

Status Report on Recommendations 2022-23



CHILDREN
& YOUTH
NEWFOUNDLAND
& LABRADOR

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

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Message from the Child and Youth Advocate

I am pleased to provide the Status Report on Recommendations for the 2022-23 fiscal year.

Our office is mandated by the **Child and Youth Advocate Act** to advance and protect the rights and interests of children and youth. The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** provides guidance for children's universal rights.

This report on recommendations is a measure of accountability produced by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate to ensure that the rights and interests of young people are respected and protected.

As of March 31, 2023 a total of 267 recommendations have been issued since the office was opened in 2002. This Status Report indicates that 225 (84.27%) of all these recommendations have been implemented, 41 (15.36%) have been partially implemented, and only 1 (0.37%) has not been implemented.

Through this process our Office monitors all recommendations until we are satisfied that all have been addressed appropriately, and in full.

My Office is pleased that 84.27% of all recommendations to date have been fully implemented and significant progress has been made on many of the outstanding. This progress would not be possible without the valiant efforts of those who work on behalf of young people each day to uphold their rights. It is through the championing of these rights that progress can truly be made.



Linda Clemens Spurrell, MSW, RSW
Child and Youth Advocate

Recommendation Monitoring Process

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA) conducts reviews and investigations which result in recommendations. These recommendations focus on improvements to ensure better responses and services respecting children and youth rights in the province. Section 24(1) of the **Child and Youth Advocate Act** authorizes the Child and Youth Advocate to request progress reports on these recommendations.

The Child and Youth Advocate requests annual written updates of government departments, agencies and entities on their progress implementing recommendations. In addition to the written responses, follow up meetings may be required for clarification or additional information.

The OCYA assesses the progress update and assigns the recommendation to one of the following three categories: implemented, partially implemented, or not implemented. In the event that a recommendation involves multiple entities, the recommendation will remain in the partially completed category until all elements of the recommendation are implemented.

Updates on each recommendation are requested annually until the OCYA is satisfied that the recommendation has been addressed. The results are reported publicly and these reports can be found at: <https://www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca/publications/status-reports-on-recommendations/>.

Definitions

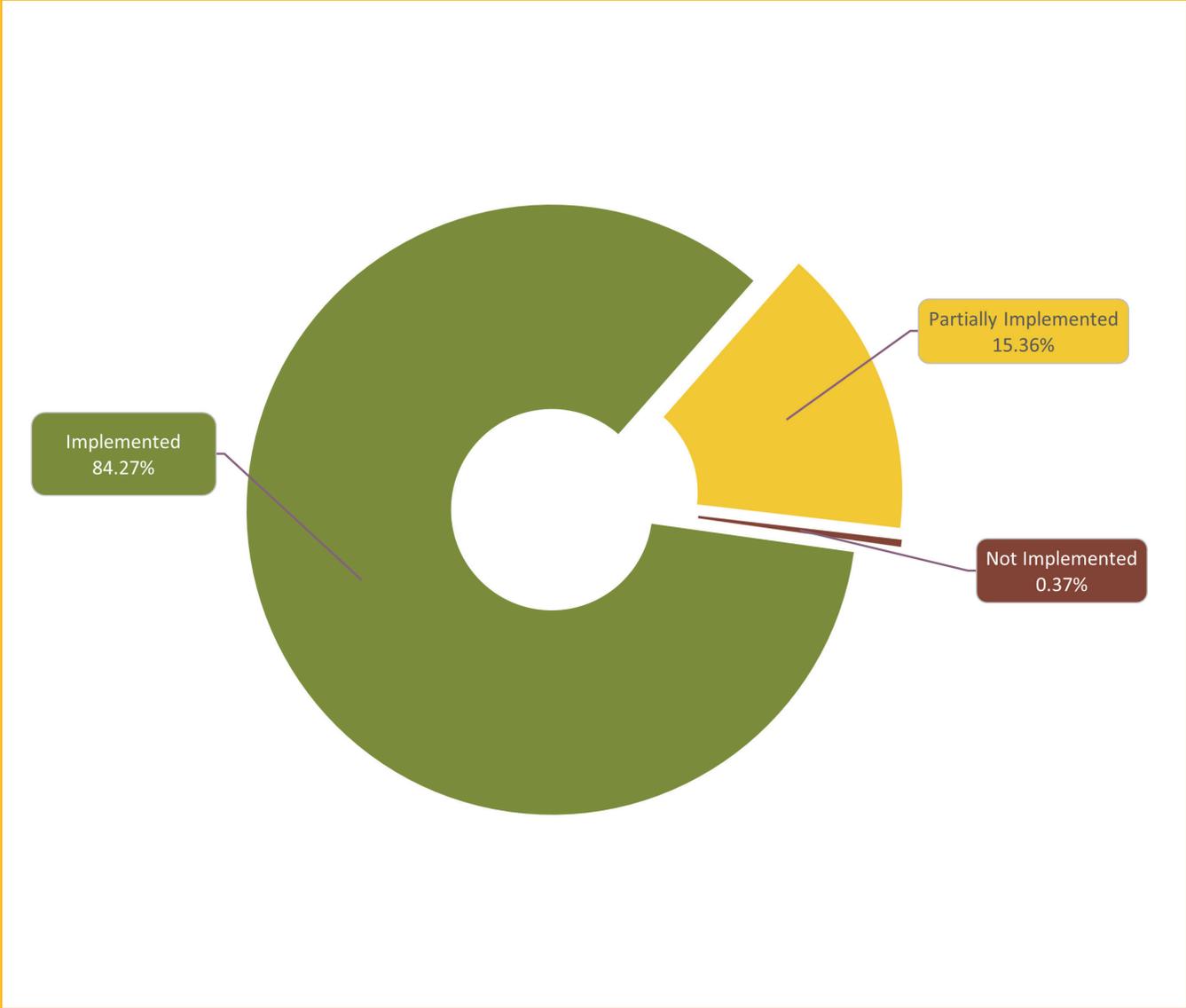
The status of each recommendation is divided into one of three categories:

