



BUSINESS PLAN

2014-2017



Message from the Advocate for Children and Youth



I am pleased to present the Business Plan for April 1, 2014 – March 31, 2017 for the Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth (ACY). Our office has been designated a Category 2 entity as per the *Transparency and Accountability Act*. The office is required to prepare a Business Plan that includes our goals and objectives to be met during this period taking into account our mandate and resources.

The office has a very important mandate of representing the voices of children and youth to ensure that their rights and interests are protected and advanced. As the Advocate for Children and Youth for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and for the achievement of the identified goals and objectives.

Carol A. Chafe
Advocate for Children and Youth

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1.0 OVERVIEW

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA) opened on November 18, 2002. The Office was established by statute, *The Child and Youth Advocate Act*, which was proclaimed on May 12, 2002. The current Advocate for Children and Youth, Carol A. Chafe was appointed to the position of Child and Youth Advocate on September 27, 2010 **and** confirmed by resolution of the House of Assembly on December 16, 2010.

The Advocate is a Statutory Officer of the House of Assembly and reports directly to the Legislature through the Speaker of the House. The staff of the Advocate for Children and Youth are members of the Public Service of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Advocacy services are provided to children and youth through a central office located in St. John's with outreach to all areas of the province. Services can be accessed by visiting our office and by telephone (toll-free number and telephone for the hearing impaired available), email, fax and the website.

The Office has a total of 11 staff working with the Advocate for Children and Youth; including the Director of Strategic Planning and Development and Director of Individual and Systemic Advocacy; 3 Individual Advocacy Specialists; 3 Systemic Advocacy Consultants; 1 Executive Assistant; 1 Administrative Officer; and 1 Administrative Assistant/Receptionist. (See Organizational Chart attached as Appendix A.)

The House of Assembly Management Commission approved a budget of \$1,297,000.00 for the Advocate for Children and Youth for Fiscal Year 2014-2015. The details are noted below:

Budget Approved for 2014 - 2015 Fiscal Year	
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Salaries	\$1,027,400.00
Employee Benefits	\$3,500.00
Travel & Communication	\$65,400.00
Supplies	\$6,000.00
Professional Services	\$25,000.00
Purchased Services	\$165,900.00
Property, Furnishings & Equipment	\$4,000.00
Total Budget	\$1,297,200.00

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The Website: www.ChildAndYouthAdvocate.nl.ca

2.0 MANDATE

The Mandate of the ACY is stated in Section 3 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*. The ACY was established with a mandate to:

- Protect and advance the rights and interests of children and youth through the provision of advocacy services.
- Ensure that children and youth have access to services and that their complaints receive appropriate attention.
- Inform the public about the needs and rights of children and youth.
- Provide information and advice to government, agencies of the government and to communities about the availability, effectiveness, responsiveness and relevance of services to children and youth.
- Make recommendations to government regarding legislation, policies, programs and services designed to meet the needs of children and youth.
- Conduct independent reviews and investigations.

In carrying out her duties, the Advocate may:

- Receive and review matters related to individuals or groups of children and youth.
- Advocate or use alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to resolve issues.
- Initiate and participate in case conferences, administrative reviews, mediation or other processes where decisions are being made regarding children and youth either individually or collectively.
- Meet and interview children and youth.
- Engage in public education.
- Make recommendations to government, agencies of government or communities regarding legislation, policies and practices respecting services or the rights of children and youth.
- Where alternative dispute processes are ineffective or inappropriate, conduct an independent investigation.
- Access information respecting a child or youth which is held by a government department or agency which is determined necessary to conduct the work of the Advocate.
- Enter a government or agency premises for the purpose of conducting a review or investigation.

- Publish reports related generally to the exercise and performance of his/her functions under the Act or to a particular case investigation by him/her.
- Submit an Annual Report to the House of Assembly.

Scope of the Office:

