

Annual Report 2021-22

Our Vision: A province where every child's and youth's rights are protected and respected.

Children
and
Youth



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Message from the Child and Youth Advocate

I am pleased to present the 2021-22 Annual Performance Report for the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate. This report has been prepared in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act** provisions for a Category Two entity. As the Acting Child and Youth Advocate, I recognize my obligations under this **Act**, and I am accountable for the results in this report.

I was honoured to be appointed as the Child and Youth Advocate (Acting) in January 2022 following the retirement of my predecessor and valued colleague, Jackie Lake Kavanagh. Ms. Lake Kavanagh left a solid foundation for us to continue to build on. We share the successes profiled in this report with her, and express our gratitude for her tireless dedication to advancing the rights of children and youth.



This fiscal year saw our staff demonstrating continued flexibility and creativity as we navigated another year of living and working during the COVID-19 global pandemic. While the pandemic changed many things, it did not change the fortitude and dedication of our staff. We responded to more than 525 requests for services and advocacy assistance, published 4 investigative reports, and facilitated rights education sessions with more than 350 elementary and high school students.

I hope this report provides readers with an understanding of our work, as we continue to promote the rights of children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Karen Gray
Karen Gray, MSW, RSW
Child and Youth Advocate (Acting)







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Overview

Mandate

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA) is an Independent Statutory Office of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of all children and youth in the province and provide public oversight of government programs and services. We advocate to ensure children and youth have access to services they are entitled to, that their issues receive appropriate attention, and their voices are heard in matters affecting them.

We are mandated by legislation through the **Child and Youth Advocate Act**, to protect and advance the rights of children and youth. Our advocacy work is also guided by the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**, the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** and other policies and laws. Our primary clients are children and youth under the age of 19. If a young person is in extended care or custody, they are eligible until the age of 21.

We help children and youth by standing up for their rights in dealing with child serving systems. We help young people speak up for themselves, we speak up with them, or we speak up for them.

We encourage young people to contact us if they are having an issue accessing services, if they feel their rights are not being respected, or if their viewpoint is not being heard. We also work closely with family members, professionals, other supporters, and champions working on behalf of children and youth.

We offer individual advocacy, as well as systemic advocacy where groups of young people are affected. We investigate and review complaints, and deliver public education on the rights of children and youth. The voices and rights of young people are integral to the work we do and guide all of our advocacy efforts.



Section 3 of the **Child and Youth Advocate Act** states the Office is established:

- (a) to ensure that the rights and interests of children and youth are protected and advanced and their views are heard and considered;
- (b) to ensure that children and youth have access to services and that their complaints relating to the provision of those services receive appropriate attention;
- (c) to provide information and advice to the government, agencies of the government and to communities about the availability, effectiveness, responsiveness and relevance of services to children and youth;
- (c.1) to review and investigate matters affecting the rights and interests of children and youth; and
- (d) generally, to act as an advocate of the rights and interests of children and youth.

Financial Information

The budget approved for Fiscal Year 2021-22 was \$1,445,400.

What We Do

Individual Advocacy:

We speak up for young people, with young people, or help young people speak up for themselves so their voice is heard and their rights are respected.

Reviews/ Investigations:

We review and investigate complaints or concerns on behalf of an individual or group of children or youth.

Systemic Advocacy:

We look into issues that affect groups of children and youth, and advocate for needed changes.

Education and Outreach:

We provide education sessions and workshops with youth groups, professionals, community organizations, and schools about children and youth rights.

Our Vision

**A province where every
child's and youth's
rights are protected and
respected.**



Our Values

Integrity:

We act honestly, ethically and always in good faith in all areas of our work

Courage:

We lead with courage, as agents of change, to challenge the status quo in order to improve the circumstances and outcomes for children and youth

Inclusiveness:

We provide a safe space for all children and youth where differences in experiences and expression are valued and respected

Empowerment:

We work with young people in a way that builds their confidence, gives power to their voices, and recognizes their expertise in their own lives

Staff

The Child and Youth Advocate has a strong and committed team of 13 permanent staff. The team has diverse educational and professional backgrounds that include social work, nursing, education, law, psychology, and administration. Team members have worked in a variety of practice settings including public service, community organizations, and private practice.

All of our dedicated staff are passionate about standing up for the rights of children and youth. Here is what a few have to say:



"It is an honor and a privilege to go to work every day for the children and youth of this province, and I believe strongly in advocating for their rights and interests."

- *Trish LeGresley, Systemic Advocacy Consultant*



"Children and youth teach us so much... compassion, bravery, and understanding. They truly are the experts of their own well-being, and I am grateful to support them in amplifying their voices as they navigate systems."

- *Veronica Hounsell, Advocacy Services Specialist*



"Sometimes young people need someone to simply be there, to let them know we are on their side and care for their well-being. I enjoy working here because our office does listen to the voices of young people. It's definitely rewarding."

- *Suzanne Holt, Executive Assistant to the Advocate*

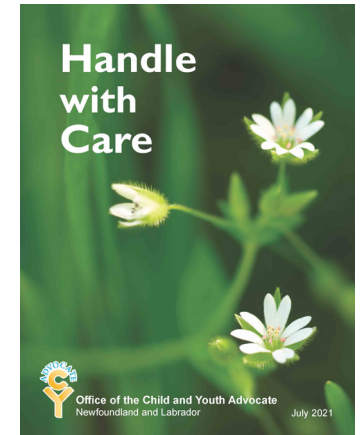
Highlights and Accomplishments

During the past fiscal year, the COVID-19 global pandemic continued to influence our service delivery model. On occasion, we worked from our homes and were not traveling for outreach. However, we continued to deliver on our mandate and remained steadfast in our commitment to the children and youth of this province. During this time we responded to over 525 requests for assistance. We also released four investigative reports, made three Submissions to Government, and facilitated 33 engagement sessions with youth and community partners.

Systemic and Investigation Reports

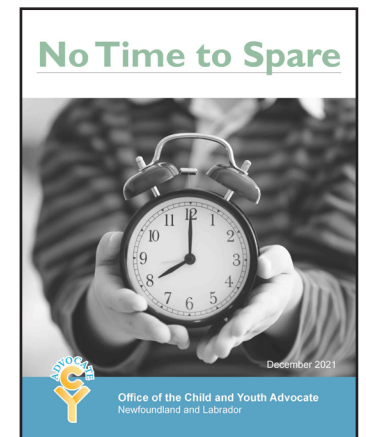
Handle with Care (July 2021)

This investigation looked at a case involving a seven-year-old child who experienced a mental health or behavioural episode while residing with her mother at a shelter for victims of family violence. Paramedics and uniformed police initially responded. Police then engaged the mobile crisis response team because of its specialized ability to intervene in mental health crises, however the police officers subsequently handcuffed the young child in the absence of the mental health clinician. The Report noted that our communities may have many pressing needs for police enforcement services. However, a misbehaving or mentally unwell young child should not be one of them. The timing of this report presents an opportunity to incorporate the recommendations from this investigation into evolving services and responses so that children in distress receive better responses in the future. There are clear and compelling lessons in this investigation for law enforcement and health care to do better for traumatized children.