Implemented:	The recommendation has been completed to the satisfaction of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.
Partially Implemented:	The department or agency has made some progress on the recommendation; however, outstanding items remain to be addressed.
Not Implemented:	There has been no substantive progress on the recommendation.

This report is structured to identify the recommendations which are partially implemented or not implemented. This report also profiles some of the highlights and accomplishments in improvements for services and responses to children and youth.

Overall Status

At March 31, 2023, 84.27% of all recommendations have been implemented, 15.36% have been partially implemented, and there are 0.37% of recommendations that have not been implemented.



Status of Recommendations

Investigations and Reviews	Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented	Total
A Special Kind of Care (December 2021)	2	2	-	4
Blanket of Insecurity (December 2021)	2	2	1	5
No Time to Spare (December 2021)	3	2	0	5
Handle with Care (July 2021)	-	2	-	2
A Soft Place to Land: Lessons for Client-Centered Care (October 2020)	5	3	-	8
A Long Wait for Change: Independent Review of Child Protection Services to Inuit Children in Newfoundland and Labrador (2019)	14	19	-	33
Special Report on Trans Youth in Newfoundland and Labrador (2019)	3	2	-	5
Seen But Not Heard (2019)	2	4	-	6
Chronic Absenteeism (2019)	1	3	-	4
No Second Chance (2018)	3	1	-	4
A Stolen Life (2016)	6	1	-	7
*Previous Reports	184	-	-	184
Total	225	41	1	267

All recommendations in reports not listed here have been implemented. *Previous reports can be found on our website at:

<https://www.childandyouthadvocate.nl.ca/publications/investigation-reports/>

Highlights and Accomplishments

We would like to recognize and share some of the highlights and accomplishments by various government departments and agencies in response to our recommendations. The following list does not identify all activities, but demonstrates significant efforts to make concrete improvements to services and responses to children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Handle with Care (2021)

■ NL Health Services:

- **Western Zone:** In addition to core competency training required by Western Zone staff, crisis intervention training is provided to Police Officers, as a part of Mobile Crisis Response Team training. Western Zone provides Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Officers who are members of Mobile Crisis Response Teams 40 hours of comprehensive crisis intervention training (CIT) and offers Royal Canadian Mounted Police Officers who are members of Mobile Crisis Response Teams a condensed, two-day CIT, consisting of signs and symptoms of mental illness and guidelines for responding.
- **Eastern Zone:** On March 2, 2023, the Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) team within Eastern Urban and Rural Zones received training entitled “Trauma Informed Care: Through a Crisis Intervention Lens”. This was a three-hour training that both clinicians and officers attended. All current MCRT staff working in Eastern Zones now have this training.
- **Labrador Grenfell Zone:** Staff have attended Trauma Informed Crisis Intervention Training that will support practicing a trauma-informed approach. Staff who attended this training can now train other staff as needed and share the training and knowledge with the RCMP, who work with the Mobile Crisis Response (MCR) teams. All new RCMP members receive MCR training prior to working with the team. In addition, Labrador Grenfell Zone has received funding from the Department of Health and Community Services to develop additional trauma programming that is specific to needs identified within the Zone.

