Space for kids in residential homes: can technology help?

What you need to know:

Carefully managing resources for foster children means that time and money for children's needs are not wasted. Using automated tracking systems, staff can quickly find out what resources are needed to provide care.
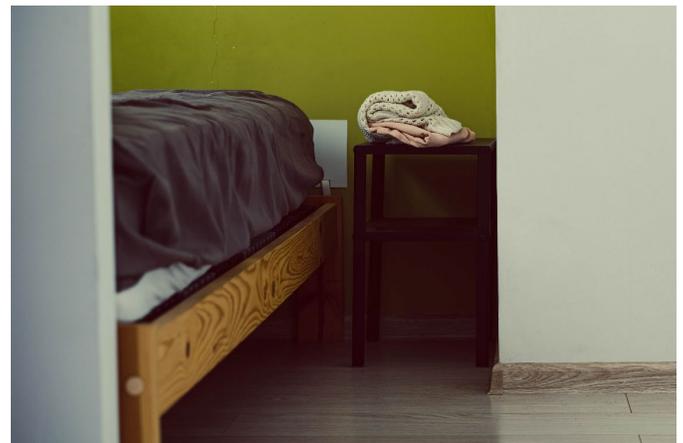
What is this research about?

While most children the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) looks after live in foster homes with families, some children live in residential homes. The Ministry staff at residential homes give children constant care. Foster children have complex needs, and often receive special care outside the residential home. When the children are away, the Ministry wants to make sure other children get care quickly.

The researcher investigated tracking unused spaces in residential homes electronically. The purpose is to help more children in the province get good care.

What did the researcher do?

For this report, the researcher gathered examples of technology that shows unused beds in foster care homes in real-time. The report summarizes the technological solutions that can help get children the shelter they need quickly. The researcher also summarizes some social drawbacks and suggestions for using the technology in residential homes.

In residential homes, staff give foster kids constant care. With many kids coming and going, tracking their needs and spaces in the residential home is a challenge (Photo credit: Ivan Lopatin from Unsplash).

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What did the researcher find?

The researcher found that staff using automated tracking systems can instantly check if rooms in residential homes are empty. By using these systems in residential homes the ministry can reduce staff time and costs related to finding spaces for children in care. This can also reduce waiting times for children in care.

The researcher recommended using these systems as a database to make other information about the children and staff easily accessible for caregivers. The report also recommends testing these systems on a small scale to start.

How can you use this research?

Staff in residential homes can use electronic tracking systems outlined in the report to easily manage their resources. Child welfare staff may use the technology recommended in the report as a live database for information like when to clean a room and who is using it. Automated databases can give MCFD information on how their facilities are running as well.

This research may also be useful in other group living situations such as senior care facilities.

The intent of the research was to improve the ministry's residential services to children in BC through innovative solutions.

About the researcher

Varun Sharma is a University of Victoria (UVic) graduate student. This project was completed as part of the Graduate Studies (GS) 505 course and supervised by instructors Drs. Gord Miller and Wayne Mitic. Facilitated by UVic Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization, GS 505 is a partnership between MCFD and UVic. This project was prepared on behalf of MCFD.

Keywords

Foster care; residential homes; technology; foster homes; group homes; vacancy; child and youth care

Citation

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Territory acknowledgement