

Petition to Ensure the Rights of Homeless and other Vulnerable Children Frequently Asked Questions

1. *What is this petition trying to achieve?*

We want all children regardless of where or how they live to receive the benefit of programs funded by the Government of Canada. Currently, there are barriers within the government's direct payments to families systems that materially deprive children who move a lot due to homelessness, parental addiction or incarceration, or government care.

In addition to calling for the removal of those barriers, the petition calls for children who are homeless or affected by parental incarceration to be recognized as disadvantaged and provided the specialized supports they need to flourish.

2. *What exactly is EFry asking the government to change?*

The petition calls for:

- The Canada Child Benefit and Child Special Allowances to be available to caregivers of children in informal arrangements so the child can benefit like other children do.
 - Currently, only parents or legal guardians can claim these benefits, so children living with grandparents, family members or friends in informal care arrangements are disadvantaged. The expense and legal requirements for appointing a legal guardian are barriers for grandparents on a fixed income, the poor, and caregivers of children whose parents are incarcerated or have mental health issues.
- Federally funded, provincially delivered programs and services should be equally available to all appropriate children, regardless of where or how they live in Canada.
- Children living with parents or guardians as part of the Homelessness Partnering Initiative should be recognized and receive funding, so parents and children don't have to exist on funds allocated to support only the adults.
- Homeless children and those whose parents have addictions should be recognized as in need of special supports to achieve improved life outcomes and receive equal benefits to their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

3. *Why is EFry using a petition to try and make these changes happen?*

A petition is the way citizens can tell the Government of Canada they are concerned and want it to take action. The government has direct ability to make the changes asked for.

- The federal government transfers monies to the provinces and territories for education and health with some latitude to set priorities. We are asking the Government of Canada to use the latitude it has to raise the issues faced by these children in accessing funded programs and services.
- The federal government sets the rules of entitlement for child specific programs like the Canada Child Benefit and Child Special Allowances, as well as for some services like the Homeless

Partnering Initiative and Housing First. We are asking the government to make provision for those children currently excluded by the criteria.

4. How does the petition process work?

New Westminster MP Peter Julian is sponsoring EFry's petition. For every 25 signatures, he is able to speak to it in the House of Commons for one minute. The more people who sign the petition, the longer it's possible to advocate for it. The government must respond to issues raised in the House of Commons within 45 days.

To support the petition, download it, get people to sign it and mail it free (no postage needed) to:
Peter Julian, MP
Suite 203, Wellington Building
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

5. What information do people signing the petition have to provide?

First and last name, home address (or city and province), signature and postal code.

6. Do people have to be 18 or over to sign the petition?

There is no minimum age requirement. Any resident of Canada can sign it.

7. How many times can I sign the petition?

Once.

8. How many signatures are you trying to get?

As many as we can. We want to reach 25,000 people. For every 25 signatures, Peter Julian MP, is able to advocate on behalf of these children in the House of Commons for one minute. The more signatures we gather, the greater the opportunity to discuss this important issue. We need a strong call to increase the likelihood of the needed changes being made.

9. Is there a deadline for gathering signatures?

There is not a strict deadline; however, urgency is conveyed when signatures are collected within a short timeframe. We are targeting our efforts to summer 2018. When the House of Commons returns after the summer break, we hope to have enough signatures to see the issues not only tabled to a committee but also for a committee of MPs to be struck to look specifically at them. Peter Julian MP will have sufficient time to advocate for the petition effectively if we can give him enough time in the House.

10. I want to support the petition but am not able to gather signatures. Where can I sign it?

EFry will have a presence at several events this summer. Please email us at petition@elizabethfry.com or call Jared Olliffe at 604-520-1166, and we will try and find a way to connect with you so you can sign the petition.

11. EFry serves BC's Lower Mainland. Are you only seeking signatures from people in BC?

This is a national issue. We are seeking signatures from people across Canada.

12. Can I sign this petition online?

Unfortunately not. The government cannot tell where email signatures come from, so online petitions do not carry the same weight as paper-based petitions.

13. I want to gather signatures but don't have access to a printer. How can I get copies of the petition?

Email us at petition@elizabethfry.com with your address and how many petition sheets you would like. Each one has space for 25 signatures. Alternatively, you can call Jared Olliffe at (604) 520-1166 if you are in BC's Lower Mainland or toll free from anywhere in Canada at 1-888-879-9593.

14. I'd like to support the petition but I can't afford to print copies or mail them in. Can I be reimbursed for costs?

Thanks for the support! We're happy to send you as many blank petition sheets as you like (25 signature spots per sheet). The sheets are pre-addressed self-mailers that don't require any postage.

15. I've downloaded the pdf of the petition. Do I have to print this on legal paper? Does it have to be printed as two-sided?

The petition should be printed on legal-sized paper (8.5" x 14"). While it's two-sided, the second side just has the mailing address and is designed so the petition can be folded and mailed without an envelope. You don't need to send it that way, so one-sided printing is fine. It can be mailed in an envelope with no postage, so no matter how you send it in, postage is free.

If you can't access legal paper, we will send you copies of the petition to complete. Please contact Jared Olliffe at (604) 520-1166 if you are in BC's Lower Mainland or toll free from anywhere in Canada at 1-888-879-9593.

16. I'd like to volunteer to help EFry gather signatures at events. Whom do I contact?

We'd love to have your help. Please contact Jared Olliffe at (604) 520-1166 if you are in BC's Lower Mainland or toll free from anywhere in Canada at 1-888-879-9593.