A Soft Place to Land (2020)

- NL Health Services:
 - Western Zone: In addition to the electronic referral, electronic notification is also provided to Mental Health and Addiction staff that a client of theirs attended the Emergency Department for mental health and addiction reasons. This notification then prompts the Clinicians to review their client's health record and to follow-up with their client in a timely manner to offer support and services. This initiative was recently awarded as a leading practice by the Health Standards Organization (HSO). A leading practice is a practice carried out by a health or social service organization that has demonstrated a positive change, and is people centered, safe and efficient.

A Long Wait for Change: Independent Review of Child Protection Services to Inuit Children in Newfoundland and Labrador (September 2019)

- The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development (CSSD), the Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation in partnership with the Nunatsiavut Government to address recommendations and issues identified in **A Long Wait for Change**. Quarterly meetings are held with Executives from each office.
- Progress has been made in multiple areas identified by Nunatsiavut Government, including the development of a policy to support connections between children in care and relatives, as well as other and important persons in their lives.
- The Cultural Connections Plan for Inuit children and youth was co-developed and finalized with Nunatsiavut Government.
- The Caring for our Children program provides the ability for Nunatsiavut Government to recruit, assess, and train foster parent applicants. The program has concluded its pilot phase and is now delivered by Nunatsiavut Government.

Special Report on Trans Youth in Newfoundland and Labrador (May 2019)

- NL Health Services:
 - Central Zone: is committed to offering training opportunities on gender diversity for professionals who work with children and youth. A staff eLearning module titled, “Improving Care for Transgender, Two-Spirit and Gender Diverse (T2SGD)”, developed by Eastern Zone, is available on the Provincial Learning Management System for all Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services staff to access.
- Conseil Scolaire Francophone Provincial started a Rainbow Club in one of its schools and has implemented gender neutral washrooms.

Chronic Absenteeism: When Children Disappear (2019)

- NL Health Services:
 - Central Zone: Mental Health and Addictions Services have expanded “Doorways” services in four schools in the Central Zone: Exploits Valley Intermediate (since September 2022); Botwood Collegiate (since September 2022); Gander Collegiate (since January 2023); and Leo Burke Academy in Bishop’s Falls (since February 2023).
 - Eastern Urban and Rural Zones: The Eastern zone has formed a partnership with NLESD (Senior Management Official-Student Services) with a goal to bridge gaps between Youth Mental Health and Education. They currently have 5 Youth Outreach Workers working in 5 separate junior high/high schools in the metro area.
 - Labrador Grenfell Zone: Labrador Grenfell Zone has youth early intervention outreach workers based in the high schools within the Zone’s main sites (St. Anthony; Happy Valley-Goose Bay; and Labrador West) who provide one-on-one services, group support, etc., to children and youth as needs are identified.
- Conseil Scolaire Francophone Provincial has created new policies and procedures to address cases of absenteeism.

Recommendations Partially Implemented

The following is a list of the recommendations which are partially implemented, some of which are at the beginning stages of implementation while others are nearing completion.

A Special Kind of Care (December 2021)

Recommendation 1: The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure the policy pursuant to Section 68(1) of the Children, Youth and Families Act include the requirement to share information necessary for the planning and care of children and youth in staffed residential care. In the case of children with disabilities and complex needs, this information must include all known exceptionalities and include information from former care givers. Information should be communicated prior to placement whenever possible.

Recommendation 4: The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure that residential programming meets the needs of children and youth in care that this programming is implemented in a timely and consistent fashion, and that service providers adhere to programming plans. The Department may consider the potential benefit of a dedicated position, beyond the assigned social worker, to be responsible for detailed review and follow up of planned interventions and programming at staffed residential placements in order to ensure programming meets the needs of the children and youth in care and that necessary follow up and consultations occur.

Blanket of Insecurity (December 2021)

Recommendation 2: The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development review and clarify its commitment beyond financial support when out of home safety plans and kinship placements are engaged on behalf of a child.

