



Children's Aid Society
La Société d'aide à l'enfance
NIPISSING & PARRY SOUND



STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND PRIORITIES



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2021 - 2025

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND PRIORITIES

VALUES

MISSION Working together to build communities where families are strong and all children and youth are safe and resilient.

VISION Families and Communities Keeping Children and Youth Safe, Nurtured and Strong.

MUTUAL RESPECT We understand that all circumstances are unique and experiences and worldviews are diverse. We acknowledge the natural power dynamics in relationships and commit to engaging all perspectives, actively listening, and collectively proceeding with decisions.

INCLUSIVENESS We treat everyone fairly, with respect and with dignity while maintaining and encouraging an atmosphere of openness. We approach our work with an anti-oppressive framework.

INTEGRITY We establish trust and instill confidence by doing our work with sincerity, honesty, equality and humility. When faced with difficult decisions, we rely on our values to guide our decisions.

COURAGE Together we are ready for the uncomfortable and willing to be vulnerable and have healthy discussions that lead to better outcomes.

ACCOUNTABILITY We demonstrate leadership and teamwork by striving to achieve shared goals, holding each other accountable, and ensuring transparency.

INNOVATION We approach every challenge with creativity and resourcefulness. We are open to new approaches, and respond in a responsive, flexible manner.





INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the 2024-2025 Business Plan for the Children's Aid Society of the District of Nipissing and Parry Sound. It provides a comprehensive overview of the organization's mandate, strategic priorities, key initiatives, and performance indicators for the upcoming year.

Children's Aid Societies across Ontario operate as independent agencies embedded in their local communities, offering essential support and resources to children and their families. Governed by the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, these non-profit organizations are led by volunteer Boards of Directors elected from the community. Board members bring a shared commitment to the well-being of children, coupled with individual expertise that strengthens the organization's governance. Programs and services are tailored to address the specific needs of children and families within each local context.

The Children's Aid Society of Nipissing and Parry Sound (PARNIPCAS) is a multi-service agency delivering a broad range of services, including child welfare, youth justice, and early learning and prevention programs.

MANDATE AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Children's Aid Society of the District of Nipissing and Parry Sound is a child protection agency mandated under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*. Under this mandate the Society has the responsibility to protect children from harm or the risk of harm due to neglect and physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

Children's Aid Societies' are independently governed agencies tasked with delivering essential, legislated services to safeguard children and support families. Their mandated responsibilities include:

- Investigating allegations or evidence that children under the age of 16, or those in the care or supervision of the Society, may be in need of protection.
- Protecting children under the age of 18, or those in the Society's care or supervision, when necessary.
- Providing guidance, counseling, and other services to families to protect children and prevent circumstances requiring child protection.
- Caring for children assigned or committed to the Society's care under the Act.

- Supervising children placed under the Society's supervision as mandated by the Act.
- Facilitating adoption placements under Part VII of the Act.
- Performing any additional duties outlined by this or other legislation.

The Child, Youth and Family Services Act, along with supporting regulations, directives, and standards, provides detailed guidance on the mandatory services that Children's Aid Societies must deliver. These directives specify not only what services must be provided but also the processes and timelines for their delivery. This includes targeted services for Indigenous children and families, as well as French-language services.

Children's Aid Societies prioritize safeguarding children while enabling them to remain with their families in the community whenever it is safe to do so. Family-based support involves comprehensive assessments, individualized service plans, collaboration with other professionals and service providers, and ongoing supervision of the child within their home. These cases often involve verified child protection concerns and risks of abuse or neglect, requiring skilled and qualified child welfare staff. Providing services within the family home, when safe, aligns with the legislative and regulatory framework as well as the government's policy direction.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

The child welfare sector continues to evolve, with a heightened focus on accountability and transparency. Over recent years, the sector has undergone significant scrutiny through reviews and inquests that have drawn considerable media attention. These reports have amplified calls for reform and greater openness within child welfare systems.

In 2019, the closure of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth (PACY) shifted oversight of the child welfare sector to the Ombudsman, reflecting the government's increased emphasis on sector accountability. This political and regulatory environment demands greater compliance with Ministry standards and regulations in the protection of children and youth. Recent reports from the Ombudsman underscore the need for enhanced adherence to these standards across the sector.

The rising cost of care for youth with complex needs has become a significant challenge, sparking widespread discussion within the sector. For PARNIPCAS, these costs are a key contributor to ongoing budget deficits. This issue is not unique to our organization; deficits linked to high-cost care for complex youth are being felt across the province.