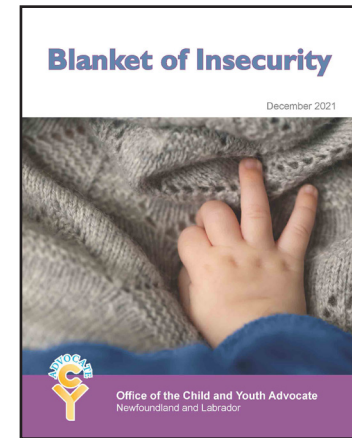
No Time to Spare (December 2021)

The title of this report **No Time to Spare** is a very clear message about the critical importance of timely interventions in the life of a child. Babies and young children grow and their brains develop at an incredibly fast pace. This is the time and opportunity for them to develop attachments to the adults in their lives. Predictability, responsiveness, and constancy are truly important. Secure attachments have a range of positive impacts on the young child, as well as into their future years. The inverse is also true where unstable relationships and lack of attachment have significant negative repercussions on a small child and create further challenges as they grow. The child who was the focus of this report was born into a trauma filled family. However, Child Protection's response did not provide the positive interventions one should expect and hope.



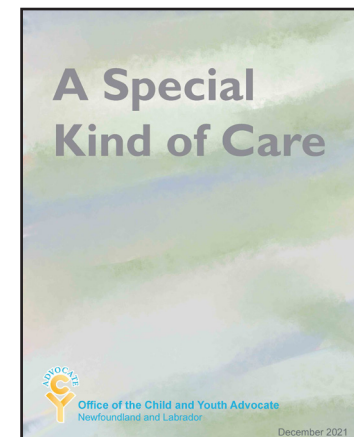
Blanket of Insecurity (December 2021)

This Report points to the critical importance of not only timely interventions but also the need for timely decisions in the life of a child. The investigation showed the chaos and instability in a child's life when there are multiple moves, and multiple caregivers in and out of young lives and revealed the elusive nature of permanence for some children. The Report also showed the essential need for thorough assessments and monitoring to ensure the children are in good hands. It also points out the importance of transferring information and decisions related to a child's welfare and identifies the significance and consequence when the many professionals who are frequently involved in the lives of these children fail to collaborate.



A Special Kind of Care (December 2021)

This investigation involved a youth with significant disabilities who had been in the care of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development for most of her life. Her first out of home placement at two months of age was the first of 11 placements. These placements included a family placement, a long-term foster placement, trial adoptive placements, an emergency placement home, and staffed individualized living arrangements. In one placement, 75 different staff provided care for this youth within a six month period. This investigation identified gaps in residential staff training, lack of residential staff continuity and consistency, poor implementation of resident programs, and deficiencies in collaborating with the various professionals involved in this young person's care. These issues exist in various residential care settings throughout the province, and are not limited to this young person or the specifics of this investigation.



Submissions, Media Statements, and Formal Presentations

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate completed the following this fiscal year:

- Submission to the Department of Education, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador regarding the **Teacher Training Act** (February 2022)
- Submission to the Ministerial Committee on Anti-Racism, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (January 2022)
- Media Statement: Better Responses Needed in Student Complaints of Teacher Misconduct (November 2021)
- Presentation to the Health Accord for Newfoundland and Labrador (September 10, 2021)

Engagement and Outreach

The **Child and Youth Advocate Act** mandates our Office to provide education on children's rights, among other services. This year, our engagement and outreach continued to look a little different due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we were so pleased to facilitate 33 outreach sessions this fiscal year. Unlike the previous year when in-person outreach sessions were limited, this year 10 of the 33 sessions were in-person. We always enjoy speaking directly to young people, whether it is virtually or in-person.

School Outreach

During 2021-22 we held virtual sessions with students in:

- Grades 5, 6, 10 and 11 at Belanger Memorial School in the Codroy Valley
- Grades 5 and 6 at Jens Haven Memorial School in Nain
- Grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 at E. A. Butler All Grade School in Cartyville
- Grade 4 at Mushuau Innu Natuashish School in Natuashish

Conferences and Community Outreach

- Presented virtually to groups of Sparks, Brownies, Guides, Pathfinders, and Rangers in Burin, Mount Pearl, Portugal Cove-St. Phillips, and St. John's.
- Visited with the children and caregivers of a play group at the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Phillips.

- Participated in Sharing Our Cultures event at The Rooms for Grade 6 Students (information booth).
- Presented to the X-cellent Youth Leader Program participants at the City of St. John's.
- Held multiple sessions with Association For New Canadians newcomer children and youth (grades 4 to 12).



Professionals and Future Professionals

- Presented to 16 new hires with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. We are now a scheduled presenter at all new staff orientations.
- Presented to 12 staff at Choices for Youth's Rally Forward Program.
- Presented to Memorial University School of Social Work students who visited our Office.
- Presented to the Child and Youth Care with Addictions Support Worker Program students at Eastern Academy
- Facilitated our annual session to over 200 students at the Centre for Collaborative Health Professional Education, Memorial University Faculty of Medicine. This included students from Social Work, Pharmacy, Nursing, Medicine, and Kinesiology.
- Presented and recorded an educational session at Memorial University for the Advancing the Practice Together (APT) education session. This is a partnership of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development (CSSD) and Memorial University's School of Social Work.

National Child Day

National Child Day is celebrated in Canada on November 20th each year. It is a recognition of our country's commitment to upholding the rights of children, as well as two historic events: the 1959 signing of the **UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child** and the adoption of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** in 1989. National Child Day is a very special time in our Office and we try to recognize the day all week long. In recognition of National Child Day 2021, we broadcasted Radio ads, created posters, tweeted, and shared a collage of staff wearing blue. We were delighted to visit a local play group in Portugal Cove-St. Philips and facilitated 10 virtual outreach sessions for schools throughout the province.



Supporting Initiatives Important to Young People

During each year, our Office participates in activities that support issues of importance to young people. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, this included attending events in the community. This past year, staff wore orange on September 30, 2021 to support the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (Orange Shirt Day) and wore pink on February 23, 2022 in recognition of Pink Shirt Day to support the anti-bullying movement.



Young Artist Program

Our Young Artist Program is an ongoing program for anyone under the age of 21. We accept artwork all year long and display it on our Young Artist Wall of Fame, and use it on our website, social media, newsletters, reports and other resource materials about children’s rights. We are interested in artistic creations such as drawings, paintings, pictures, and poetry. If you would like to learn more please visit <https://www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca/YoungArtistProgram.htm>. Every submission receives a prize pack and certificate.





Young Artist Program



We would love to showcase your original artwork!

Who can participate?
Anyone under the age of 21

How will my art be used?
It will appear on our website, on social media, on our wall of fame and in our various print materials

How do I submit my artwork?

