



**Office of the Child and Youth Advocate**  
PROVINCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

## **BUSINESS PLAN**

**2011 – 2014**



**Office of the Child and Youth Advocate**  
**PROVINCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**

*Message from the Child and Youth Advocate*



I am pleased to present the Business Plan for April 1, 2011 – March 31, 2014 for the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate. Our office has been designated a Category 2 entity as per the *Transparency and Accountability Act*. We are 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.

As the Child and Youth Advocate appointed September 27, 2010, I have had the opportunity over the past few months to review the office with my staff and visit other Children's Advocate's Offices to best determine the direction we will take for the future. It is very timely now that we are ready to move forward with a specific plan for the next three years.

We have 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 Child and Youth Advocate 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*

**Carol A. Chafe**  
**Child and Youth Advocate**

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## **1.0 OVERVIEW**

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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 Child and Youth Advocate, Carol A. Chafe, was appointed to the position of Child and Youth Advocate on September 27, 2010 and her appointment was 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 Office of the Child and Youth Advocate 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 available), email, fax and the website.

The office has a total of 12 staff including: Executive Assistant; Director of Strategic Development and Planning; Director of Individual Advocacy and Outreach; Director of Reviews/Investigations and Systemic Advocacy; four Advocacy Services Specialists, two Systemic Advocacy Consultants, Administrative Officer and Administrative Assistant. (See Organizational Chart attached as Appendix A.)

The House of Assembly Management Commission approved a budget of \$1,332,200 for the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate for Fiscal Year 2011-2012.

The details are noted below:

Salaries	\$993,900
Employee Benefits	\$5,000
Transportation and Communications	\$85,000
Supplies	\$10,000
Professional Services	\$30,000
Purchased Services	\$203,300
Property, Furnishings and Equipment	\$5,000
TOTAL	\$1,332,200

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## 2.0 MANDATE

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The Mandate of the OCYA is stated in Section 3 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*.

The OCYA 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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:**

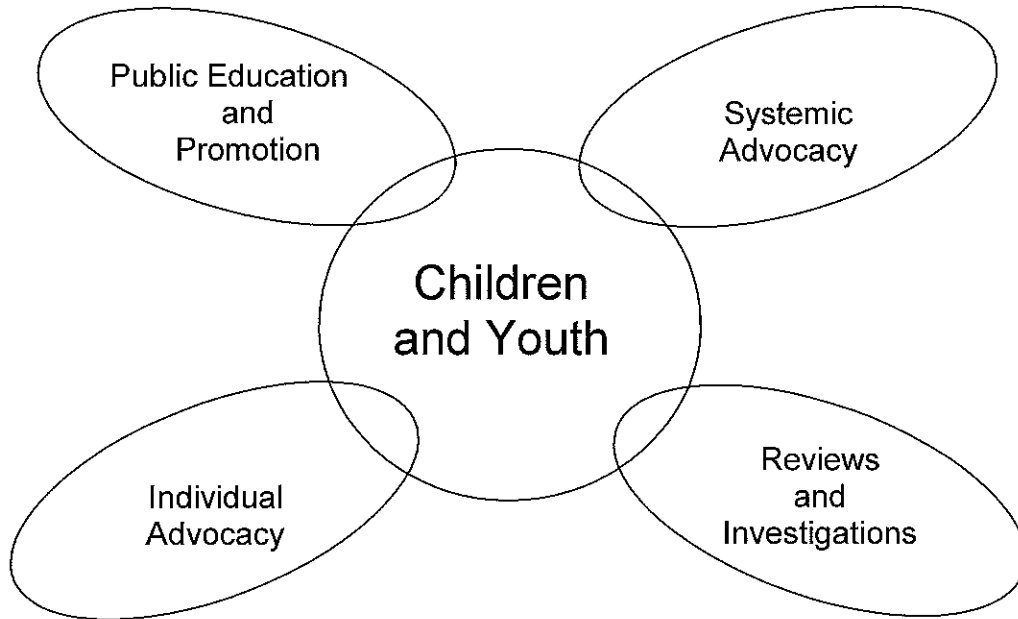
- Children and youth are our primary clients.
- Advocacy services must remain child focused.
- Children and youth must be treated with respect and their inherent dignity as human beings recognized.
- The right of privacy of the child, as well as all parties involved, must be respected in the advocacy 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

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### Provision of Services:

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

- **Individual /Group Advocacy**
- **Systemic Advocacy**
- **Education and Promotion**
- **Reviews and Investigations**

### Individual/Group 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 Services 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**

Systemic files relate to an issue that is impacting, or has the ability to impact, a group(s) of children and youth, but requires further research to determine if the issue is systemic. Often, individual files highlight emerging issues which require further advocacy work.

Systemic issues occur when policies and practices of government 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.

## **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 provinces as well as the opportunity to promote the Office and educate the public about the OCYA’s role and 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.

## **Reviews/Investigations**

Reviews and investigations are carried out pursuant to Section 15 (1) subsection (c) of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*. The Child and Youth Advocate 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.

Reviews and Investigations are considered a quasi-judicial process where individuals receive a subpoena and the Office releases its findings and recommendations to government and agencies.

