



9-YEAR-OLD ELODIE

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 Elodie. Her circumstances meet the criteria for a **systemic review**. Elodie and her family were receiving Child Intervention through an Assessment at the time of her passing.

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.

Elodie's experiences were unique, and she left a lasting impression on those who knew and loved her. My heartfelt condolences go out to her family and those who cared about Elodie.

Respectfully,

[Original signed by Terri Pelton]

Terri Pelton

Child and Youth Advocate (Alberta)

ABOUT ELODIE AND HER FAMILY

Elodie¹ was nine years old when she passed away in an accident.² The police investigated and did not lay charges; the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner concluded that she died as a result of those injuries. Elodie and her family were receiving Child Intervention through an **Assessment**³ at the time of her passing.

Elodie was a big-hearted, strong-willed, and energetic young girl with an adventurous spirit. She loved watching cartoons, swimming, and gymnastics. Elodie was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, a language impairment, and had challenging behaviours. Elodie had two siblings and was Nolan and Natasha's second child. At times, her parents used substances and their relationship was volatile; they often separated and reconciled.

SUMMARY OF ELODIE'S EXPERIENCES WITH GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

Elodie from Birth to 5 Years Old

Elodie was born premature and was treated in hospital for feeding difficulties before being discharged home. She regularly saw a family doctor and received routine medical care throughout her life.

When Elodie was one year old, her doctor and parents noted that she had developmental delays, and she was referred to an early childhood intervention program. Staff worked with her parents to help improve Elodie's behaviours, communication, and self-help skills, but her difficulties persisted.

Elodie's doctor referred her for an assessment, and she was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and a language impairment. Results indicated that she required substantial support and recommended a specialized education program, Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD), and continued follow-up with her family doctor.

Shortly after, the family was connected to FSCD and workers met with them yearly to review their needs and the supports available to them. They received funding for respite care, housekeeping, a behavioural consultant, occupational therapist, and a speech and language pathologist, which they accessed. Although improvements were noted, Elodie required ongoing support to meet her needs.

When Elodie was two years old, Child Intervention received a report about emotional injury related to family violence. Three weeks later, additional concerns were received about

neglect; Elodie was seen on the highway unsupervised. Caseworkers spoke with Nolan and Natasha, who denied physical violence. They said that Elodie was being supervised by other children who were unaware that she had left the home without permission. Involvement ended after locks were installed on the doors and Elodie's parents agreed that she would be supervised by an adult.

At three years old, Elodie started a specialized early childhood education program that had small class sizes. She was supported by a psychologist, educational assistant, occupational therapist, and a speech and language pathologist. An Individualized Program Plan (IPP) was implemented, which included assistance with transitions and strategies to improve her self-help, motor, social, language, and emotional regulation skills. Elodie's educational supports remained similar throughout the rest of her schooling, and her IPP was updated yearly.

Over the next two years, Elodie changed schools twice when her family moved. The COVID-19 public health measures were put in place, and her schooling moved to online learning. Elodie did not attend virtually because her unique needs made it challenging for her to participate. After the measures were lifted, she returned to in-person learning and her participation improved.

When Elodie was five years old, Child Intervention received a report about emotional injury related to her parents' substance use and family violence. Six weeks later, additional concerns were received about neglect; Elodie's younger brother, Luke, was found in the community unsupervised. Nolan and Natasha said that they had a verbal argument and that they used substances socially. They indicated that Luke and Elodie had challenging behaviours and often tried to leave home. It was noted that the family was receiving FSCD services, but additional information was not gathered from them. Intervention involvement ended after a safety plan was developed that included an alarm system, not arguing in front of the children, and having sober caregivers.

Elodie from 6 to 9 Years Old

When Elodie was six years old, Child Intervention received a report about emotional and physical injury. Concerns were related to inappropriate discipline and her parents' declining mental health. Weeks later, caseworkers responded and Natasha agreed to a safety plan. It was noted that the family was connected to FSCD. Additional information was not gathered from them before involvement ended.

Two months later, Child Intervention received a report about neglect and emotional injury. Concerns were related to Natasha and Nolan's substance use, declining mental health, and the condition of the home. Attempts to contact the family did not occur for

1. All names in the report are pseudonyms.

2. Details about Elodie's death are not provided to protect her privacy.

3. Bolded terms are defined in Appendix A.

six weeks. During this time, Nolan and Natasha separated, and she entered into a new relationship with Oliver. The children remained with her until concerns were received about her substance use. Arrangements were made for Elodie and her siblings to live with Nolan, and he and Natasha entered into a three-month **Enhancement Agreement (EA)**.