Online by visiting: <https://www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca/YoungArtistProgram.htm>

Send by mail to: Young Artist Program
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
193 LeMarchant Road
St. John's, NL A1C 2H5

Call us to find out more: 1-877-753-3888 

We are interested in:

- Drawings
- Paintings
- Pictures
- Poetry

Follow Us on Twitter  @OCYANL

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate



ADVOCATE
CHILDREN & YOUTH
NEWFOUNDLAND ADVOCATE

Joint Initiatives

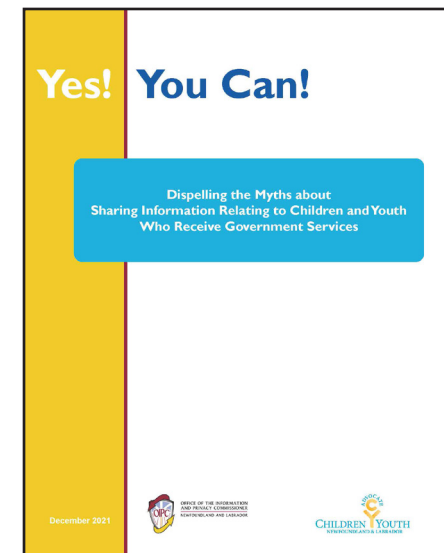
Calendar Project

In December 2021, our Office released a 2022-23 calendar profiling artwork from students of the Mushuau Innu Natuashish School. This calendar project was a joint initiative with the school. The school organized all the children’s artwork and supported their creativity, and the Advocate’s office completed the design and printing and assisted with distribution. The full calendar can be found by visiting our website: <https://www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca/files/Calendar2022-23.pdf>



“Yes, You Can”

In December 2021, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate released a guide for professionals working with children who may be at risk, titled “Yes, You Can: Dispelling the Myths about Sharing Information Relating to Children and Youth Who Receive Government Services.” The guide, which consists of a background document and a desktop reference, was developed by the two statutory bodies as our Offices regularly hear tales of a lack of information sharing between agencies and professionals, blamed on “privacy”. In many of these instances, these privacy concerns are not actually founded in statute but are based on misconceptions and risk-averse behaviour. The guide explains the legislative authority for these professionals to collect, use, and disclose information when needed – Yes, You Can share information in order to protect a child who may be at risk of harm.



Continuous Learning and Information Sharing

It is important to continually learn new things as we strive to advocate for the rights of children and youth. We have a strong, ongoing commitment to learning so we can better serve young people in the province. We were pleased to attend sessions on a variety of child and youth related topics, including:

- Child development
- Childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences
- Diversity
- Cultural humility
- Children's rights
- Corporal punishment
- Disability awareness
- Human Trafficking
- Mental health
- Parental alienation
- Pandemic impacts
- Youth justice
- Resilience
- Vicarious trauma
- Violence prevention

Conferences, Courses, and Presentations

The list below offers a sampling of some specific educational opportunities:

- Newfoundland and Labrador Association of the Deaf session
- Learning Disabilities Association of Newfoundland and Labrador session
- Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) Issues of Substance 2021 Conference
- Canadian Consortium on Child and Youth Trauma Symposium
- Roots of Empathy Conference
- Neufeld Institute sessions focused on emotional health and well-being
- Daring to Do Workshop series offered by the by Kojo Institute on Anti Racist Action in Child Welfare

Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates

The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA) is an association of independent government-appointed children's advocates, ombudsmen, and representatives from ten provinces and two territories. The Council identifies areas and issues of mutual concern, addresses issues at a national level, and shares research and best practices. The Council's vision is that the rights, interests, and well-being of all children and youth are valued and respected in Canadian communities and in government legislation, policy, programs and practices.

This past fiscal year, the CCCYA met on two occasions and issued the following three media statements, which can be found at <http://www.cccya.ca/content/Statements-Reports.asp?langid=1>:

- May 7, 2021: Children's advocates call for significant mental health planning and investment for young people now and after pandemic on National Child and Youth Mental Health Day
- November 17, 2021: Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates urges Canadians to call on government to safeguard the rights of children and youth
- December 13, 2021: Child and Youth Advocates Reflect on 30 Years of Children's Rights in Canada. This statement recognized that December 13, 2021 marked 30 years since Canada ratified the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (UNCRC). This legally-binding human rights treaty sets out 42 protection, promotion, and participation rights for young persons under 18. All CCCYA member office's work is grounded in the UNCRC. It is the role of CCCYA to help hold governments accountable for meeting their legal obligations under this document.

Despite the UNCRC and Canada's strong economic, environmental and social conditions, the CCCYA continues to identify and advocate for many gaps in systems. This includes corporal punishment. The CCCYA has been quite vocal about the need for Canada to repeal Section 43 of the **Criminal Code** which legally permits corporal punishment of children and has been used to defend assault of children for the purpose of corrective discipline. While there are limits on the force that can be used, legal interpretation and application of these limits have been inconsistent, resulting in children not being afforded the same protections against violence that are taken for granted by adults. Section 43 goes against the solid body of research demonstrating the immediate and long-term harms that corporal punishment imposes on children, and on society generally.

The CCCYA will continue to advocate as a group against this and other issues impacting the well-being of young persons in our country.