## 4.0 VALUES

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

<b>Value</b>	<b>Action Statement</b>
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**

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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 Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

Sections 3 and 15 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* mandate/authorize the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate 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**

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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

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### **Mission:**

The newly appointed Child and Youth Advocate conducted a thorough review of the structure and functioning of the office to identify areas that were working well and areas for improvement. This included input from all employees as well as external visits to Advocate offices in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Ontario.

This review was very beneficial and resulted in the identification of the need for change in structure, policies and processes to best meet the changing and complex challenges of consistently meeting the advocacy needs of children and youth today and in the future.

By March 31, 2017 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate 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:**

Will have enhanced the 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 recommendations of reports in place.
- Proactive initiatives to address systemic issues implemented.
- Position Statements/Report(s) on proactive systemic issues completed as necessary.
- Public education and promotion program implemented.
- Improved communication initiatives implemented.
- Evaluation process of public education and communication established.

## **8.0 ISSUES**

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The review completed over the past few months has resulted in assisting this office to identify many areas that are working well but also provided the benefit of identifying areas we can strengthen and improve. The challenges of providing advocacy to children and youth are ever changing and it is important we remain diligent to what is required to best meet their needs.

Ultimately, we have identified several areas that require refinement, expansion or development, which will be the basis for structural and organizational restructuring and enhancement over the next three years.

### **Issue 1: Advocacy and Administrative Protocol and Processes**

To better enable the office to service our clients, a new organizational structure will be implemented resulting in a realignment of management responsibilities and the division of services. In order to ensure consistent and effective practices, new documented policies, procedures and protocols will need to be developed and implemented.

#### **Goal:**

By March 31, 2014, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have improved the structure and processes to provide and support services.

#### **Measure:**

Will have improved structure and processes.

#### **Indicators:**

- New organizational structure in place.
- Administrative policies and procedures manual completed.
- Advocacy protocols and procedures manual completed.

## **Objective 1:**

By March 31, 2012 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have implemented a new organizational structure to support services.

### **Measure:**

Will have implemented new organizational structure.

### **Indicators:**

- New organizational structure developed.
- Position descriptions for new positions completed.
- Recruitment for new positions completed.
- New positions filled.
- New organizational structure implemented.

## **Objective 2:**

By March 31, 2013 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have established a process to develop and implement an administrative policy and procedures manual.

## **Objective 3:**

By March 31, 2014 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have established a process to develop and implement an advocacy protocols and procedures manual.

## **Issue 2: Enhanced Reviews/Investigation Protocol and Process**

The overall review and investigation protocol and process need to be refined and enhanced. There are outstanding investigations from 2005 to 2010 that require completion. There is a need to establish a formal process to follow up recommendations of three existing reports and any future reports.



**Goal:**

By March 31, 2014 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have enhanced investigation/review protocol and processes.

**Measure:**

Will have enhanced investigation/review protocol and processes.

**Indicators:**

- Outstanding investigations completed and reported.
- Enhancement of investigative protocol and process.
- Formal follow-up process for recommendations in place.

**Objective 1:**

By March 31, 2012, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have the outstanding investigations completed.

**Measure:**

Outstanding investigations completed.

**Indicators:**

- Timelines for each review and staff responsible identified.
- Additional resources hired as necessary.
- Processes for monitoring of timelines and status of investigations established.
- Each investigation is completed.
- Each investigative report is completed.

**Objective 2:**

By March 31, 2013 the investigative protocol and process will be refined and enhanced.

### **Objective 3:**

By March 31, 2014 will have established a formal follow-up process of recommendations of reports.

### **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.

#### **Goal:**

By March 31, 2014 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have further enhanced overall systemic advocacy.

#### **Measure:**

Will have enhanced systemic advocacy.

#### **Indicators:**

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

### **Objective 1:**

By March 31, 2014 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have researched initiatives to address systemic issues proactively.

#### **Measure:**

Will have researched proactive initiatives for systemic advocacy.

**Indicators:**

- Lead person responsible for implementing proactive initiatives identified.
- Proactive initiatives researched.

**Objective 2:**

By March 31, 2013 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have identified and implemented initiatives for proactive advocacy.

**Objective 3:**

By March 31, 2014 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have produced position statements/report(s) on proactive systemic issues as necessary.

**Issue 4: 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.

**Goal:**

By March 31, 2014 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have expanded public education and promotion and enhanced communication.

**Measure:**

Will have improved public education and promotion and enhanced communication.

**Indicators:**

- Public education and promotion program in place.
- Various communication initiatives implemented.

### **Objective 1:**

By March 31, 2012 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have implemented a public education and promotion program.

#### **Measure:**

Will have implemented a public education and promotion program.

#### **Indicators:**

- Lead person responsible identified.
- Identification of various aspects of education program.
- Development of timelines for establishment of each aspect of education program.
- Education program implemented.

### **Objective 2:**

By March 31, 2013 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have established and implemented various communication initiatives.

### **Objective 3:**

By March 31, 2014 the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate will have established a process to evaluate the public education and communication initiatives.

## **9.0 CONCLUSION**

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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 members of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate. Through strong commitment and collaboration we will successfully meet the goals and objectives as outlined in this Business Plan for 2011 – 2014.

# Appendix A Office of the Child and Youth Advocate Organizational Chart

