

# We all have a role:

## Building social capital among youth in care



Using data from the BC Adolescent Health Survey, McCreary Centre Society, in partnership with Vancouver Foundation's Fostering Change Initiative, has released a report which highlights the importance of social capital (networks and relationships) for young people who are in the care of the BC government. The full report can be downloaded at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

Youth in care can face barriers to building and maintaining social capital, such as a history of trauma and loss, and having to move from one home to another. Yet when youth have supportive relationships in their lives they report better outcomes. For example, youth in care who felt safe at school and had good relationships with staff and peers reported better health and a greater likelihood of planning to go on to post-secondary education.

*79% of youth who felt their teacher cared about them had positive plans for their future (vs. 56% who felt their teachers did not care).*

**Youth in care are reaching out for help;** and when that experience is a positive one, it appears to have benefits. The risk of youth self harming was more than halved if they found a social worker they approached to be helpful, compared to if they did not find the experience helpful (24% vs. 65%).

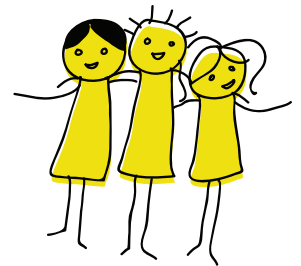
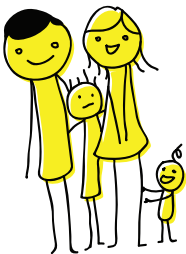
**Maintaining relationships with family and other non-professionals are also important.** Youth who had a supportive adult in their family were more likely to report positive mental health and post secondary plans, and were less likely to report problematic or heavy alcohol use.

*98% of those who were connected to family and had a supportive adult in their family reported good or excellent mental health.*

Different types of social capital were particularly associated with different outcomes. **The strongest form of social capital which reduced the likelihood of youth binge drinking was having friends with healthy attitudes to risky behaviours.**

*12% of youth whose friends disapproved of them getting drunk consumed alcohol in the past month, compared to 44% whose friends did not mind if they got drunk.*

**Social capital attained from relationships with friends and family, at school and in community were all important.** Youth who had just one form of social capital reported better health than those without such relationships. However, the cumulative effect of having a greater amount of social capital showed us that everyone has a role to play in improving connections and outcomes for youth in care.



**"Youth in care"** refers to youth who indicated on the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) that they were currently in the care of the BC government or on a Youth Agreement. The 2013 BC AHS was completed by almost 30,000 youth aged 12-19 across BC. It included over 1,000 youth who had been in the care of the BC government, and 300 who were currently in a foster home, group home or on a Youth Agreement.