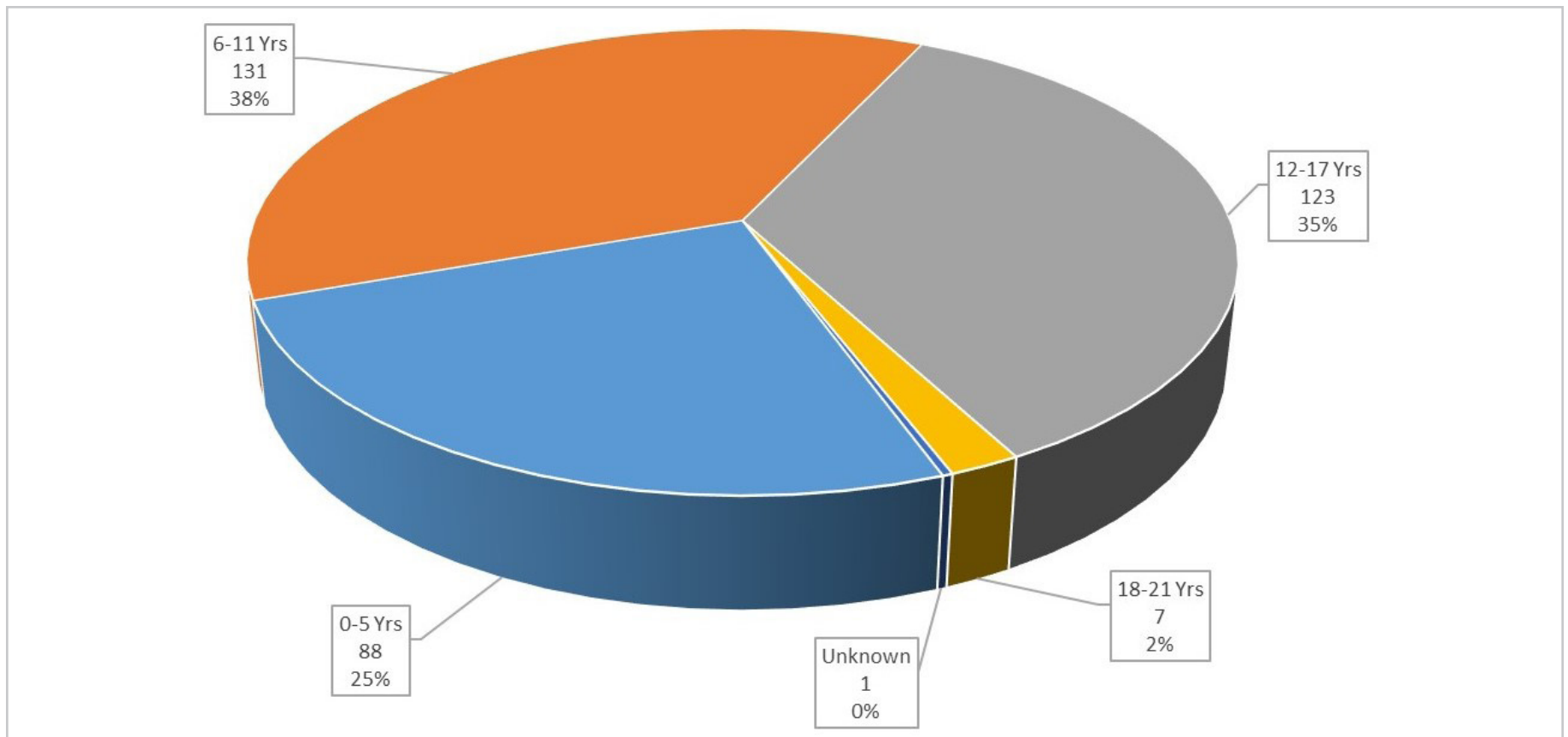
OCYA Statistical Highlights

Service Delivery and Performance

We responded to more than 525 requests for services and advocacy assistance. This includes 175 shorter-term requests for information, as well as assistance with navigating various systems of government and its agencies.

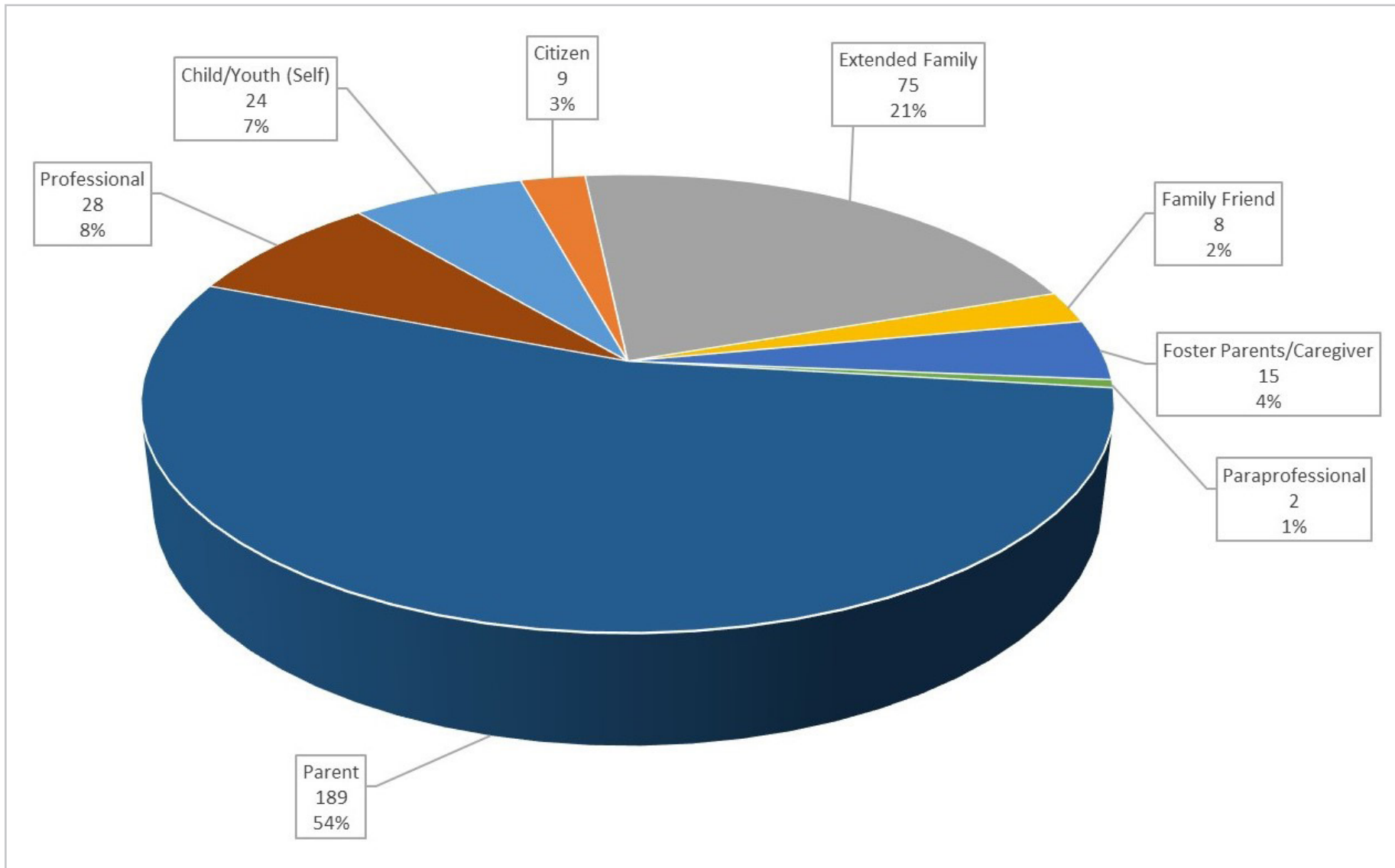
Age of Client

This chart identifies the ages of clients who were the subject of the requests for advocacy assistance. Children aged 6-11 years continue to be the focus of most requests for advocacy assistance at 38%, which is a consistent trend.