Nolan was reluctant to engage and did not receive additional services. Natasha worked with a family support worker on completing her taxes and applications for housing and specialized education program funding for Luke. She completed an addiction and mental health assessment that relied on self-reported information; it did not provide recommendations. Natasha obtained a Parenting Order granting her day-to-day care, and the children were returned to her. Soon after, she was evicted and moved into a hotel with her children. She refused further support, and at the conclusion of the EA, involvement ended.

Within months, Child Intervention received a report about neglect and emotional injury. Concerns were related to Natasha and Oliver's substance use, family violence, inadequate supervision, and the condition of the home. The supervision concerns were not substantiated, and she and Oliver separated. Natasha cleaned her home and said that she drank socially. Intervention involvement ended. Within the year, Natasha and Oliver reconciled.

Elodie started Grade 2 at a new school and her existing supports were transitioned there. When she was nine years old, Child Intervention received a report about neglect and emotional injury. Concerns were related to Natasha and Oliver's substance use, family violence, and the condition of the home. Three weeks later, Child Intervention received a report that Elodie had been involved in an accident. Emergency medical services responded and transported her to the hospital, where she was pronounced deceased. Soon after, Elodie's siblings were **apprehended** and placed with relatives. The police investigated and did not lay charges; the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner concluded that Elodie died as a result of those injuries. A funeral was held in her honour, and she is deeply missed by those who knew and loved her.

TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Birth to 5 Years Old	6 to 9 Years Old
• Birth – 1 Years Old · Born prematurely · Treated for feeding difficulties · Developmental delays noted by family doctor and parents · Early childhood intervention program • 2 – 4 Years Old · Assessed · Diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and a language impairment · Family Support for Children with Disabilities · Child Intervention involvement · Specialized early childhood education program · Individualized Program Plans • 5 Years Old · Child Intervention involvement	• 6 – 7 Years Old · Child Intervention involved 3 times · Enhancement Agreement • 9 Years Old · Child Intervention involvement 9-year-old Elodie passed away

FINDINGS

Children and Family Services

Child Intervention was involved with Elodie and her family six times because of her parents' substance use, family violence, and neglect. Often, contact with the family did not occur for several weeks during which additional concerns were received. Elodie and her siblings were at increased vulnerability because of their age and level of functioning. They would have benefited from timely Child Intervention responses to assess their needs and risk.

During Child Intervention involvements, responses remained largely unchanged and often did not address the severity of the concerns. Robust assessments of Natasha and Nolan's ability to meet their children's needs, and the effectiveness of interventions were required to inform services.

Oftentimes, it was noted that Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) was involved with Elodie and her parents, but additional information was not gathered from them. The Cross Ministry Protocol: Supporting Alberta's Children, Youth, Parents/Guardians with Disabilities outlines requirements for Child Intervention and FSCD to work together and coordinate services to best support children with disabilities and their families, which was not followed.

The Ministry of Children and Family Services has been notified that an internal review of Elodie's circumstances may be beneficial to determine if further systems improvements are required to strengthen adherence to policy and practice standards related to the above concerns.

Health

Elodie had the same family doctor who monitored her health and referred her to additional medical services as needed. When concerns were noted for her development, she had timely assessments and received several diagnoses. Recommendations helped clarify her needs and informed planning.

Education

Elodie's developmental needs were identified early; services were adapted to meet them, and she attended specialized educational programming. Elodie had Individualized Program Plans that were updated yearly and provided accommodations to improve her social, language, emotional regulation, and self-help skills.

Assisted Living and Social Services

Elodie and her family began receiving FSCD when she was two years old. Caseworkers met with them regularly to review their circumstances and adapted services to meet her evolving needs.

THEMES TO TRACK

1. Child Intervention supports

Elodie required timely Child Intervention responses to assess her needs and risk.

2. Assessment

Elodie would have benefited from fulsome assessments of her parents' capacity to meet their children's needs, and the effectiveness of interventions.

3. Implementation and consistency of policy and practice expectations

The Cross Ministry Protocol: Supporting Alberta's Children, Youth, Parents/ Guardians with Disabilities was not followed.

4. Services and supports

Elodie and her family received timely supports from Health, Education and Family Support for Children with Disabilities that evolved to meet their needs.

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.

Assessment

The gathering and analysis of information to determine whether a child is in need of intervention under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*.

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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