Section 2. (g) of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*

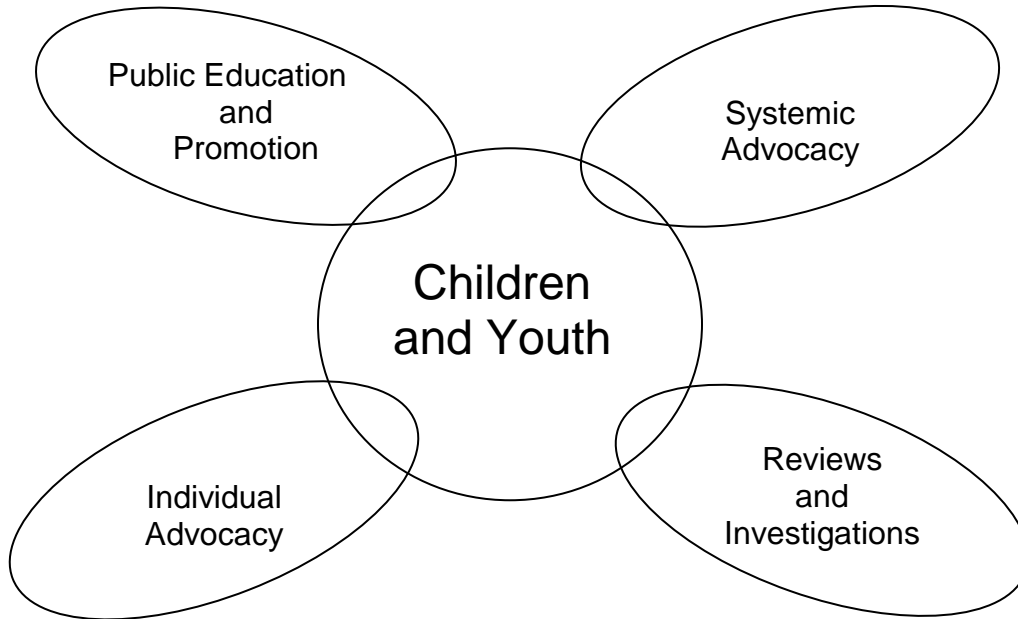
The Office provides services to any child or youth under the age of 19 years old who is entitled to receive services from a department, agency or board of government. The age is extended to youth up to their 21st birthday where they are in a care or custody arrangement. The Advocate engages in both individual and systemic advocacy, public education and reviews and investigations on behalf of children and youth in the Province.

The Office operates from a rights-based perspective and applies the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* as the basis for its advocacy work. Canada has ratified the Convention and as a result, legislation, policies and procedures that govern services and programs for children and youth should be reflective of those rights.

Principles:

- Children and youth are our primary clients.
- Advocacy services must remain child focused.
- Children and youth must be treated with respect and their inherent dignity as human beings recognized.
- The right of privacy of the child, as well as all parties involved, must be respected in the advocacy process.
- Children and youth have the right to information and access to government services and programs.
- Children and youth have a right to speak, be heard and to participate in decision-making processes.
- Parents, extended family and significant others are natural advocates for children and youth.
- Actions are based on empowerment.
- Information is confidential unless there is risk of harm.
- Interventions are respectful, understanding and compassionate.
- Cultural diversity is recognized and respected.

3.0 LINES OF BUSINESS



Provision of Services:

The ACY provides advocacy services to children and youth in four main capacities:

- **Individual Advocacy**
- **Systemic Advocacy**
- **Public Education and Promotion**
- **Reviews and Investigations**

Individual Advocacy

Individual Advocacy includes the provision of information, self-advocacy, basic and comprehensive advocacy services. Individual Advocacy differs depending upon the type of intervention provided.

- Information - involves the provision of information and/or referral to another government department, board, or agency. These types of calls are usually opened and closed on the same day and involve very little action by the Advocacy Specialist.

- Self-Advocacy Assistance - involves the provision of information regarding programs, services, appeal procedures, options, and strategies, and may include coaching. These types of cases are usually very short term and can be opened and closed on the same day. Information may be mailed or e-mailed to assist the caller further, such as a copy of a policy or information regarding services and supports.
- Basic Advocacy Intervention - involves the provision of advocacy services requiring consultation and/or referral to other agencies and is usually completed within a short time frame. Advocacy staff engage in problem-solving strategies; make initial calls to service providers; and provide self-advocacy assistance. The cases usually require phone contact with service providers, referrals to Child, Youth and Family Services and other agencies and are short term in nature.
- Comprehensive Advocacy Intervention - involves the provision of intensive advocacy intervention when basic advocacy intervention and/or self-advocacy assistance is not sufficient. Comprehensive Advocacy Intervention may involve in-depth self-advocacy coaching; meetings with multiple service providers; meetings with the child or youth and/or his or her natural advocate; attending/arranging case conferences/ meetings; and engaging in alternate dispute resolution processes.

Systemic Advocacy

The Advocate for Children and Youth regularly monitors issues that appear to be impacting a group(s) of children and youth. These issues may require further research to determine if they are of a systemic nature. Often, individual files highlight issues which require further advocacy work. At the call of the Advocate for Children and Youth, issues that are presently being assessed as possible systemic matters, may require systemic files be opened and assigned to a Systemic Advocacy Consultant for more comprehensive involvement.

Systemic issues files are opened when issues presented to the ACY impact a group or groups of children and youth and, therefore, require advocacy from a systemic perspective. Systemic issues occur when policies and practices of government departments and agencies interfere with the delivery of services and programs intended to support the quality of life for children and youth.

