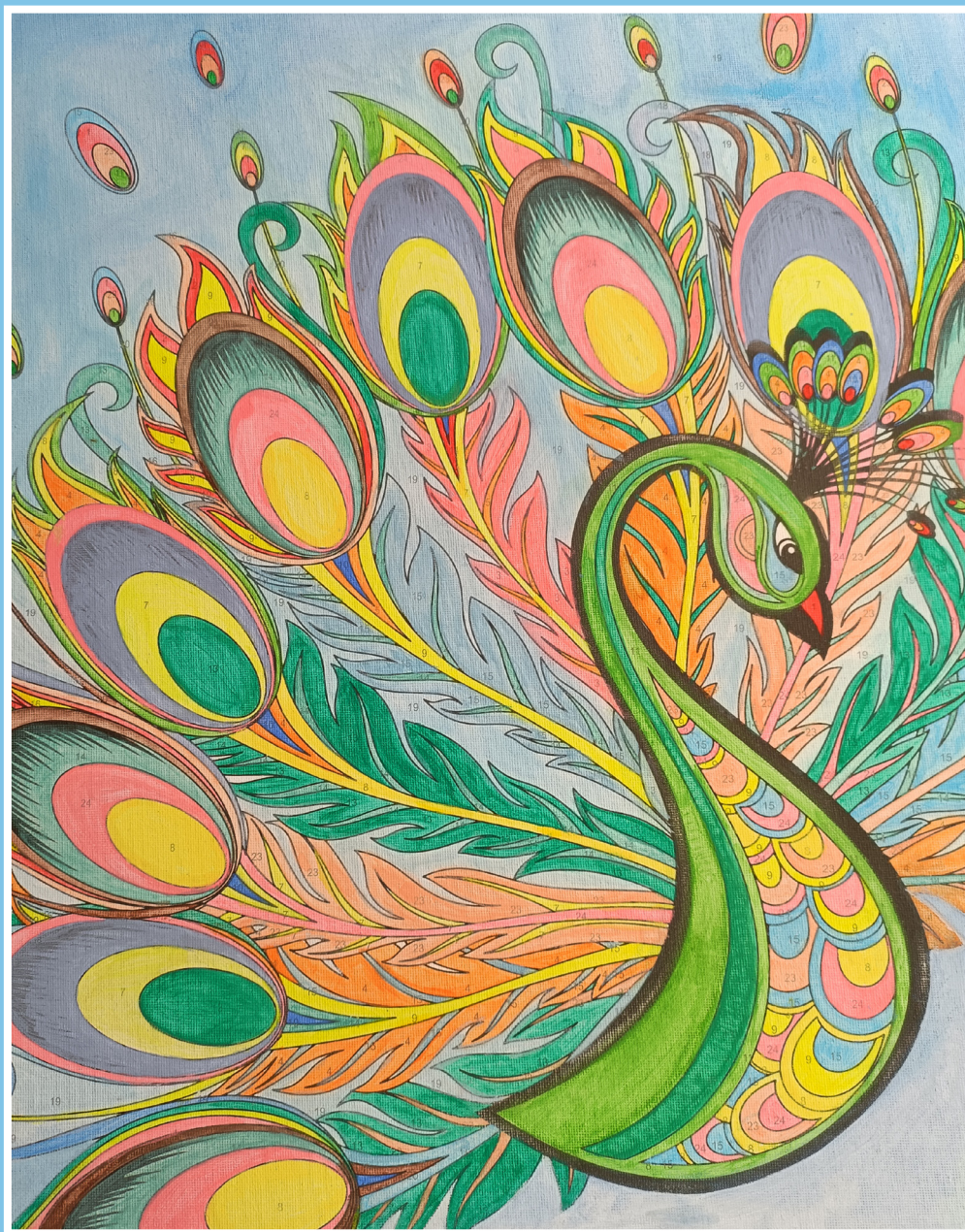


# Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

## Business Plan 2026-29



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**Meira**

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# Message from the Child and Youth Advocate

I am pleased to present the 2026-29 Business Plan 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.

On June 15, 2026 I was appointed as the Child and Youth Advocate for Newfoundland and Labrador. This role gives me the privilege to represent the rights, interests, and viewpoints of young people here in the province. I am excited to implement this Business Plan over the next three years, particularly our commitment to meet with and meaningfully engage young people on the issues that matter to them. I also look forward to enhancing our education and awareness efforts throughout the province, so we all can understand, protect, respect, and uphold the rights of children and youth here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In 2027 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA) will celebrate 25 years of advocating for the rights of children and youth here in the province. Those advocacy efforts would not be possible without the dedicated and passionate staff of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, the young people themselves, and the many family members and champions who support them.