Recommendation 3: The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development clearly identify immediate steps to mitigate risk to a child when a kinship agreement is terminated because it is no longer considered safe or appropriate for the child.

No Time to Spare (December 2021)

Recommendation 3: The Department of Children Senior and Social Development develop an enhanced planning and monitoring policy for Kinship Care that ensures adequate support and intervention to deal with complex relationships with the biological family. This must include additional training for kinship caregivers where required.

Recommendation 5: The Department of Children Seniors and Social Development ensure that planning for a child's complex needs (e.g. emotional, behavioral, and medical) include consultation and planning with family and other professionals providing services to the child.

Handle with Care (July 2021)

Recommendation 1: Regional Health Authorities, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police collectively review and revise the training program for Mobile Crisis Response Teams to include the following criteria:

- a. Trauma-informed approach for children and youth;
- b. Strategies and interventions reflective of best practices for intervening with children and youth in crisis;
- c. Professional development for team members about the cognitive, emotional and social development of children and youth; and,
- d. Guidance and education on children's rights.

Recommendation 2: The Department of Justice and Public Safety and the Department of Health and Community Services engage Regional Health Authorities and both provincial police forces to determine scope and intent of Mental Health Crisis Response Teams in responding to young children, and to determine if alternate responses and resources are necessary.

A Soft Place to Land: Lessons for Client-Centered Care (October 2020)

Recommendation 3: Regional Health Authorities, and the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure front line staff as well as service providers delivering front line services on behalf of the department receive appropriate professional development on trauma-informed care for children and youth.

Recommendation 6: As team lead, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure full implementation of Recommendation 47 in Towards Recovery: The Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador for a provincial implementation plan for suicide prevention and furthermore with specific attention to the needs of children and youth in this plan.

Recommendation 8: Regional Health Authorities immediately streamline services and policies to ensure a coordinated and uninterrupted transition from child/youth psychiatry to adult psychiatry and to other mental health services, and to consult with youth mental health consumers in this process.

A Long Wait for Change: Independent Review of Child Protection Services to Inuit Children in Newfoundland and Labrador (September 2019)

Recommendation 2: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development seek the input and perspectives of Inuit children and youth in all plans that affect them and in a manner that reflects their age and developmental level.

Recommendation 7: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development complete an audit on all out-of-community placements, and engage Nunatsiavut Government to ensure all placement options have been considered first within the child's family and/or community, and secondly within Nunatsiavut territory.

Recommendation 8: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure all access visits are designed for the maximum benefit of the child, and that they take place in a child-friendly and culturally appropriate environment that promotes parent-child interaction.

Recommendation 9: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure appropriate transition planning for children who have been removed from their parents and community. This must include specific and structured steps when children are removed and returned. Nunatsiavut Government must be invited and supported to actively participate.

Recommendation 10: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development broaden its mandate and range of responses to focus more on prevention and early intervention for children and families in the child protection system, and support Inuit community services and programs that contribute to prevention and early intervention.

Recommendation 11: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development consistently develop cultural continuity plans for children and youth and ensure these plans are meaningful, authentic and are enhanced by Inuit community resources. Plans must include measurable steps ensuring the child or youth in care is provided with opportunities for Inuit cultural activities, ceremonies, celebrations, practices, lifestyle, family and community contacts.

Recommendation 12: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development consistently engage parents, family members and foster parents in meaningful collaboration for all planning related to their children and youth, and those in their care.

Recommendation 13: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development enhance recruitment and explore new models of foster care which could potentially include placing parents and children together.

Recommendation 14: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development develop and evaluate outcome goals for child protection services in partnership with Nunatsiavut Government.

Recommendation 15: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development review and revise the scope, mandate and physical environment of the alternate family care group home in Nain to ensure a quality and safe placement option for Inuit children and youth. Include consideration for a visitation centre, emergency placements, parent coaching centre, healing facility, and transition-to-home placement centre for children and parents.

Recommendation 18: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development work to increase kinship care options and increase financial and social support for kinship caregivers.

Recommendation 19: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure professionals and caregivers working with traumatized children and families receive mandatory education in caring for traumatized children and youth.

Recommendation 20: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development review and update the current level of financial supports to Inuit children, families and caregivers in the child protection system to reflect the northern Labrador reality. This must include addressing prices of goods and services, as well as transportation and delivery costs.

Recommendation 21: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador vigorously adopt and observe Jordan's Principle for Indigenous children and youth, and work with the federal government to access available federal resources to help address needs.

