

BUSINESS PLAN 2020-23



Published by:
The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
Newfoundland and Labrador
193 LeMarchant Road
St. John's NL, A1C 2H5

Printed by:
The Queen's Printer
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

Message from the Child and Youth Advocate

I am pleased to present the Business Plan 2020-2023 for the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate. The Office has been designated as a Category 2 entity as per the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and for the achievement of the identified goals and objectives.

As Child and Youth Advocate, I am a statutory officer of the House of Assembly and serve in an oversight capacity. My office plays a vitally important function by independently representing the rights and interests of children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador. My office serves as a catalyst for change to improve services and responses to young people, and ensures their rights are respected and protected. This is especially important during a global pandemic where systems have changed how and where they deliver services. I pledge that my team and I will work hard every day so that children's rights are prominent in government decision-making and service delivery systems.

We will strive to learn and share lessons about youth engagement in these changing times, with many of those teachings coming directly from youth. And we will seek innovative ways to broaden our approach on our mandated role to deliver education on children and youth rights.

My team and I look forward to the challenges ahead, and to making a difference in the lives of children and youth.


Jackie Lake Kavanagh
Child and Youth Advocate





BUSINESS PLAN 2020-23

Table of Contents

Message from the Child and Youth Advocate i

Overview 1

Mandate 2

Staff 3

Organizational Chart 3

Lines of Business 4

Financial Information 5

Our Vision 6

Our Values 7

Who We Serve 8

Issues 9

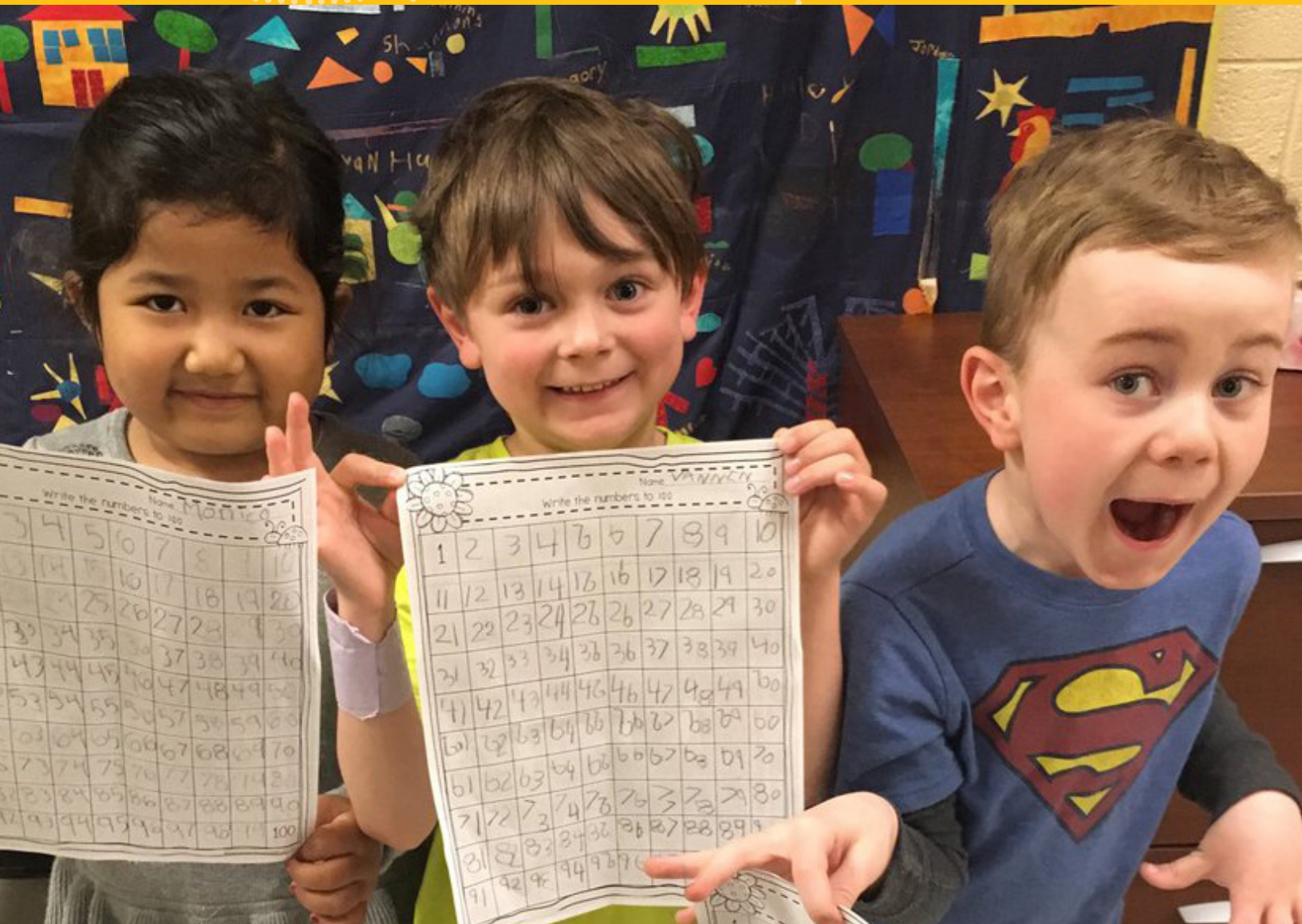
Issue 1: Promote Awareness of Children’s Rights 10

