

1. Department of Justice Canada (2019) – *The Voice of the Child in Family Law*

Summary: *This landmark national review synthesizes decades of Canadian and international research on child participation in family-law processes. It concludes that children overwhelmingly want opportunities to share their views and that, when supported appropriately, participation increases their sense of fairness, safety, and emotional well-being. The report emphasizes that VOC processes—whether through structured interviews, judicial meetings, or written reports—do not place decision-making responsibility on children but instead ensure their lived experiences are accurately represented. It highlights that involvement improves the quality of best-interest determinations, reduces misunderstandings, and strengthens procedural justice, making children more accepting of final outcomes even when those outcomes diverge from their stated preferences.*

Direct link:

https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/vcfl-pvedf/docs/RSD_2019_Saini_Voice_of_the_child_in_family_law_EN.pdf

2. Department of Justice Canada (2023) – *Voice of the Child Programs and Services in Canada*

Summary: *This national scan provides a contemporary overview of how VOC programs operate across provincial and territorial jurisdictions. It finds widespread uptake of VOC practices but notes significant variability in availability and structure, with provinces like BC, Ontario, and Nova Scotia offering robust systems while others, including Alberta, rely largely on private practitioners. The report observes that VOC programs help reduce court delays, minimize adjournments, and support earlier settlements by giving decision-makers timely, accurate information about children’s experiences. It concludes that consistent, neutral VOC processes contribute to more child-centred dispute resolution and bolster compliance with UNCRC Article 12.*

Direct link:

<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/rg-rco/2023/vcpscpt-pvepsocpt.html>

3. FREDA Centre & Representative for Children and Youth (2020) – *Implementing Children’s Participation Rights in Family Law and Child Welfare*

Summary: *This comprehensive literature review analyzes child participation as a rights-based requirement under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It stresses that meaningful involvement is essential to children’s well-being, dignity, and autonomy—not an optional or discretionary add-on. The report finds that when children are included*

appropriately, they experience lower stress, greater emotional resilience, and improved long-term adjustment following parental separation. It emphasizes that participation does not mean forcing children to choose between parents but rather allowing them to safely describe their experiences and concerns. It also outlines best-practice conditions for participation, including neutrality, trauma-informed engagement, and clear explanation of roles and outcomes.

Direct link:

<https://www.fredacentre.com/wp-content/uploads/RCYFREDAFinalLiteratureReview26112020.pdf>

4. Cashmore, J. (2011) – *Children’s Participation in Family Law Decision-Making*

Summary: *Cashmore’s influential work synthesizes empirical studies examining how children experience and interpret their involvement in family-law decision-making. The central finding is that children value being heard far more than having control over the outcome; what they want is an opportunity to share their views with a neutral professional who listens and ensures their experiences are understood. Participation was strongly associated with greater acceptance of decisions, reduced emotional distress, and improved adjustment—even when courts or parents chose an arrangement different from the child’s stated preference. Cashmore emphasizes that when participation is done well, it does not place an inappropriate burden on children but instead enhances the fairness and transparency of the legal process.*

Direct link (ResearchGate):

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227413982_Children's_participation_in_family_law_decision-making

5. Nova Scotia Justice – *Voice of the Child Report Guidelines*

Summary: *Nova Scotia’s guidelines provide one of the clearest and most structured provincial frameworks for VOC reports in Canada. The document outlines appropriate interviewer qualifications, interview protocols, child-development considerations, and the required structure of a VOC report. It emphasizes neutrality, non-investigative function, and the importance of reporting only what the child expresses—not interpretations, opinions, or recommendations. The guidelines also highlight the distinction between VOC reports and full parenting assessments, noting that VOC is meant to provide timely, focused insight into the child’s views while avoiding the invasiveness and delays of comprehensive evaluations.*

These guidelines reflect modern best practice and have influenced VOC work across Canada.

Direct link:

<https://www.nsfamilylaw.ca/children/voice-child-reports/voice-child-report-guidelines>


6. British Columbia – Hear the Child Society (Practice Framework)

Summary: *The Hear the Child model, used extensively across British Columbia, provides a structured, child-friendly approach to gathering children’s views in family disputes. It emphasizes developmentally appropriate interviewing, neutrality, and clear, verbatim-style reporting of what the child said without editorializing or making recommendations. The BC model has become a commonly cited Canadian standard because it supports child participation in a manner that is efficient, accessible, and non-coercive, making it widely usable in mediation, collaborative law, arbitration, and court contexts. Evaluations of the program show strong satisfaction among children, parents, and legal professionals, and its structure influences practice in other provinces.*

Direct link:

<https://www.hearthechild.ca>

7. Ontario Office of the Children’s Lawyer – VOC & Clinical Reports

Summary: *Ontario’s OCL provides both investigative clinical reports and non-investigative Views of the Child Reports, offering one of the most established government-based child-participation systems in Canada. OCL’s VOC reports focus solely on the child’s views and experiences and are prepared by trained clinicians who follow strict standards of neutrality, confidentiality explanation, and developmental sensitivity. The program has been extensively evaluated and is widely respected for producing reliable, child-focused evidence that supports negotiation and court decisions. The OCL model demonstrates the benefits of a publicly funded, standardized system—something Alberta currently lacks—which ensures consistency, accessibility, and high-quality child-participation practices. *

Direct link:

<https://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/ocl/>