In response, the Ombudsman's office has announced an investigation into the crisis of complex youth care, including the shortage of adequate placements and treatment beds. The scope of this investigation will extend to evaluating the Ministry's role and response to the ongoing challenges.

ANALYSIS OF OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Reconciliation and Acknowledgement

Child welfare agencies across Ontario remain deeply concerned about the over-representation of Indigenous children in care and acknowledge the critical feedback from Indigenous communities regarding the adverse impacts of the current system.

In July 2017, the Ontario child welfare sector unanimously committed to prioritizing reconciliation with Indigenous communities through eight key initiatives:

- Reduce the number of Indigenous children in care.
- Reduce the number of Indigenous legal files.
- Increase the use of formal customary care agreements, enabling Indigenous communities to retain care of their children.
- Track and report the number of Indigenous board members at the local level.
- Implement mandatory Indigenous training for all staff.
- Integrate Jordan's Principle into inter-agency protocols to ensure First Nations children receive services without jurisdictional delays or disputes.
- Collaborate with Indigenous communities to develop tailored, agency-specific plans addressing their unique needs.
- Foster stronger relationships between the agency and the Indigenous communities it serves.

Performance Measures

Children's Aid Societies recognize the importance of evaluating performance and outcomes for children and families. At PARNIPCAS, operational performance is monitored continuously through various tools, including the Standards Quality Improvement Plan (SQIP), service-related metrics, client feedback, and provincially mandated performance indicators.

Standards Quality Improvement Plan (SQIP)

The SQIP is a standardized tool used by Children's Aid Societies across Ontario to assess compliance with performance standards. Key areas of focus include:

- Recurrence rates of child protection concerns.
- Timely completion of child protection investigations, ensuring all required steps are followed.
- Timely home visits and service plan reviews for cases involving children and their families.
- Timely visits and care plan reviews for children in the Society's care.

Service-Related Metrics

PARNIPCAS monitors several key service metrics regularly through a Power BI dashboard that updates daily. These metrics include:

- Completed investigations.
- Overdue and pending investigations.
- Investigation dispositions.
- Legal status of children in care.
- Worker caseloads and additional metrics critical to service delivery.

Client Feedback

Client feedback plays a vital role in ensuring quality service delivery. All child welfare clients are invited to provide feedback through an anonymous, confidential, and voluntary survey. This feedback informs service improvements and aligns with the Signs of Safety approach to ensure meaningful measures of our work.

Signs of Safety

PARNIPCAS has adopted the Signs of Safety practice model, a sector-wide approach that emphasizes centering the voices of children, youth, families, and their natural support networks in safety and planning decisions. With the guidance of an external consultant, staff across the agency have undergone comprehensive training, participated in practice sessions, and engaged in case reviews to integrate this model into our work.



OVERVIEW OF CURRENT AND FUTURE PROGRAMS AND KEY ACTIVITIES

Current: The Children’s Aid Society is a multi-service agency offering programs funded through the Public Health Agency of Canada (*Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program, Community Action Program for Children*), Ministry of Youth Justice Services and Department of Justice Canada (*Community Support Team, Child and Youth Advocacy Centre*), and Ministry of Community, Children and Social Services (*Child Welfare, Infant and Child Development, Community Capacity Building, Child and Family Intervention*).



Future: The Society is actively engaged in several key projects that will be implemented over the duration of our current strategic plan, which extends through 2025.

Service Snapshot



2117 Calls for Service



Only 39% of these Reports
Resulted in an Investigation

11% of Reports
Received Ongoing
Protection Services



10% Resulted
in the Removal
of a Child

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

The Society has steadily reduced the placement of children and youth into foster and group care by prioritizing family-based connections. Our efforts focus on increasing the use of Kinship and Kith Service arrangements, placing youth with relatives or trusted family friends whenever possible.