Issue 2: Promote Youth Engagement 11

Conclusion 12



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 work independent of operational direction from any government department in fulfilling our mandate. The governing legislation is the **Child and Youth Advocate Act** and our advocacy work is guided by the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** and other policies and laws.

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is mandated to protect and advance the rights of children and youth. We represent the interests and viewpoints of children and youth under the age of 19 years in Newfoundland and Labrador. If a young person has been in care or custody the age of service is extended to their 21st birthday.

We help young people speak up for themselves, we speak up with them, or we speak up for them. We do this through individual advocacy, systemic advocacy, investigations and reviews, as well as public education about the rights of children and youth.

We advocate for changes and accountability that promote the interests and well-being of children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador. The office advocates 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.

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

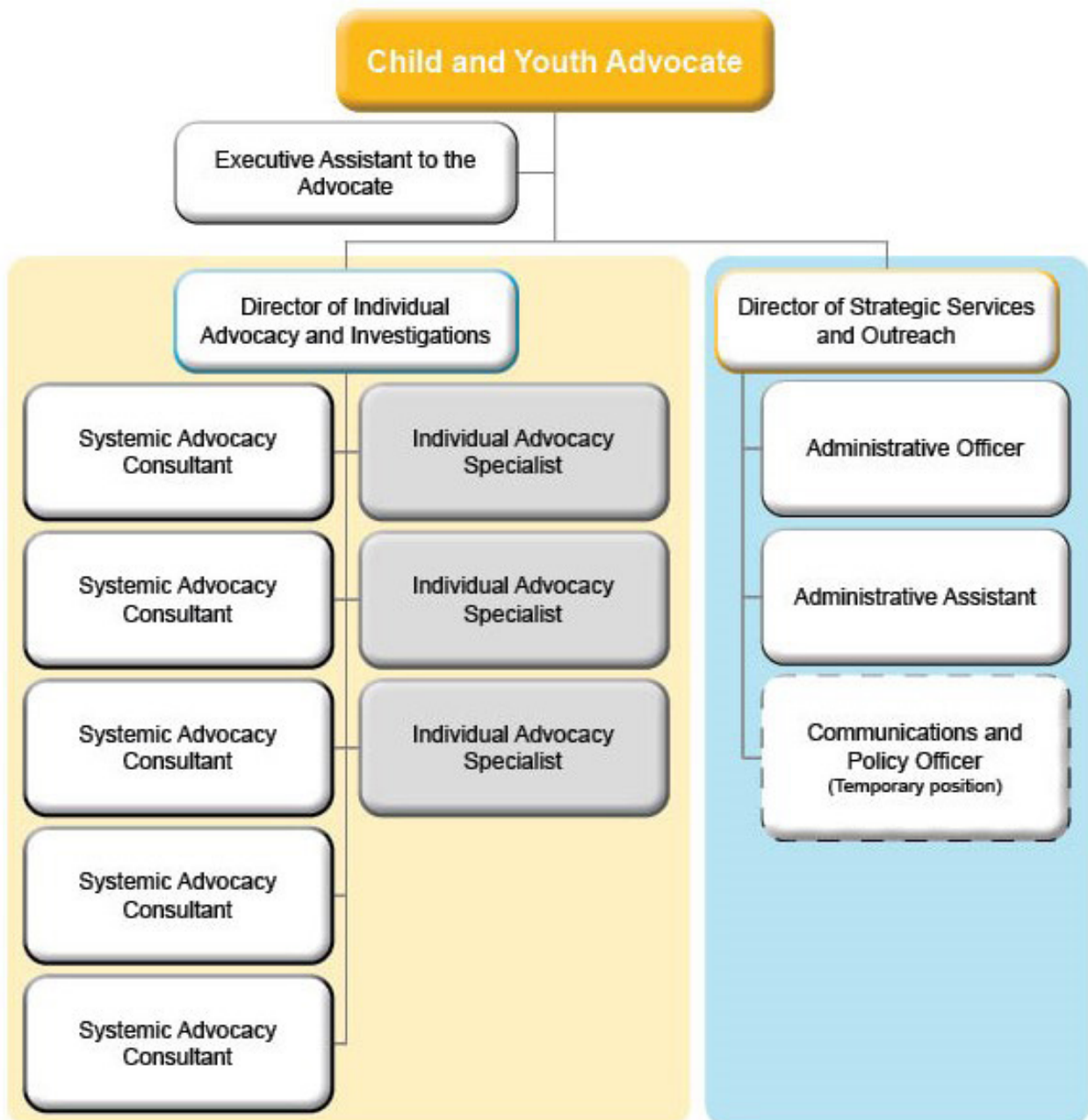
- (a) to ensure that the rights and interests of children and youth are protected and advanced and their views are heard and considered;
- (b) to ensure that children and youth have access to services and that their complaints relating to the provision of those services receive appropriate attention;
- (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.

Staff