Sincerely,



**Wilma MacInnis**, MSW, RSW  
Child and Youth Advocate



By a Young Artist who lives in St. John's.

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By Young Artist: **Abraham**

# 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, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, 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:

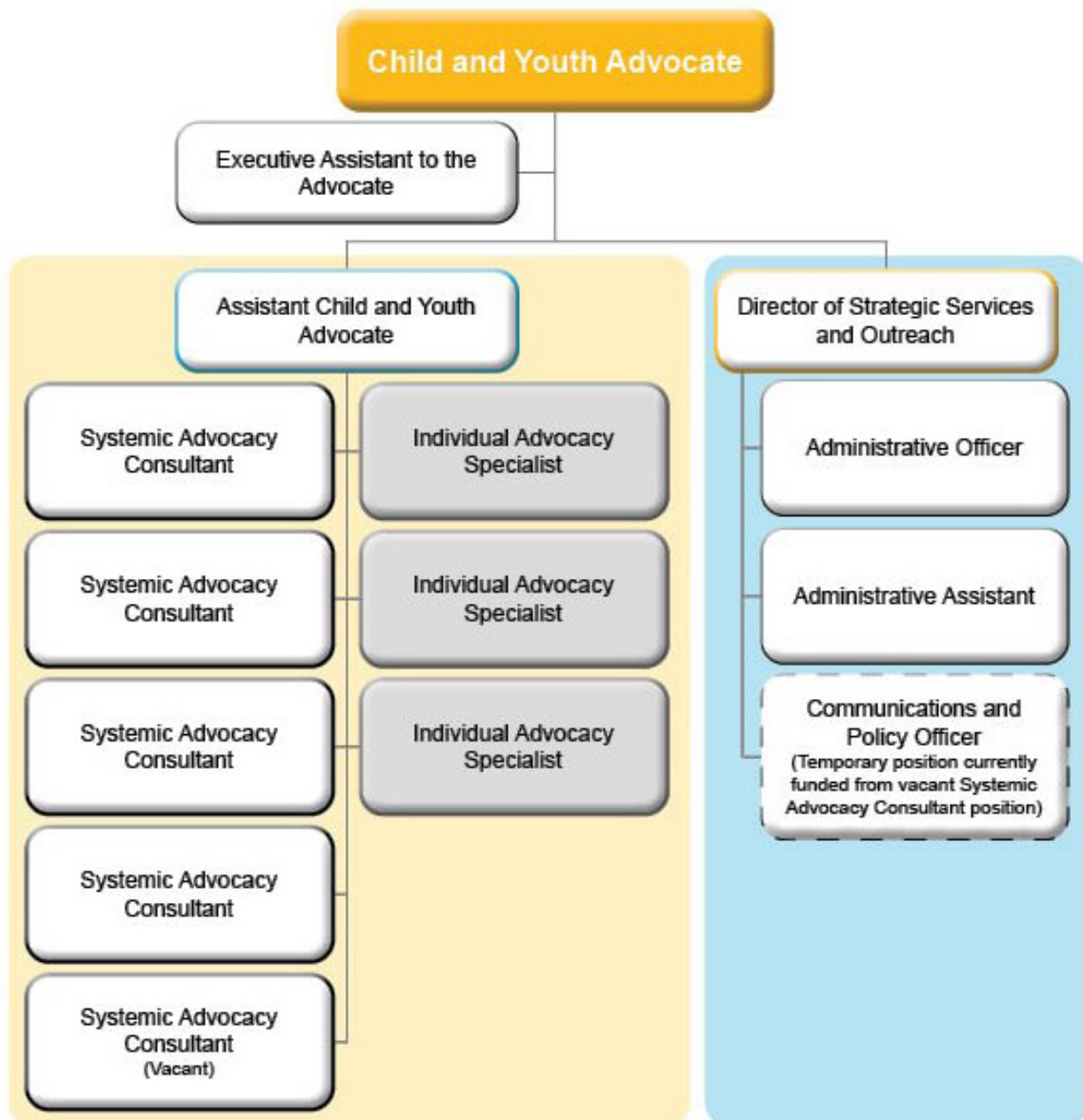
- (a) to ensure that the rights and interests of children and youth are protected and advanced and their views are heard and considered;
- (b) to ensure that children and youth have access to services and that their complaints relating to the provision of those services receive appropriate attention;
- (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, social sciences, education, 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 and establishing findings, 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 2026-27 Fiscal Year	
Salaries	\$ 1,431,700
Employee Benefits	\$ 3,500
Transportation & Communication	\$ 55,400
Supplies	\$ 6,000
Professional Services	\$ 19,000
Purchased Services	\$ 164,900
Property, Furnishings & Equipment	\$ 4,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$1,684,500</b>

# Vision

**A province where every child’s and youth’s rights are understood, protected, respected, and upheld.**

## Foundational Principles

### Reconciliation

This principle requires the OCYA to continually seek opportunities to listen and learn about the histories and current realities of Indigenous people throughout our province. The office recognizes reconciliation and respects the unique rights of Indigenous young people. This requires intentional action to ensure these rights are protected and respected for all Indigenous children and youth.

