

UPDATE

Our Kids Are Worth It **Our Fourth Year**

Strategy for Children and Youth



Child and Youth Strategy

The Child and Youth Strategy identifies policy opportunities, breaks down barriers, and develops innovative partnerships and initiatives to support children, youth and families. We do this by supporting and advancing collaboration at the community level and across government.

The Strategy is led by the Department of Community Services, but it does not work alone. Four departments and their partners work together towards this common goal: Health and Wellness, Education, Justice, and Community Services.

Cooperation is central to the governance and implementation of the Child and Youth Strategy. There are currently 15 cross-departmental, interagency groups within the Strategy, working together to identify issues and address service gaps. Strengthening our capacity locally, regionally and provincially is an ongoing focus.

The Strategy is also supported by a network of youth and youth agencies called Leaders of Today. This group informs our work, strengthens the youth voice and provides a respectful space for youth and government to learn from one another.



Leaders of Today Annual Youth Summit, Tim Horton Children's Camp, Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia

The Child and Youth Strategy is a multi-year, inter sectoral initiative that was created in response to the 2006 release of the Nunn Commission of Inquiry Report. (http://www.gov.ns.ca/just/nunn_commission/_docs/Report_Nunn_Final.pdf).

Child and Youth Strategy Governance Chart



Areas of Focus

We're moving forward. When the Child and Youth Strategy was launched in 2007, the focus was on a series of pilot programs centered on innovation. Today, four key areas are at the centre of our work: youth engagement, collaborative service-delivery approaches, horizontal (governance) practices, and improving evaluation, data collection and sharing.

Our areas of focus reflect our commitment to improving services to children, youth, and families through greater collaboration. As always, this work continues in partnership with communities.

Some of the initiatives undertaken to support the focus areas from October 1, 2010, to September 30, 2011 include:

Youth Engagement Practices

Youth engagement practices promote an environment in which young people are seen as experts on issues that affect them. Youth are engaged in informing, shaping and evaluating responses to those issues, thereby improving use of existing resources and reducing costs related to service delivery. Government will seek to lead by example in this area and will work with communities to support both adults and youth in this work.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Co-hosted the Leaders of Today Weekend Summit
- Offered youth engagement training and delivered programs across the province
- Provided youth engagement grants
- Supported the Gay Straight Alliance Symposium in Cape Breton
- Co-hosted the Youth Nominee Luncheon (29 youth, 3 Ministers, 1 MLA)
- Supported HeartWood in developing and publishing an article "Putting Teens at the Top of Rural Communities' Agendas"
- Reviewed existing youth engagement activities and proposals
- Designed, developed, and implemented the first Mentoring Teen Boys' Learning Circle
- Conducted a workshop on service learning for youth volunteers

Collaborative Service Delivery Approaches

Collaborative service delivery approaches help to advance and model best practices and principles that promote a continuum of supports to ensure families, children and youth receive the service they need, when they need it. Central to the success of this initiative is ensuring access and providing value for investment.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Reviewed collaborative/integrated service delivery models in other jurisdictions, and identified barriers and how they were addressed
- Identified what is working well and systemic barriers in Nova Scotia using learnings from SchoolsPlus and Well Child System
- Developed a slide presentation and workshop on collaborative practices in Nova Scotia
- Supported training opportunities such as the Incredible Years and Restorative Practices
- Worked at the community level to identify opportunities and mechanisms to improve collaborative practices. Examples include shared work plans and emerging practices forums. This work is also being done through the SchoolsPlus initiative as well as other Strategy pilots.
- Community staff from Parenting Journey sites (a former pilot of the Strategy) at Cape Breton Family Place Resource Centre and South Shore Family Resource Association partnered with correctional facility staff from the Cape Breton Correctional Facility and the Nova Scotia Youth Facility to pilot a parenting program to incarcerated males and youth. The program was developed by a team led by the Departments of Community Services and Justice and included representation from the Departments of Health and Wellness, Mi'kmaq Family and Children Services and the African Nova Scotian Community.

Horizontal Practices

Horizontal practices aim to develop and practice a shared understanding that recognizes all levels of ownership to ensure coordinated activities and enhance collaborative practices. This creates clear roles and accountabilities, communication, and other processes that will reflect the broad scope and diverse nature of the Strategy.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Established a Horizontal Practices Work Plan, including a communications framework, education plan, and terms of reference
- Developed a protocol for communicating and connecting with the Child and Youth Strategy Committee
- Regional Senior Leadership tables came together in March 2011 to harmonize how to move forward together

Evaluation, Data-Collection and Sharing Protocols

Developing and implementing data-collection practices that will facilitate information sharing and evaluate the progress toward the goals of the Child and Youth Strategy. These include a full range of tools and input, from academic study to community knowledge.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Provided ongoing support for the universal use of the SchoolsPlus Information Sharing Protocol
- Supported province-wide implementation of the Early Development Instrument
- Created a plan to identify and implement data-collection practices that facilitate the sharing of information and evaluation of progress towards the outcomes of the Child and Youth Strategy
- Began development of an evaluation framework for consistent data collection across partners

“Shining the Light”

Collaboration is certainly not limited to the Child and Youth Strategy. There are many examples of departments and agencies working together to support children and youth. We are “shining the light” on a few examples -- we know there are many more.

- The Department of Health and Wellness, in partnership with Heartwood Centre for Community Youth Development, coordinated the second year of the **Health Promotion Youth Corps**, providing opportunities for young people to work with community partners on health promotion projects that support good health among their peers. Areas of focus this year included sexual health, healthy eating and health inequities. The Youth Corps is planning its first ever March Break Health Promotion Camp in 2012. More than a half dozen Youth Corp participants became involved in Health and Wellness projects after the program ended for the season. One Youth Corps project deserves special mention - a six-week experience for two groups of youth in the Annapolis Valley and Halifax who worked with staff and community partners to look at their relationship with food and cooking. The two groups visited farms and spent time in kitchens to improve their cooking skills and the youth will continue to be involved as the province revises its School Food and Nutrition Policy.
- Youth were involved with the province's **Cyber Bullying Task Force** - serving on the task force committee and the working group; and helping to develop a focus group process as well as co-facilitating focus groups with children and youth in Nova Scotia. Partners included the departments of Education and Health and Wellness and the Leaders of Today Network.
- **Wood Street's Secure Treatment** - The Wood Street Centre provides a secure treatment program for youth who are in the care of the Minister of Community Services. These youth may suffer from an emotional and/or behavioural disorder may need confinement to treat or alleviate the disorder, and/or who refuse or are unable to consent to treatment. Services are delivered collaboratively with many partners, including the departments of Community Services, Justice, Education, Natural Resources, Health and Wellness and the District Health Authorities.
- **Halifax Youth Attendance Centre (HYAC)** addresses the needs of medium- to high- risk youth, under court order, living in the Halifax Regional Municipality, by providing a variety of structured group and individual programs and services. This Centre operates in partnership with the Departments of Justice, Health and Wellness, Education and Community Services and their service providers.

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