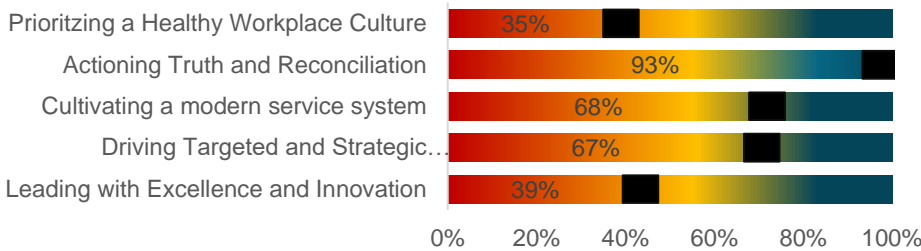
We strongly believe that children should be with their families, and priority is ensuring they have a safe and nurturing home environment to flourish in. To achieve this, we offer a range of services and programs and collaborate closely with various community partners who share our mission. If a child cannot be at home, we strive to place them with kinship families or familiar caregivers who can provide a secure environment. The protection and well-being of children is a collective effort, and with the support of our community partners and concerned citizens, we are making a positive impact in the lives of children.

63 Children & Youth are
Residing in Kin Placements

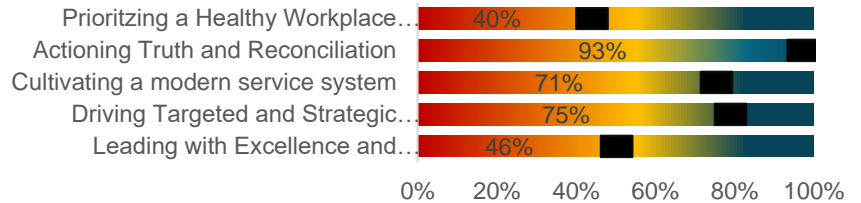


Operational Workplan

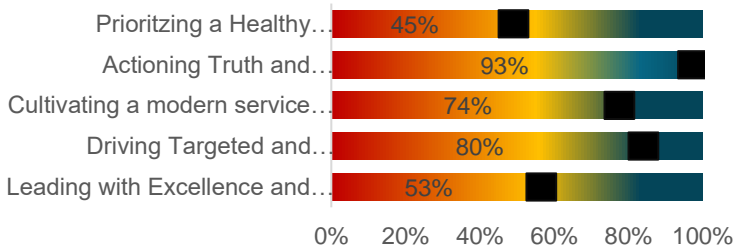
Q1 2023/2024 Baseline (ref: Agency Workplan Updates)



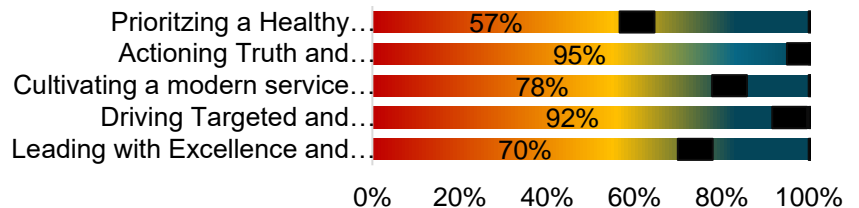
Q2 July-Sept 2023 (ref: Agency Workplan Updates)



Q3 Oct-Dec 2023 (ref: Agency Workplan Updates)



Q4 Jan-Mar 2024 (ref: Agency Workplan Updates)



Risks

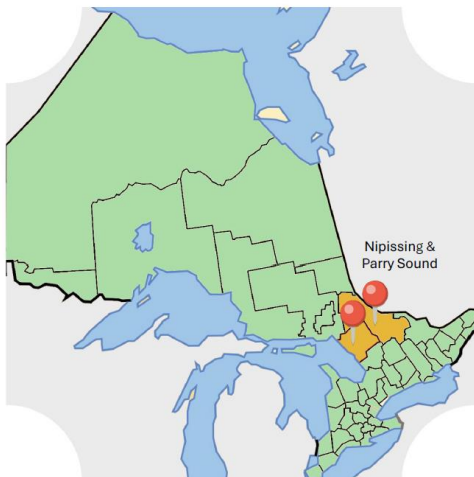
In the development of this Business Plan, the Society carefully considers numerous factors that may influence the execution and attainment of the objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan.

GOVERNMENT FISCAL RESTRAINT

The Ontario government has consistently emphasized fiscal restraint, a priority reflected in the funding framework for child welfare services. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) continues to focus on efficiency and cost containment within the child welfare funding envelope. Over the past four years, the Ministry has applied administrative constraints to Children's Aid Societies, with the current funding formula, introduced in 2020/21, still in effect for 2023/24. This formula calculates constraints on a percentage basis, differentiated by the size of the Society (small, medium, or large) and based on 2011 expenditures in administration, infrastructure, and technology.

