



Status Report on Recommendations 2023-24



CHILDREN
& YOUTH
NEW ZEALAND
ADVOCATE

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 2023-24 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, 2024 a total of 267 recommendations have been issued since the office was opened in 2002. This Status Report indicates that 233 (87.27%) of all these recommendations have been implemented, 34 (12.36%) 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.

My Office is pleased that 87.27% of all recommendations to date have been fully implemented and significant progress has been made on many of those remaining. This progress is possible due to the dedicated professionals who work with, and on behalf of, young people each day to uphold their rights.

There is still work to be done, but I am hopeful that the voices of young people will continue to be heard and respected, and their rights upheld, as positive changes are made within the systems that serve them.

Sincerely,



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



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.

Definitions

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

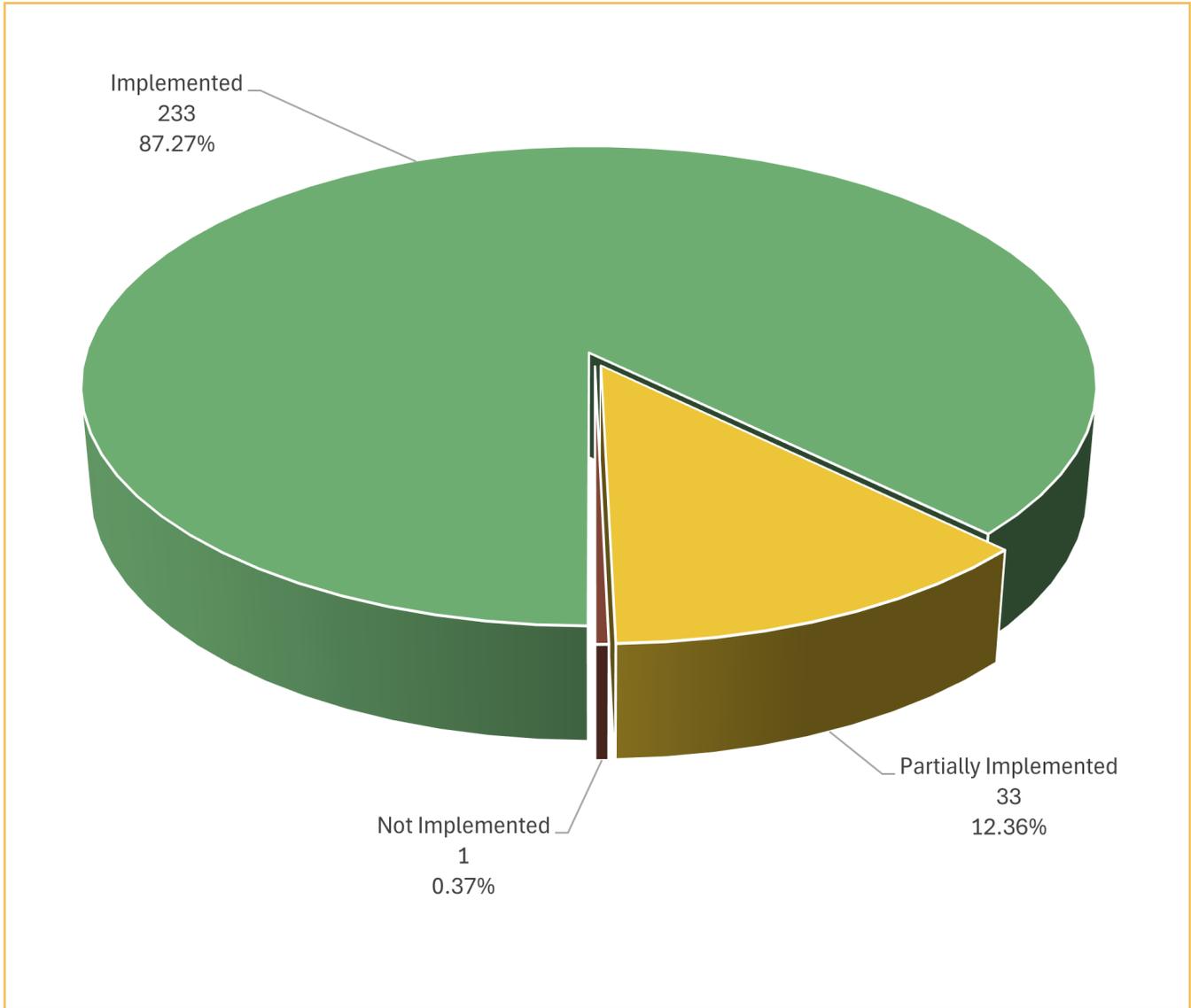
Implemented:	The recommendation has been completed to the satisfaction of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.
Partially Implemented:	The department or agency has made some progress on the recommendation; however, outstanding items remain to be addressed.
Not Implemented:	There has been no substantive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

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/>.