Our dedicated staff are passionate about standing up for the rights of children and youth. In addition to the Child and Youth Advocate, there are 13 permanent staff members on our team with diverse educational and professional backgrounds. These backgrounds include social work, nursing, education, law and psychology. Our administration staff serve important support roles to ensure advocacy and investigative staff can dedicate their efforts directly to issues affecting children and youth every day.

Team members have worked in a variety of practice settings including public service, community organizations, and private practice.

Organizational Chart



Lines of Business



Individual Advocacy:

Children and youth have rights, and these rights create expectations about the responses and services young people deserve. When we become aware that a child or youth is experiencing barriers to these rights being respected, and that responses are not sufficient, we advocate on an individual level for that young person.

Systemic Advocacy:

Systemic issues affect groups of young people. These systemic issues may involve gaps, changes or reductions involving services, programs, policies, or laws. When we see broad issues that negatively impact the rights of children and youth, we advocate for broader systemic change to benefit these groups of young people. We will do this work regardless if anyone makes a complaint or request to our office.

Reviews/Investigations:

We may formally investigate or review a matter on behalf of a child or youth or group of children or youth. This is a very serious matter which may involve witnesses being required to provide information under oath or affirmation. By law, we can compel the disclosure of documents and case files to this office. We may review policies, legislation, and other information. After determining the facts, we typically make recommendations for changes in policies, services, programs and /or laws to better protect and advance children's rights in the future.