### Relationship Building

This principle requires the OCYA to meet its stakeholders where they are, and particularly young people, to build mutual trust and understanding. This requires listening to learn, actioning our commitments, and amplifying the voices and rights of young people in matters that concern them.

### Social Justice

This principle requires the OCYA to continually monitor government systems and programs to identify individual and systemic inequalities. The office aims to ensure equity, access, participation, and protection of rights for all young people who require the services of government.

### Trauma Informed Practice

This principle requires the OCYA to integrate a comprehensive understanding of trauma into advocacy work, ensuring young people are supported respectfully and safely through the process.

### Hope

This principle requires the OCYA to act with a vision for an improved future for all young people. This requires our office to demonstrate a positive outlook for young people, and to influence transformative and sustainable change that ensures the protection of children’s and youth’s rights.

## Values

<b>Integrity:</b>	We act honestly, ethically, and sincerely in all areas of our work.
<b>Equity</b>	We work to remove barriers so all young persons have access to the services they require and advocate for systems to be responsive to their individual needs.
<b>Safety:</b>	We create emotionally, physically, and culturally safe environments grounded in trauma informed practice, especially for children and youth who feel marginalized.
<b>Reconciliation:</b>	We actively seek opportunities to listen and learn from Indigenous peoples in order to understand their histories and current realities. We respect and honour the knowledge and experience of Indigenous people in the work we undertake.
<b>Accountability:</b>	We take responsibility for our actions and hold child and youth serving systems accountable for their decisions and actions.

## 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

## Issue 1: Youth Engagement

Youth engagement is a foundational element of the work of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate. Young people are the experts of their own lives and have a right to be heard in matters that affect them. It has been 10 years since the first Listening Tour was completed by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate. The purpose of a Listening Tour is to speak directly to young people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador to hear about their experiences in accessing the services they need, as well as the issues affecting them within their communities. While this is a daily part of the Office's work, we want to seek out the voices and perspectives of all young people in a thoughtful manner that empowers them to lead the conversation.

**Goal 1: By March 31, 2029, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have conducted youth engagement activities.**

Indicators:

- ▶ Listening Tour planned
- ▶ Listening Tour completed
- ▶ Report of Listening Tour publicly released

Objective 1.1: By March 31, 2027, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have begun a Listening Tour.

Indicators:

- ▶ Plan for the Listening Tour developed
- ▶ Invitations to targeted stakeholders sent
- ▶ Notices of travel advertised

Objective 1.2: By March 31, 2028, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have completed the Listening Tour.

Objective 1.3: By March 31, 2029, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have publicly released a final report of the results of the Listening Tour.

## Issue 2: Education and Outreach

Education and outreach is a significant part of the mandate of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate. It is important that all young people know they have rights, what those rights are and where they can access help if their rights are being violated. It is also important for adults and champions for children and youth to understand the special rights that all young people have. Over the next three years, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will develop a rights based education and outreach plan that includes sessions throughout the province and delivers information about the rights of young people and the role of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

### **Goal 2: By March 31, 2029, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have conducted targeted education and outreach activities.**

Indicators:

- ▶ Education and outreach plan developed
- ▶ Targeted education and outreach activities conducted for young people
- ▶ Targeted education and outreach activities conducted for stakeholders

Objective 2.1: By March 31, 2027, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have developed an education and outreach plan.

Indicators:

- ▶ Staff planning meetings held
- ▶ Key stakeholders identified
- ▶ Travel planned

Objective 2.2: By March 31, 2028, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have conducted targeted education and outreach activities.

Objective 2.3: By March 31, 2029, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have continued targeted education and outreach activities.

## Conclusion

As the Office enters its first year of this current planning cycle, we are excited about the ongoing opportunities to meet with and learn from young people in our province. We strive to be the platform where young people are not only heard but whose voices actively shape the decisions that affect their lives. By investing in young, diverse voices, we are investing in not only advocacy, but capacity building, leading to a more inclusive, rights-based society. We are committed to this work and look forward to focusing on the activities presented in our Business Plan for 2026-29.





# Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

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