Overall Status

At March 31, 2024, 87.27% of all recommendations have been implemented, 12.36% 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)	3	1	-	4
Blanket of Insecurity (December 2021)	3	1	1	5
No Time to Spare (December 2021)	3	2	0	5
Handle with Care (July 2021)	1	1	-	2
A Soft Place to Land: Lessons for Client-Centered Care (October 2020)	6	2	-	8
A Long Wait for Change: Independent Review of Child Protection Services to Inuit Children in Newfoundland and Labrador (2019)	17	16	-	33
Special Report on Trans Youth in Newfoundland and Labrador (2019)	4	1	-	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	233	33	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.

Also, we note that department names remain the same as they were at the time the recommendations were made.

Seen But Not Heard (April 2019)

- The Department of Children Seniors and Social Development reported the development of a distinct Cultural Connection Plan (CCP) for Inuit children and youth which was developed in collaboration with Nunatsiavut Government to meet the specific needs of Inuit children and youth. This CCP was implemented in May 2023.

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

- NL Health Services reported:
 - Changes have been made and are ongoing within services to reflect suggestions made during a panel discussion in June 2023 for Western Zone. The panel was comprised of individuals with lived and living experience, as well as clinical staff. The aim is to improve practices so that they are more inclusive and respectful.
 - Labrador-Grenfell Public Health staff were provided with an education session entitled “Sexual Health - Understanding Sexuality and Gender to Help Create an Inclusive Care Environment” by the Regional Health Promotion Coordinator.
- The Department of Education reported that the department and school districts have provided mandatory professional learning on gender diversity and sexual orientation for all staff. Educators can access professional learning materials on gender diversity via the K-12 professional learning website. This training discusses LGBTQ inclusive practices and guidelines and provides advice on building awareness and having discussions with the school community.

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 and the Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation (IAR) reported that:
 - In November 2023, in partnership with the Public Service Commission (PSC), IAR released an eLearning module entitled “Toward Reconciliation: An Overview of Indigenous Histories Across Canada” for the core public service. In addition to Recommendation 23 from **A Long Wait For Change**, this course is also in direct response to Call to Action #57 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which calls on all levels of government to provide mandatory training for public service employees. This course provides an overview of Indigenous peoples in Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador, the impacts of colonialism, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, residential schools, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and putting reconciliation into action. The eLearning was co-developed with the Nunatsiavut Government, Innu Nation, NunatuKavut Community Council, Miawpukek First Nation and Qalipu First Nation and is part one of an educational series that will focus on Indigenous culture, identity, and history in Newfoundland and Labrador.
 - Since the implementation of the Caring for our Children project, 37 foster homes have been recruited and received approval (including interim approvals), as of March 31, 2024.

Chronic Absenteeism: When Children Disappear (January 2019)

- NL Health Services reported that Youth Outreach Workers have been implemented in Clarenville, Marystown, and Placentia. Part of the mandate for Youth Outreach Workers is to reduce chronic absenteeism by working collaboratively with local schools and utilizing a localized approach.

Recommendations Partially Implemented

The following is a list of the recommendations which are partially implemented. We want to acknowledge that all of these recommendations are at different stages of implementation. Some are at the initial stages of implementation, some have made significant progress towards implementation, and some are very close to completion. All recommendations remain categorized as partially implemented, regardless of the stage of implementation, until the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate considers them fully implemented by all entities.

A Special Kind of Care (December 2021)

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 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 Seniors 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.

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

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 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 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 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 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

It is essential to monitor the progress of these recommendations and report publicly to ensure there is transparency and accountability to children, youth, their families, and the public. We believe in the importance of transparency and accountability in all the work we do.

As noted in the Report, at March 31, 2024, 87.27% of all recommendations made to date have been implemented, 12.36% 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.



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