Education and Outreach:

We are mandated to provide education on children's human rights. In this role, we are able to connect with children and youth, to learn directly about their issues at the community level, and to hear from others who are committed to improving services and responses to young people in Newfoundland and Labrador. In our education role, we may offer sessions to schools or youth groups, provide book readings to young children on rights-based themes, speak at conferences, deliver professional development workshops, and participate in cultural and community events.

Financial Information

Budget Approved for 2020-21 Fiscal Year	
Salaries	\$1,191,000
Employee Benefits	\$3,500
Transportation & Communication	\$55,400
Supplies	\$6,000
Professional Services	\$19,000
Purchased Services	\$160,900
Property, Furnishings & Equipment	\$4,000
Total:	\$1,439,800

By Young Artist:
Monica



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



Who We Serve

We advocate for the rights, interests and well-being of all children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador. When a young person's rights are not being well-served, we are available with assistance for any concerns or complaints.

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. Young people may contact us directly. We also work closely with family members, professionals, other supporters, and champions working on behalf of children and youth.



Issues

This plan has been developed in the midst of a global pandemic. COVID-19 forced immediate and unprecedented changes to models of work and service delivery in Spring 2020. In developing these alternative models for our work, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate has posed the following question: How can we be more innovative in broadening our reach to deliver on our mandate, both in the current environment, and post-pandemic?



Issue 1: Promote Awareness of Children's Rights

Under Article 42 of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, young people have a right to know their rights. With this knowledge, they are better equipped to stand up for their rights, or ask someone to help them do this and so are their families. We continually seek new and creative ways to build awareness of children's rights.

In the current context of a global pandemic, in person meetings, sessions, workshops, and activities on children's rights cannot happen in the same way. We will explore alternate ways to connect with children and youth, implement new strategies, and assess how they worked. This will enable us to broaden our reach provincially, both during the pandemic as well as post-pandemic.

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 1.1: By March 31, 2021 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have identified new approaches to reaching young people to deliver education on children and youth rights.

Indicators:

- ▶ Engaged with children and youth
- ▶ Met with school personnel
- ▶ Connected with youth-serving organizations
- ▶ Consulted with Office of the Chief Information Officer regarding technology
- ▶ Researched best or promising practices in other jurisdictions

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

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



Issue 2: Promote Youth Engagement

We believe that children and youth are the experts in their own lives. Now, more than ever, it is important to engage youth in new and meaningful ways. Young people need to have their voices heard and amplified. This is their right. We will tap into the perspectives and lessons from young people, research best practices for youth engagement in the current context, develop and implement a plan to share lessons to enhance youth engagement, and assess these initiatives to inform future engagement activities. We will promote the perspectives of young people and share insights we obtain regarding youth engagement.

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

Indicators:

- ▶ Researched best practices in youth engagement
- ▶ Engaged children and youth to inform engagement practices and identify issues of importance to them
- ▶ Amplified children and youth voices and perspectives
- ▶ Assessed children and youth engagement activities

Objective 2.1: By March 31, 2021 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have researched best practices in youth engagement.

Indicators:

- ▶ Completed a jurisdictional scan regarding youth engagement during a pandemic and beyond
- ▶ Held meetings with youth serving organizations
- ▶ Completed online research activities regarding youth engagement
- ▶ Consulted children and youth to inform engagement practices and priorities

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.

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.



Conclusion

As advocates for children and youth, we are agents of change. We take this responsibility very seriously because we know how important it is to protect children's rights. While this plan does not articulate all of the work we will do over the next three years, it identifies key strategic issues that we will focus on, and weave throughout our work. We look forward to this opportunity and dedicate ourselves with purpose.



Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

193 LeMarchant Road, St. John's, NL A1C 2H5

Telephone: (709) 753-3888

Toll Free: 1-877-753-3888

Fax: (709) 753-3988

Email: office@ocya.nl.ca

Twitter: @OCYANL

Website: www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca