

# Youth advocate flunking on mental health issue: Opposition

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*Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones: 'If we can't depend upon the child advocate's office to go forward and represent these children that are not getting the proper care, then who can we depend upon?' (CBC)*

Newfoundland and Labrador's youth advocate is failing to do her job, the Liberal leader of the Opposition says.

Yvonne Jones said Child and Youth Advocate Darlene Neville, whose office is funded by the provincial government, should be calling for a mentally ill teenage girl to be removed from an adult ward at the Waterford Hospital in St. John's.

But Neville said in a statement Tuesday that addressing the closure of a pediatric psychiatric unit "is the No. 1 priority" for her office, and that she cannot comment further while an investigation is underway.

In December, a nursing shortage prompted officials to move two adolescents who were being treated at the Janeway Children's Health and Rehabilitation Centre to the Waterford Hospital.

Jones said she is disturbed that Neville has not spoken out about the issue, or to help one teenager who is still being treated in an adult, co-ed ward.

"No one is putting pressure on the system to have her moved," Jones said.

"If we can't depend upon the child advocate's office to go forward and represent these children that are not getting the proper care, then who can we depend upon? And I think there need to be some changes made in that office if this kind of representation is going to continue."

Jones said she fears that more teens will get the same kind of treatment in the future.

In a statement, Neville said that she cannot speak publicly about the patient's case.

"Discussing details of ongoing treatment of any youth in the public forum would not only constitute a violation of the privacy rights of the youth, but could also jeopardize ongoing treatment," Neville said.

Neville added that she has no authority to compel Eastern Health or any officials to "admit, treat, transfer or discharge any patient."