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August 11, 2015

Deputy Minister Lynn Hartwell  
Department of Community Services  
5675 Spring Garden Road, Halifax, B3J 1H5

**Re; Changes to Child & Family Services Act & Duty to Report**

Dear Ms. Hartwell:

I am writing on behalf of the Board and staff of the Tri County Women's Centre in respect to the proposed amendments to the Child and Family Services Act to include youth 16 -18. We have been one of many voices that have said for many years, youth in this age bracket need to be able to qualify for services and supports. We applaud your department for addressing this gap in services.

While we welcome this inclusion, it is our understanding that "duty to report" will be extended to all incidences of sexual assault of youth between the ages of 16-18 years. We do have young women disclose sexual assault, through our services here, due in part to our confidential service and the confidence and trust we have developed with youth 16-18.

You can appreciate that an unintended consequence of these proposed amendments to Act would negatively affect the confidence we have established with youth and the confidentiality of our services.

We implore you and your colleagues to see this age group as mature minors who have a right to seek out confidential services like ours and we would not be required mandatory reporting. This will respect the best practice youth approach we want to uphold and ensure our services are not compromised.

We realize there would be "duty to report " where the situation includes younger children who would be vulnerable to the perpetrator(s).

We look forward to working with your colleagues in promoting the enhanced services these youth will be able to access when the need arises.

Sincerely:

Bernadette MacDonald

CC:

Kelly Belser - Coordinator, Child Protection

Wendy Bungay - Director, Child Protection

Vicki Wood - Executive Director, Child and Family Services