Person Requesting Advocacy for Child/Youth

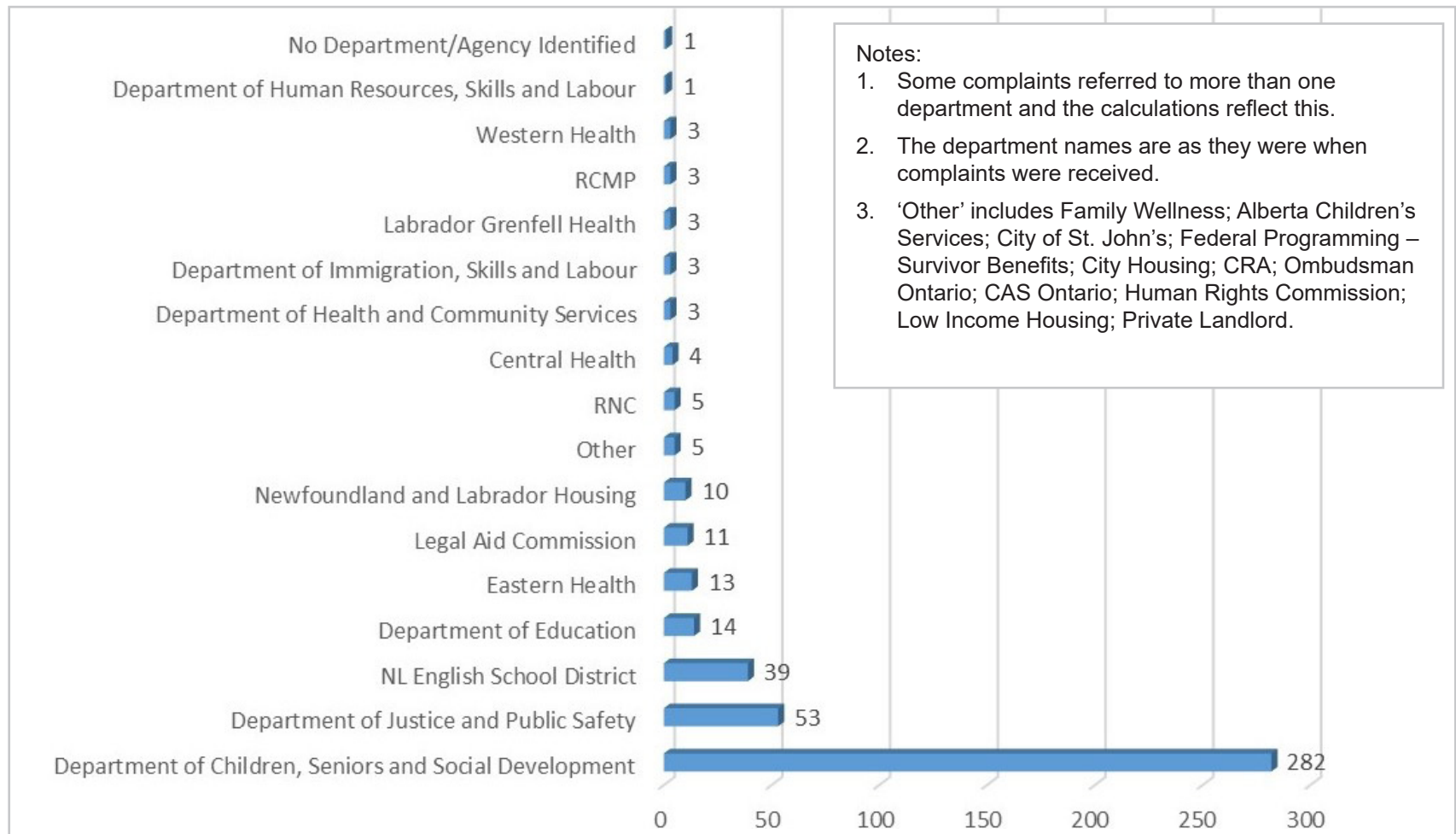
This chart identifies the person requesting advocacy assistance. Consistent with previous years, parents continue to be the primary group requesting advocacy services for their children (54%) followed by extended family (21%).



Requests for Advocacy Assistance by Department or Agency Involved (2021-22)

This graph below represents the department or agency which was the focus of a concern or complaint and where formal advocacy services were provided. The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development continues to be the highest department or agency of focus.

In addition to the graph below, we also responded to 175 shorter-term requests for information, as well as assistance with navigating various systems of government and its agencies.



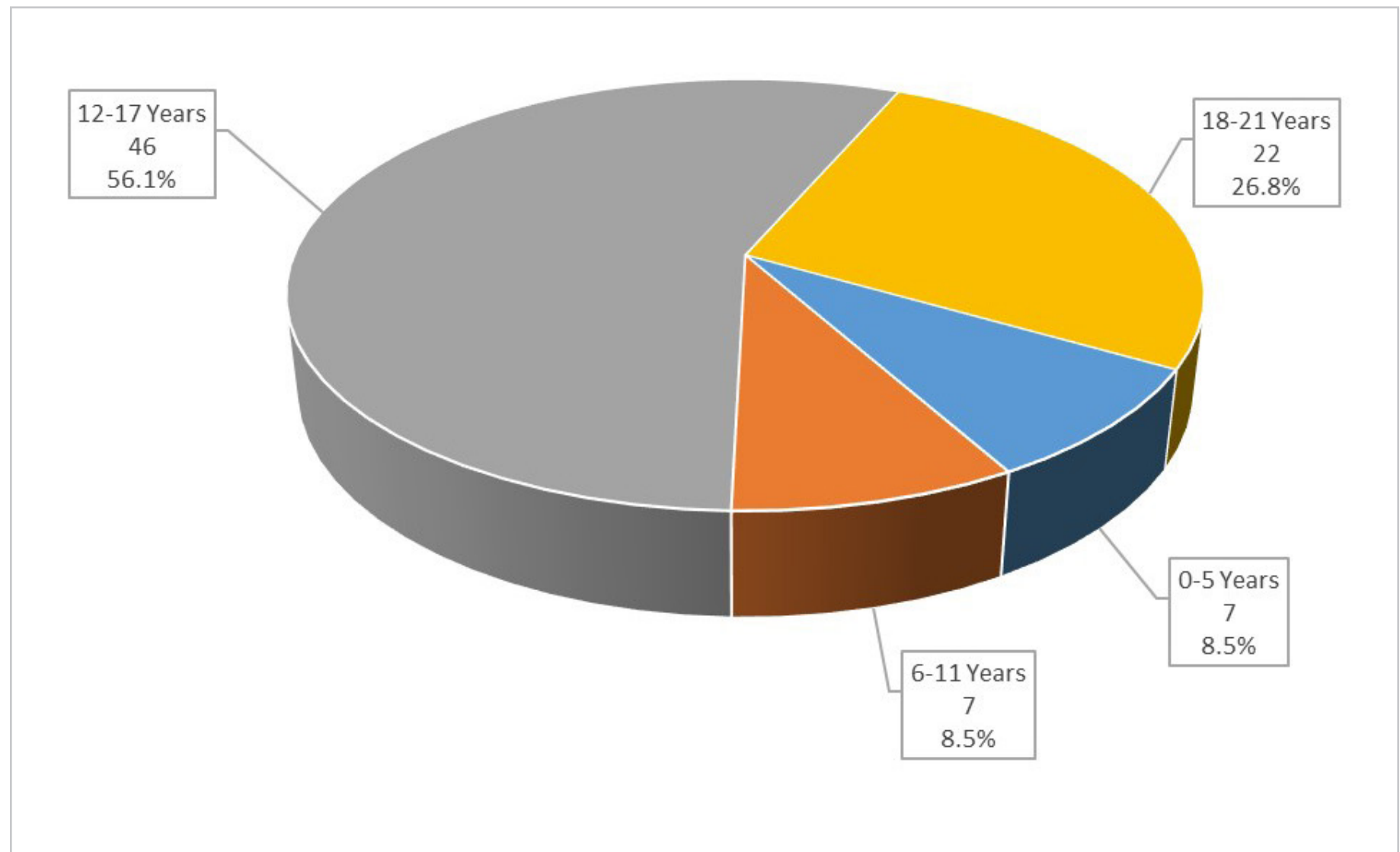
Mandatory Reporting of Deaths and Critical Injuries

The **Child and Youth Advocate Act** requires the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development and the Department of Justice and Public Safety to report child and youth deaths and critical injuries to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate where the young person received a designated service. Section 16.1 in the legislation defines critical injury as “an injury, including physical or psychological injury, which may result in the death of a child or youth or may cause serious or long-term impairment of the health of a child or youth”. These departments are also required to report a death or critical injury within 12 months of the young person receiving a designated service, if the young person is no longer a client.

