Alain was released and moved back in with Delphine. Shortly after, Damien was born, and Alain and Delphine separated. The family's circumstances remained unchanged, and

Damien was apprehended and placed in a different foster home than his sister.

Over the following three months, Delphine worked on her sobriety. She and Alain had separate parenting assessments, which found that with ongoing therapeutic and addiction supports, they had the capacity to parent their children. Soon after, Alain was incarcerated, and 18-month-old Miva and 2-month-old Damien were returned to Delphine's care under an SO.

Miva was connected to a pediatrician whom she saw regularly during her early childhood. She was treated by specialists for an eye condition and was assessed for a minor heart murmur, which came back negative. Miva was assessed and diagnosed with a mild speech delay, and she attended an early education program where she received speech and language therapy. By the end of the school year, her speech challenges had resolved. She went to a new school for Grades 1 and 2, where she was an average student who excelled at science.

Over the next five years, Child Intervention received five reports about physical abuse and emotional injury related to inadequate supervision. At times, concerns were unsubstantiated or Delphine was cautioned about the importance of proper supervision and involvements ended. Other times, she was referred to community-based supports, and involvements ended.

Miva from 8 to 11 Years Old

Miva went to the same elementary school from Grades 2 through 4. She participated in peer groups and worked with school counsellors. When her attendance declined, she was connected to school-based supports.

Child Intervention received three reports over the next two years about neglect and emotional injury. Concerns were related to Delphine's substance use, inadequate food, and poor school attendance. The substance use concerns were not substantiated, and Delphine accessed her support network and school-based services. Intervention involvements ended.

Soon after, Child Intervention received a report about neglect. Concerns were related to Delphine being hospitalized as a result of her substance use. Nine-year-old Miva and eight-year-old Damien were apprehended and sent to stay with their maternal grandfather, Mike. He agreed to provide short-term care due to his declining health.

Over the next 18 months, Miva and Damien had several placement moves because caregivers did not have the capacity to manage their challenging behaviours. They struggled with transitions and had emotional and physical outbursts. Therapeutic

1. All names in the report are pseudonyms.

2. Bolded terms are defined in Appendix A.

supports were often requested for the children but were not arranged in a timely manner, impacting placement stability.

When Miva was 11 years old, she and Damien became the subjects of a **Temporary Guardianship Order**. Caseworkers found it challenging to identify caregivers who could manage both children's needs, and when Miva was 11 years old, she was moved to campus-based group care while Damien remained in his foster home.

Miva changed schools each time she moved. Although her educational services were disrupted, she regularly attended and maintained average grades. When she began attending her placement's school program, she had Individualized Program Plans (IPP) that focused on helping her manage her behaviours and improving her math skills.

Miva from 12 to 15 Years Old

While in campus-based care, Miva discovered a love for horses and other animals. She attended the on-site school, and her IPP supports continued. She did well academically, excelling in science.

Miva was assessed by the program's psychiatrist and was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. Medications were prescribed to help with her sleep and mood; however, Alain and Delphine did not consent, so they were not started.

When Miva was 13 years old, she became the subject of a PGO. Over the next five months, she was taken to the hospital several times for self-harm and suicidal ideation. Each time, she was discharged with safety plans and recommendations to access therapeutic and psychiatric supports. Caseworkers arranged for animal-assisted therapy, a youth worker, and Miva continued to work with her psychiatrist. She was supported by a family doctor who specialized in working with children in the care of Child Intervention.

Miva voiced that she wanted to live in foster care and hoped for a rural placement, but they were not available. She was moved to a group home after she had emotional and verbal outbursts. Within weeks, Miva began using methamphetamine. Her mental health declined, and she stopped attending school.

Fourteen-year-old Miva's mental health continued to decline, and her substance use increased. She was confined under the *Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (PChAD)* and discharged with recommendations that included psychiatric, medical, and addiction supports. Miva met with a psychiatrist and family doctor regularly, but she refused addiction counselling.

It was challenging to find Miva a placement that could meet her needs and she often stayed in a Child Intervention office, temporary placements, hotels, and summer camps. She told caseworkers that she wanted therapeutic support and a long-term placement close to her family. A specialized mental health placement became available in another city, and Miva was moved.

While there, Miva was assessed and it indicated that she had difficulty with problem-solving, working memory, and processing speed. Recommendations included a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) assessment and continued therapeutic and educational supports. Miva struggled to engage with therapy as it was virtual. An FASD assessment was not arranged; the reason is not known. School staff met with her case team to reengage her in her education, but her attendance continued to be poor.

Miva had a physical outburst toward staff and was charged; her placement ended. She was subsequently confined in a **secure services** facility. Miva was discharged with recommendations that included a specialized group home that could provide a therapeutic and structured environment. Over the next two months placements were unable to meet Miva's needs and she was moved between two group homes and a specialized mental health placement.

A decision was made not to register Miva in school until the following year due to her instability. Her criminal charges were dropped, and she did not have further involvement with youth justice.