A systemic approach is used to influence programs and services, identify gaps, and determine the impact of the delivery of services and programs on children and youth in the Province. This is accomplished by providing recommendations to government regarding the challenges and changes needed to practices, policies and procedures.

Public Education and Promotion

Section 3 of the *Act* requires the Advocate to “protect and advance the rights of children and youth.” The education and promotion role of the Office is inclusive to all regions of the province through Advocacy Outreach.

Advocacy Outreach provides opportunities for in-person contact with individuals, groups and agencies throughout the province as well as the opportunity to promote the Office and educate the public about the ACY’s role, mandate and about children’s rights. This is accomplished through outreach, by developing relationships with service providers and engaging children and youth in their environment. This includes proactively finding opportunities to engage individuals at all levels by community capacity building, regional visits, volunteer initiatives and discussions and consultations regarding issues affecting children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In 2012-2013 the Office implemented its Organizational Liaison program. This program is a proactive program whereby both Individual Advocacy Specialists and Systemic Consultants are assigned as liaison to a specific youth serving centre throughout the province. This staff person is dedicated to the facility to ensure consistent communications and advocacy for youth. This program increases the knowledge staff and youth in these homes have of the Office and provides them with a dedicated contact person to connect with if they feel that there is an issue or concern that our Office may be able to assist them to address.

Reviews/Investigations

Reviews and investigations are carried out pursuant to Section 15 (1) sub-section (c) of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*. The Advocate for Children and Youth may review or investigate a matter on behalf of a child or youth, or group of them, whether or not a complaint has been made and may conduct an investigation if advocacy, mediation, or another dispute resolution process has not resulted in an outcome satisfactory to the Advocate.

The process for reviews and investigations is based on a comprehensive framework that may include review of documents, interviews of individuals, analysis of facts, and release of findings and recommendations to government and agencies and follow up respecting the recommendations. As necessary, the Advocate can subpoena individuals to be interviewed.

4.0 VALUES

The values expressed in this plan are intended to reflect values for the operation of the Advocate for Children and Youth and the conduct of its staff.

Value	Action Statement
Respect	Each employee performs his or her duties in a manner that respects the rights of other employees, the public and children and youth.
Integrity	Each employee performs his or her duties honestly, ethically and free of personal interests and activities which may appear to interfere with his or her duties.
Independence	Each employee performs his or her duties in an open, unbiased and independent manner
Confidentiality	Each employee exercises due care and control of records created or collected in the exercise of his or her responsibilities, ensuring that records are organized, secured and managed according to applicable policy and legislation.
Quality Service	Each employee builds and sustains relationships by assessing, anticipating, and fulfilling the needs of our clients.

5.0 PRIMARY CLIENTS

Children (under 16 years of age) and youth (16 years of age, but under 19 years of age and, in the case of extended care or a custodial sentence, up to age 21) are the primary clients of the Advocate for Children and Youth.

Sections 3 and 15 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* mandate/authorize the Advocate for Children and Youth to provide recommendations to government regarding the overall effectiveness of services for children and youth, including recommendations regarding changes to existing legislation, policy and service delivery.

Also, pursuant to Section 28 of the *Act*, the Advocate must report annually to the House of Assembly through the Speaker on the exercise and performance of her functions and duties under this *Act*. Both requirements reflect government and the House of Assembly as primary clients of the Office.

6.0 Vision

Our vision is that the rights and interests of every child and youth are protected and respected and each child and youth has access to all the government services they require in Newfoundland and Labrador.

7.0 MISSION

Mission:

The Mission of the Advocate for Children and Youth is to protect and advance the rights and interests of children and youth through the provision of advocacy services.

By March 31, 2017 the Advocate for Children and Youth will have enhanced the ability of the office to ensure that the advocacy needs of children and youth of the Province are consistently met.

Measure:

Enhanced ability of the office to ensure that the advocacy needs of children and youth of the Province are consistently met.

Indicators:

- New Organizational structure in place.
- Administrative policies and procedures manual completed.
- Advocacy protocols and procedures manual completed.
- Outstanding investigations completed and reported.
- Enhancement of investigative protocol and process completed.
- Formal follow-up process of recommendation of reports in place.
- Proactive initiatives to address systemic issues implemented.
- Position Statements/Reports(s) on proactive systemic issues completed as necessary.
- Public education and promotional program implemented.
- Improved communication initiatives implemented.
- Evaluation process of public education and communication established.

8.0 ISSUES

The challenges of providing advocacy to children and youth are ever changing and it is important the office remain diligent to what is required to best meet their needs. Ultimately, the office has identified several areas that require refinement, expansion or development, which will be the basis for enhancement over the next three years.