From April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development reported 82 critical injuries and 3 deaths. All 3 deaths were due to medical reasons. The Department of Justice and Public Safety reported no deaths or critical injuries.

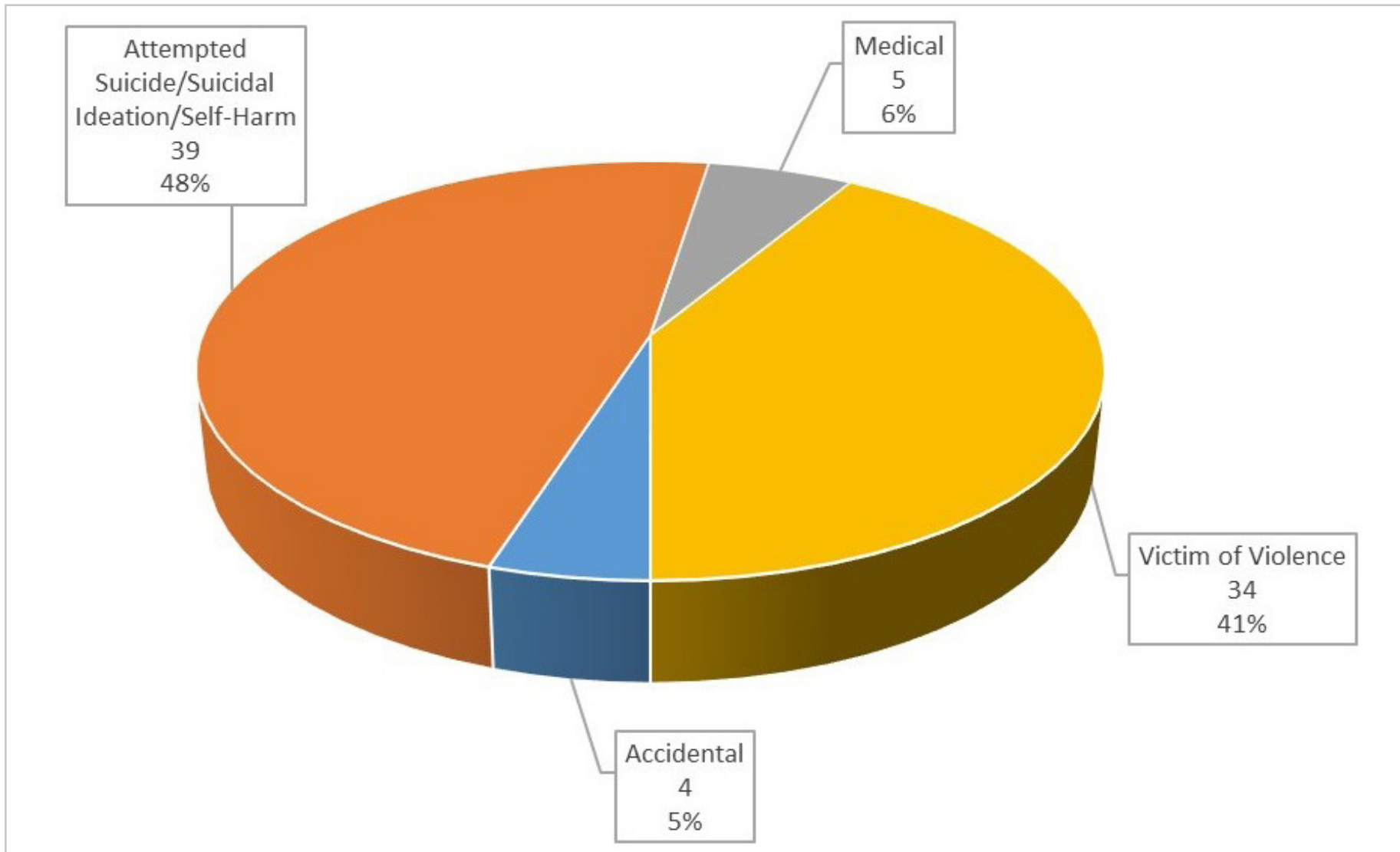
Critical Injury by Age Group

Consistent with last year the 12-17 year age group is the highest subject of mandatory reporting at 56.1%.



