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, often receiving special care outside the residential home too. When the children are away, the ministry wants to make sure other children get care quickly.

This researcher investigates 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.

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

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.
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 did this research as a graduate student in the University of Victoria (UVic) Graduate Studies 505 multi-disciplinary research internship course.

Drs. Gord Miller and Wayne Mitic of UVic’s School of Child and Youth Care both supervised the research project.

Facilitated by UVic’s Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization unit, this project is a partnership between BC MCFD and UVic.

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**Keywords**

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

**Citation**

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