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PRESS RELEASE

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Press release

Importance of self-help groups in supporting youth who leave care

A Franco-Québec study (Institut national de la jeunesse et de l'éducation populaire INJEP/Printemps CNRS – Université de Versailles-Paris Saclay/Canada Research Chair in Evaluating Public Actions Related to Young People and Vulnerable Populations) has published a report on engagement in self-help groups among youth formerly in care in France and Québec.

The value of self-help groups for youth formerly in care was also highlighted during the Special Commission on the Rights of the Child and Youth Protection. On October 22, the hearings began with a talk by the EDJeP committee of youth formerly in care, a group that is central to EDJeP's research on the future of youth in care. The committee representatives underlined the important role of self-help groups in making youths' voices heard and better supporting youth after they leave care.

Québec lag raises questions

Martin Goyette, professor and lead researcher of the EDJeP study, says “to solve the systemic problems raised by the Laurent Commission, youth must absolutely play a central role. Yet in Québec, renowned for the quality of its aid services, we are the poor cousin. Funding for organizations of youth formerly in care is almost nonexistent, an aberration.”

In Québec, the youth who were involved with self-help groups represent two organizations that support young people leaving care: the Réseau Intersection Québec (RIQ), based in Québec City, and the Centre Amitié, Ressources et Entraide pour la jeunesse (CARE Jeunesse), based in Montréal. Young participants from France represent departmental associations that assist people placed in the child protection system (ADEPAPE networks and Repairs!).

After interviewing youth who were coaching their peers, making observations in the field, and reviewing documents produced by these support organizations, the researchers found that solidarity between peers or within self-help organizations allow youth to acquire knowledge about their social rights and obtain social support in a space in which they can come to terms with their difficult experiences related to the transition to adulthood without family support.

Isabelle Lacroix, lead researcher of the study, says “These associations of youth formerly in care play a major role in supporting youth in a period of their lives in which social aid is scarce. These organizations of youth formerly in

care contribute directly to guiding changes in youth protection, in addition to being an important source of emotional and physical support for young people. In fact, the groups attempt to fill various gaps in public policy directed at youths ages 18 to 25.”

This research also demonstrates the extensive awareness raising and education work that self-help groups undertake with public policy makers, which notably entails putting public problems concerning youth on the agenda (post-care housing, job integration, remaining in school).

According to Marcelle Partouche, groups of youth formerly in care help to break down the barriers between the various institutional services by considering the needs of young people in their entirety.

Jessica Côté-Guimond thinks that the experiential knowledge and the participation of young people must be recognized. Peer support should be at the heart of future reforms to improve youth protection services.

To read the research report:

[For a summary of the report](#)

[For the complete report](#)

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