Days after her 15th birthday, Miva was taken to the hospital for suicidal ideation. She was discharged to group home staff with a recommendation for therapy. Caseworkers advocated for her to resume animal-assisted therapy; however, it was delayed pending the approval of additional funding. Her substance use escalated and her mental health declined. She threatened to damage group home property and told staff that she had plans to harm herself. Staff completed wellness checks and a safety plan was implemented.

Days later, Miva was seriously injured following an overdose on over-the-counter medication. She was hospitalized for treatment to reduce the impact on her liver. She has since recovered and continues to receive Child Intervention through a PGO.

TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Birth to 7 Years Old	8 to 11 Years Old	12 to 15 Years Old
• Birth – 1 Year Old · Born prematurely · Discharged from hospital after 11 days · Child Intervention involvement · Supervision Orders (SO) · Enhancement Agreement (EA) · Apprehended 2 times · 4 foster care placements · Returned home under SO • 2 – 7 Years Old · Assessed · Diagnosed with speech delay · Speech language support · Early childhood education program · Child Intervention involved 5 times	• 8 – 10 Years Old · Child Intervention involved 4 times · Apprehended · Multiple foster care placements • 11 Years Old · Temporary Guardianship Order · Separate placement from brother · Campus-based group care · Individualized Program Plan (IPP)	• 12 Years Old · Assessed · Diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety • 13 Years Old · Permanent Guardianship Order · Self-harm and suicidal ideation began · Youth worker, animal-assisted therapy, and psychiatrist · Group care · Methamphetamine use began · Stopped attending school • 14 Years Old · Confined under <i>Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (PChAD)</i> · Multiple placement moves · 2 placements in specialized mental health group home · Assessed · Difficulty with problem-solving, working memory, and processing speed · Criminal charges · Confined in a secure services facility • 15 Years Old · Hospital visit for suicidal ideation · Delay in approving therapeutic supports 15-year-old Miva seriously injured

FINDINGS

Children and Family Services

Child Intervention became involved with Miva and her family shortly after her birth because of neglect related to her parents' substance use. Before she was two years old, she was moved several times between foster homes and her parents' care. The frequent moves impacted her early development. Her parents' circumstances did not improve, and at nine years old, Miva was apprehended. Caregivers found it challenging to meet her needs and frequently requested therapeutic supports. They were not arranged in a timely manner, and impacted placement stability. Miva would have benefited from case planning that provided timely interventions to meet her needs. She also required tailored interventions to address her trauma, grief, and loss.

Miva had several placements after becoming the subject of a Permanent Guardianship Order. At times, appropriate placements were not available, and she stayed in Child Intervention offices, hotels or with relatives. Miva voiced that she wanted a stable, long-term placement, and the ongoing instability negatively affected her mental health. Her behaviours and substance use increased, and she disengaged from school. Miva required a placement that was tailored to her needs.

Health and Mental Health and Addiction

Miva received routine medical care throughout her life. At two years old, concerns were noted with her speech, and she was promptly referred for an assessment and connected to appropriate resources. Additional referrals to specialists were made as her health needs evolved.

In her adolescence, Miva's mental health began declined. She was connected to a psychiatrist and was also supported by a family doctor, who specialized in working with children in the care of Child Intervention.

At 14 years old, Miva was confined under *Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act*. There were appropriate discharge recommendations, and her case team was supported to implement them.

Education

When Miva was four years old, she began an early education program because of speech delays. By the end of Kindergarten, her speech had improved and she did not require further supports.

In elementary school Miva participated in peer groups and was supported by school counsellors. When her attendance declined, her school provided additional supports to her and Delphine to address barriers. Miva benefited from school-based supports and her attendance improved.

In junior high school, while living in campus-based care, Miva had Individualized Program Plans that provided accommodations to help her learn. After leaving campus-based care, her school attendance declined. School staff worked with Miva's case team to try to reengage her in her education but her attendance continued to be poor.

Justice

Miva became involved with the youth justice system at 14 years old, and the charges were subsequently dropped.

THEMES TO TRACK

1. Case Planning

Miva required case planning that provided timely interventions to meet her needs.

2. Placements

Miva required a placement that was tailored to her needs.

3. Grief and Loss

Miva required tailored interventions to address her trauma, grief, and loss.

4. Suicide

Miva was hospitalized for suicidal ideation at 13 years old and was seriously injured following a suicide attempt at 15 years old.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

Apprehended

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.

Permanent Guardianship Order (PGO)

Under this order, the “Director” as defined in the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* becomes the sole guardian of a child. The order is sought when it is believed that the child cannot be safely returned to their guardian within a specified time frame.

Secure Services

The *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* allows for the confinement of a child for up to 30 days for stabilization and assessment when the child is found to be an immediate danger to themselves or others.

Supervision Order (SO)

A court order granting the “Director” as defined in the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* mandatory supervision of a young person. Guardians retain custody.

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.

Temporary Guardianship Order (TGO)

The court grants the “Director” as defined in the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* custody and guardianship of a child for a specific period. The child is in the care of Child Intervention Services, and guardianship is shared with the parent/ legal guardian.

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