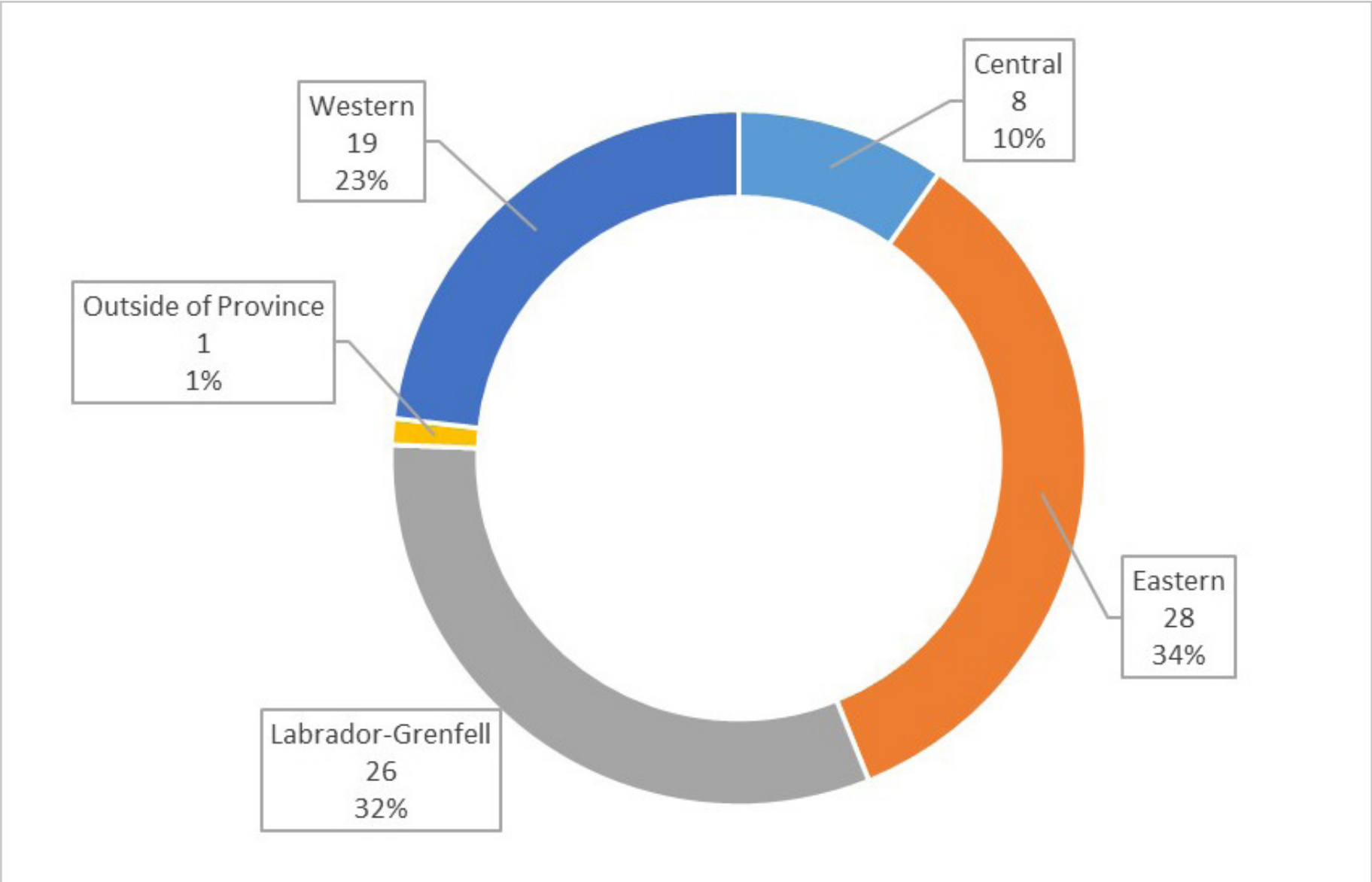
Critical Injury by Type

Consistent with last year, mental health related issues (attempted suicide, suicidal ideation, self-harm) are the highest type of critical injuries reported. We have also seen a concerning trend this year in the increase in the Victim of Violence category as it now has grown to 41% of all reports received.



Critical Injury by Region

This fiscal year, 34% of critical injuries were in the Eastern Region, 32% were in Labrador-Grenfell Region, 23% were in the Western Region, 10% were in the Central Region and 1% was from outside the province.



Report on Performance

This section identifies the goals, objectives, and indicators outlined in the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate's 2020-23 Business Plan. This report represents the second year of the plan, so we will report on the objectives and indicators for 2021-22.

The Business Plan and Annual Reports can be found under the Publications section of our website:
<https://www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca/publications.htm> .

Issue 1: Promote Awareness of Children's Rights

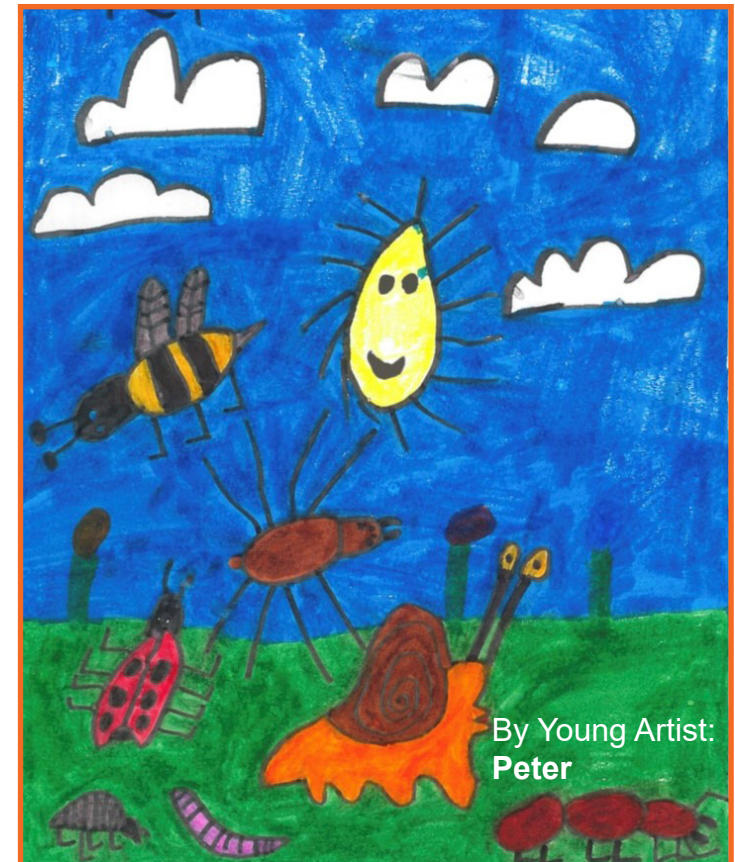
Engaging young people is paramount to our advocacy work. We are continually looking for new and creative ways to build awareness of children's rights. In past years, we visited schools and youth serving organizations throughout the province and met directly with children, youth, and those who nurture and serve them.

We have learned over the past few years in the current context of the global pandemic that in person meetings and activities cannot happen in the same way. As a result we have explored virtual engagement opportunities to connect with children and youth, implemented these virtual opportunities, and assessed how they worked. This may provide a way for us to reach even more children and youth every year. Our outreach and engagement may possibly consist of a hybrid model of virtual and in-person sessions (when deemed safe to do so).

Goal 1: By March 31, 2023 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have promoted alternative approaches to children's rights awareness

Indicators:

- Identified alternate engagement opportunities to connect with young people
- Implemented alternate engagement opportunities
- Assessed alternate activities



Objective 1.2: By March 31, 2022 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have implemented virtual engagement opportunities.

Indicator	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff provided with learning opportunities regarding technological platforms for virtual sessions 	<p>Staff were provided with learning opportunities regarding technological platforms for virtual sessions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All staff were provided with materials from the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) pertaining to general video conferencing platforms and Skype for Business. ▶ Staff were provided with information for the Zoom Learning Center and how to use Google Meet (the platform used by schools throughout the province). ▶ Staff had exposure to a multitude of technological platforms as part of professional development, including Google Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, WebX, and Skype.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Virtual engagement sessions scheduled for young people in a variety of settings 	<p>Virtual engagement sessions were scheduled for young people in a variety of settings, specifically for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Grades 5, 6, 10 and 11 at Belanger Memorial School in the Codroy Valley. ▶ Grades 5 and 6 at Jens Haven Memorial School in Nain. ▶ Grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 at E.A. Butler All Grade School in Cartyville. ▶ Grade 4 at Mushuau Innu Natuashish School in Natuashish. ▶ Groups of Sparks, Brownies, Guides, Pathfinders, and Rangers in Burin, Mount Pear, Portugal Cove-St. Phillips, and St. John's.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Virtual engagement sessions held for young people throughout the province 	<p>Virtual engagement sessions were held for young people throughout the province. Specifically, virtual sessions were held for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Grades 5, 6, 10 and 11 at Belanger Memorial School in the Codroy Valley. ▶ Grades 5 and 6 at Jens Haven Memorial School in Nain. ▶ Grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 at E.A. Butler All Grade School in Cartyville. ▶ Grade 4 at Natuashish Innu School in Natuashish.. ▶ Groups of Sparks, Brownies, Guides, Pathfinders, and Rangers in Burin, Mount Pear, Portugal Cove-St. Phillips, and St. John's.

Discussion of Results

Coincidentally, the second year of our business plan coincided with the second year of the global COVID-19 pandemic. As a result we had a further opportunity to learn, have exposure to, and utilize various technological platforms in interacting with each other, other professionals, and facilitating our outreach sessions for young people. As challenging as the pandemic has been, the exposure to and learning about these platforms has been very beneficial. This learning may not have happened if there had not been a pandemic. Through these various platforms we have been able to connect with many young people despite the pandemic and restrictions on in-person gatherings. Although we prefer direct, in-person contact with young people, virtual outreach has enabled us to make connections with young people and professionals that would not have otherwise been possible in the midst of a pandemic. A hybrid model of in person and virtual outreach may be useful given the province's geography, staff resources, travel costs, and any other potential public health related challenges. Less physical travel is also good for the environment, which is a priority issue for us all and especially for young people.