Issue 1: Public Education and Promotion

While public education and promotion and communication have been ongoing initiatives of the office, there is a recognized need to enhance these areas of our mandate. This will be achieved by evaluating current initiatives (website, newsletters organizational liaison program) for their effectiveness in connecting with the public, organizations we currently engage with as well as potential new child and youth serving organizations.

Currently the office has minimal promotional materials and/or initiative to engage in youth in the work of the office. We seek to find new initiatives to enhance the level of youth participation and raise the profile of the office with this population.

Goal:

By March 31, 2017 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have enhanced public education, promotion and communication.

Measure:

Enhanced public education, promotion and communication.

Indicators:

- Current public education and promotion initiatives evaluated.
- Current organizational liaison program evaluated.
- New communication initiatives including the application of social media reviewed and researched.
- Initiatives to promote ways in which the office can engage with youth identified.
- Initiatives identified to enhance public education and promotion implemented.

Objective 1:

By March 31, 2015 the Advocate for Children and Youth will have established a process to evaluate public education and promotional efforts.

Measure:

Established a process to evaluate both its public education, promotion, and communication initiatives including its current organizational liaison program for their effectiveness.

Indicators:

- Evaluation tools researched and identified.
- Evaluation tools developed and implemented.

Objective 2

By March 31, 2016 the Advocate for Children and Youth will have reviewed and researched new communication initiatives, including the application of social media.

Objective 3

By March 31, 2017 the Advocate for Children and Youth will have developed initiatives and strategies to promote youth engagement with the Office.

Issue 2 - Enhanced Reviews/Investigation Protocol and Process

Over the course of the 2011-2014 significant work transpired to refine and enhance the investigation process, including the completion of a policy and procedure manual. There, however remains a need to establish a formal process to follow up on the status of recommendations to government generated in reports. This report would be released publically as part of the offices desire to remain transparent and accountable.

Goal

By March 31, 2017 the Advocate for Children and Youth will have further enhanced the reviews/investigation protocol and process.

Measure

Enhanced investigation/review protocol and processes in place.

Indicators

- Process to report to Government and the public on the status of all recommendations of all reports outlined.
- Investigation protocol and processes reviewed and revised, including investigative report template developed.
- Human resources to meet the necessary demands of systemic advocacy and investigation increased.

Objective 1

By March 31, 2015, the Advocate for Children and Youth will have developed a process to report to Government and the public on status of all recommendations of all reports generated by this office.

Measure

Reporting process on the status of recommendations of all reports developed for Government and the public.

Indicators

- Report template options researched.
- Identified reporting process and structure for recommendations.

Objective 2

By March 31, 2016, the Advocate for Children and Youth will have reviewed and revised its investigation protocol and process, including further development of its investigative report template.

Objective 3

By March 31, 2017, the Advocate for Children and Youth will have increased resources to meet increasing demands of systemic advocacy and investigations.

Issue 3 - Systemic Advocacy Protocol and Processes

The overall focus of the systemic work of the office has been mainly on reactive investigation of cases and systemic issues. There is also a need to enhance the systemic advocacy to include more proactive work. This would allow the office to fulfill the mandate of being the voice for children and youth to ensure their anticipated needs are met with a goal to decrease poor outcomes. Proactive work includes the monitoring of systemic issues related to children and youth, position statements and reports.

Goal

By March 31, 2017 the Advocate for Children and Youth will have further enhanced overall systemic advocacy.

Measure

Enhanced overall systemic advocacy.

Indicators

- Initiatives to address systemic issues more proactively will be identified.
- Initiatives to address systemic issues more proactively will be implemented.
- Position Statements/Reports on proactive systemic issues produced as necessary.

Objective 1

By March 31, 2015 the Advocate for Children and Youth will have identified initiatives for proactive systemic advocacy.

Measure

Proactive initiatives for systemic advocacy identified.

Indicators

- Proactive initiatives researched and identified.

- Strategy for implementing proactive initiatives developed.

Objective 2

By March 31, 2016 the Advocate for Children and Youth will have implemented initiatives for proactive systemic advocacy.

Objective 3

By March 31, 2017 the Advocate for Children and Youth will have produced position statements/reports(s) on proactive systemic issues as necessary.

9.0 CONCLUSION

Children and youth are the most vulnerable of our population and we are honoured to have the mandate of being their voice and ensuring their rights and interests are protected and advanced. The next three years will be very challenging but exciting for all staff of the Advocate for Children and Youth. Through strong commitment and collaboration the office will strive to meet the goals and objectives as outlined in this Business Plan for 2014 – 2017.

Appendix A

Advocate for Children and Youth

Organizational Chart