Recommendation 23: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador develop and deliver mandatory Indigenous cultural education to public servants in a tiered approach with Level 1 being required for all public servants, and Level 2 reflecting more advanced content for those directly working with Indigenous communities or making decisions and policies related to Indigenous communities. Indigenous representatives should be engaged in content development and delivery.

Recommendation 24: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure training plans are in place for all social workers in Indigenous child protection settings and in addition to Recommendation 23, include community-based practical cultural learning experiences with community resources.

Recommendation 27: Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development work with Nunatsiavut Government to recruit and educate Inuit staff to fill professional and paraprofessional roles with children, families, and communities.

Recommendation 30: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador work with Nunatsiavut Government and other levels of government as necessary to address inadequate housing, food insecurity, and safe shelters for vulnerable Inuit children and their families.

Recommendation 31: Department of Justice and Public Safety engage justice system service providers to explore ways to improve access and timeliness of advice, services and decisions for family law matters in Labrador and ensure appropriate supports to implement the plan. This is particularly urgent where communities are served by circuit courts.

Special Report on Trans Youth in Newfoundland and Labrador (May 2019)

Recommendation 2: Regional Health Authorities, school districts, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Department of Health and Community Services, the Department of Justice and Public Safety, and the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development offer mandatory professional development and in-service training opportunities on gender diversity for professionals who work with children and youth.

Recommendation 3: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development review and revise curriculum for K-12 education to incorporate content on gender diversity and to ensure gender diversity is reflected in its materials.

Seen But Not Heard (April 2019)

Recommendation 1: The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development improve prevention and early intervention services to children and families at risk.

Recommendation 2: The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure that families requiring in-home parenting support and supervision are provided with qualified, trauma-informed support workers.

Recommendation 3: The Department of Health and Community Services and the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development collaboratively ensure full implementation of the child protection recommendations contained in Towards Recovery: A Vision for a Renewed Mental Health and Addictions System for Newfoundland and Labrador, specifically:

- Recommendation 1: Provide all young families with access to programs that focus on parental coping skills to increase resiliency, parenting skills and child development, and social and emotional competence of children.
- Recommendation 8: Some families with complex needs receive services from multiple government departments. Service managers at the regional level must be encouraged to develop mechanisms to work together to better meet the needs of these families.
- Recommendation 14: Through a stepped-care approach, develop and offer a range of mental health and addictions services integrated, wherever possible, within existing community and primary health care services throughout the province, including the Strongest Families Program for children, youth, and their families.

Recommendation 6: The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development ensure specific measures are taken for permanency planning to be an integral part of intervention with all children receiving child protection and in care services.

Chronic Absenteeism (January 2019)

Recommendation 2: The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the school districts, the Department of Health and Community Services and Regional Health Authorities develop and implement policy specifically identifying how staff will effectively assess and respond to chronic absenteeism.

Recommendation 3: The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and the school districts, collaboratively develop and implement policies and protocols specifically defining the point at which chronic absenteeism situations require referral to the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

Recommendation 4: The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Department of Health and Community Services, and the school districts develop agreements with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development and the Regional Health Authorities defining how all these partners will collectively contribute to addressing chronic absenteeism.

No Second Chance (October 2018)

Recommendation 4: The Department of Health and Community Services, the Regional Health Authorities and the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development collaborate to enhance the availability of mental health and addictions services throughout the province for children, youth, and their families with a particular focus on children and youth deemed at risk and in receipt of protective services.

A Stolen Life (November 2016)

Recommendation 7: The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development (formerly the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services), in consultation with Aboriginal governments, organizations and communities:

b. Demonstrate improved service standards in the Labrador region through consistent monthly Quality Assurance Indicator Reports that equal those in all other regions.

Recommendations Not Implemented

Blanket of Insecurity (December 2021)

Recommendation 4: The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development conduct an audit of all long-term out-of-home placements, including kinship placements, to identify and address factors impacting permanency for these children.

Conclusion

As noted in the Report, at March 31, 2023, 84.27% of all recommendations made to date have been implemented, 15.36% have been partially implemented, and only 0.37% has not been implemented. We are pleased with this progress and will continue to monitor and follow up on all outstanding recommendations until we are satisfied that all have been appropriately addressed to benefit the rights of children and youth in the province. It is essential to monitor the progress of these recommendations and report publicly to ensure transparency and accountability to children, youth, their families, and the public.

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