Objective 1.3: By March 31, 2023 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have assessed virtual engagement activities.

Indicators:

- Feedback requested from young people attending virtual engagement sessions
- Feedback requested from professionals/adults regarding virtual sessions
- Feedback requested from OCYA staff facilitating virtual sessions
- All feedback assessed

Issue 2: Promote Youth Engagement

We believe that children and youth are the experts in their own lives. No one truly knows their situation better than themselves. Our Office is adamant that it is essential to constantly engage youth in matters that affect them. Through the course of the pandemic we have also learned that this engagement must be done in new and meaningful ways. Young people have told us that they often have lots to say, but unfortunately are rarely asked their opinion. The voices of young people need to be heard and amplified. This is why during this past fiscal year we have engaged directly in sessions with about 350 elementary and high school students, as well as approximately 270 post-secondary students. It is through this interaction that we can hear the ideas, issues, and needs of young people. Essentially as we learn from them we can further develop our youth engagement plans to target young people more effectively.

Goal 2: By March 31, 2023, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have enhanced youth engagement.

Indicators:

- Best practices in youth engagement researched
- Youth engagement plan developed and implemented
- Youth engagement activities assessed



Objective 2.2: By March 31, 2022 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have engaged children and youth to amplify their voices.

Indicator	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assessed feedback from young people during virtual and in-person sessions 	<p>Feedback from young people during virtual and in-person sessions was assessed and this is what we heard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The young people indicated that they preferred presentations in school, either in-person or virtual. ▶ Many noted that information about their rights should actually be included in their elementary curriculum and that they should not hear it for the first time in high school. ▶ In many sessions the use of social media (Facebook, TikTok, YouTube) was also a popular response. ▶ Other ideas included promotional items, posters, websites, contests, ads, and commercials.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assessed research regarding best practices in child and youth engagement 	<p>Research regarding best practices in child and youth engagement was assessed and this is what we discovered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Much of the research indicated the critical importance of creating genuine, meaningful opportunities for youth to express themselves, be heard, voice their ideas, and provide input for projects or programs. ▶ Research also emphasized the need to offer ways for youth to speak out on issues affecting them and to help them advocate for themselves and their needs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Developed a youth engagement plan 	<p>A youth engagement plan was developed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The engagement plan identified various rural sites in the province that have not been visited in recent years as well as multiple schools in Labrador, including Inuit and Innu communities. It also included outreach specifically to young new Canadians as well as Girl Guide groups in various parts of the province.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Implemented a youth engagement plan 	<p>The implementation of the youth engagement plan began and will continue into the next fiscal year. The engagement plan is a living document which continues to grow and develop based on the ever changing needs of young people in the province.</p>

Discussion of Results

This fiscal year, we researched best practices in child and youth engagement and were intentional in gathering feedback from young people. Engagement sessions with young people provided information about our Office and their rights, as well as ensured time was dedicated to having meaningful opportunities for young people to express their views and “teach us”.

Specifically, we asked over 350 students about the best ways to engage them and how they want to learn about their rights. Many students expressed both their pleasure and surprise about being given an opportunity to voice their ideas and opinions. We learned much in those sessions and in our research that we will apply to our ongoing engagement planning process.

We firmly believe that children and youth are the experts in their own lives and we recognize that we need to regularly engage youth in matters that affect them. If we want to effectively advocate with them and for them, we need to create opportunities to truly listen to their ideas and issues.

Objective 2.3: By March 31, 2023 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will seek feedback from children and youth regarding its engagement activities.

Indicators:

- Feedback requested from young people attending in-person engagement sessions
- Feedback requested from professionals/adults regarding in-person engagement sessions
- Feedback requested from OCYA staff facilitating in-person engagement sessions
- All feedback assessed

Opportunities and Challenges

We are committed to the work that we do each day to advance and champion the rights of children and youth here in the province. We have been doing this work for 20 years and remain steadfast in that commitment. The global pandemic proved that our office is creative and adaptable to change. During this second year of the pandemic, we responded to more than 525 requests for services and advocacy assistance. We released four investigative reports and provided three submissions to government on a variety of topics that include health services for youth, racism, and teacher training. We also worked with the Mushuau Innu Natuashish School to release a beautiful calendar art project as well as the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to release a guide for professionals about sharing information.

During this fiscal year, we saw the retirement of our former Advocate, Jackie Lake Kavanagh. Her leadership and passion certainly left a mark on the Office and in the province. We are so pleased to have our Acting Advocate, Karen Gray, at the helm until a permanent Advocate is recruited. Change is a constant and with it comes new opportunities.

As we enter our third decade of advocacy, we continue to see progress in the recognition of child and youth rights and we also see needs and gaps in child and youth serving systems. We continue to be concerned about the mental health of young persons in our province. Through



our mandatory reporting process as well as our individual advocacy efforts we continue to see many young people struggle with mental health and access to mental health services. We advocated for this in our presentation to the Health Accord last fall and will continue to closely watch the implementation of the Health Accord plan to see how it impacts young people in the province. We, with our CCCYA counterparts, have also advocated for a National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, setting out clear jurisdictional mandates, multi-sectoral responsibilities, resources, and timelines, to serve as the foundation for addressing this devastating issue in our country. We will also continue to advocate to the Federal Government, with our provincial and territorial counterparts on repealing Section 43 of the **Criminal Code** to prohibit corporal punishment and legally sanctioned violence against children. It is unacceptable in a country like Canada that we continue to allow corporal punishment of children. We must promote more progressive interventions with children and move away from legalized violence.

Rights education is essential for children and youth in this province. We have advocated to the Department of Education here in Newfoundland and Labrador that rights based education is needed in the school curriculum. We have heard this first hand from students in our engagement and outreach sessions over the past year. They spoke strongly about this need and we have listened to their views. We will continue to advocate so their voices are amplified and these “true experts” are heard in the process. We are so appreciative of their feedback and enthusiasm during our engagement.

We look forward to seeing what the next 20 years hold for the Office. We know that we will continue to adjust and respond to the needs of young people, just as we have successfully adapted to the challenges of the pandemic. Children and youth need all of us to support and advocate with them. Now, more than ever, we truly need to listen to them so meaningful change can happen.



Financial Statements

Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are based on information provided in the **Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for Fiscal Year Ended 31 March 2022** (<https://www.assembly.nl.ca/business/electronicdocuments/ReportProgramExpendituresRevenuesCRFMar31-22.pdf>).



April 1, 2021 - March 31, 2022

	Estimates		
	Actual \$	Amended \$	Original \$
01. Salaries	1,157,769	1,196,600	1,196,600
Operating Accounts			
Employee Benefits	1,756	3,500	3,500
Transportation and Communications	18,134	53,900	55,400
Supplies	7,441	7,500	6,000
Professional Services	3,945	19,000	19,000
Purchased Services	130,068	160,900	160,900
Property, Furnishings and Equipment	3,638	4,000	4,000
02. Operating Accounts	164,982	248,800	248,800
Total:	1,322,751	1,445,400	1,445,400



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