Child welfare services depend heavily on defined core budget allocations from the MCCSS. As such, addressing the current deficit requires creativity and a focus on identifying financial efficiencies and exploring new revenue opportunities. These efforts are vital to maintaining operations within the existing fiscal constraints.

Alongside ongoing advocacy efforts, the Society is proactively reviewing all functional areas to identify opportunities for operational resizing. These reviews prioritize preserving core child welfare services while eliminating or reducing activities that fall outside the organization's primary mandate. The goal is to balance fiscal responsibility with adherence to our values and the delivery of high-quality services to children, youth, and families.



Our Districts

Population (combined): 134,461

The Nipissing & Parry Sound district is spread across a vast geographical area, leading to a mix of small towns, rural communities, and Indigenous communities.

Geographical Area: 26,388 Square Kilometers

4.9 Person Per Square Kilometers (Nipissing)

4.5 Person Per Square Kilometers (Parry Sound)

SOCIO-ECONOMIC REALITIES IMPACTING SERVICE DELIVERY

Child welfare is significantly influenced by a range of socio-economic factors, both locally and provincially. Within the Districts of Nipissing and Parry Sound, several key determinants are impacting or have the potential to impact child welfare service volumes under the current funding model.

Housing Crisis and Homelessness

The region faces a severe shortage of affordable housing options, contributing to a growing housing crisis. Homelessness, an issue not unlike that of other Ontario municipalities, continues to rise and increase in complexity. With projected population growth and escalating housing costs—both for rentals and home purchases—it is anticipated that this crisis will deepen further.

Opioid Crisis and Health Service Gaps

The ongoing opioid crisis remains a critical issue, with statistics showing that five Northern Ontario cities have the highest opioid mortality rates in the province. This crisis continues to destabilize families receiving services from PARNIPCAS, exacerbating their vulnerabilities.

In addition to the opioid crisis, the region faces inadequate access to essential health services, including:

- Addiction support and treatment services.
- Consistent access to primary healthcare providers.

These gaps further strain families and heighten the complexity of the cases presented to the Society.

Rising Complexity of Family Needs

Families are increasingly presenting with higher levels of complexity and multiple factors necessitating intervention. Although the overall demand for child welfare services has not increased, the need for broader community services and supports is growing. This rising demand has resulted in longer wait times for families to access the services they need, adding to their distress.

Economic Pressures and Inflation

Inflation in 2023 and into 2024 has significantly impacted families, with soaring costs for essentials such as food, gas, and housing. Many families are struggling to meet basic needs, compelling the Society to invest more heavily in admission prevention supports than ever before.

Emerging Social Priorities

Human trafficking and homelessness are becoming pressing social priorities within the communities served. These issues underscore the urgency of enhancing community resources and partnerships to address the growing challenges faced by vulnerable populations.

COMPLEX SPECIAL NEEDS

The child welfare sector has faced ongoing challenges with placement availability over the past five years, an issue that has intensified in recent years and significantly impacted the Society's deficit.

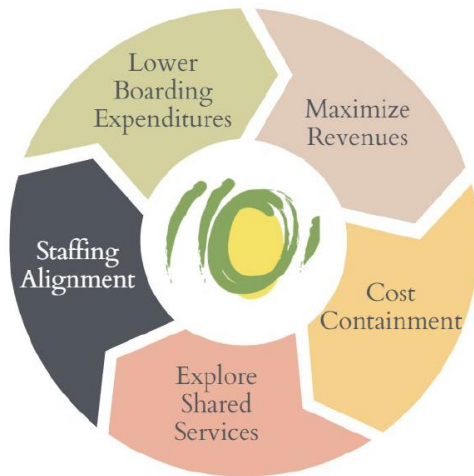
To address these challenges, specialized recruitment campaigns have been implemented with some success, resulting in the development of more appropriate care options for children and youth with complex needs. Despite these efforts, placement shortages have strained emergency response capabilities, leaving the Society with limited options.

In some cases, this shortage has necessitated the use of hotel accommodations as temporary care solutions until suitable placements can be identified. This reliance highlights the urgency of increasing capacity and access to appropriate placement resources to better meet the needs of children and youth requiring specialized care.

BUSINESS EFFICIENCIES

In response to the continued emphasis on fiscal restraint by the Provincial Government, the Society remains committed to identifying and implementing cost-saving measures. Efforts are focused on optimizing resources, streamlining processes, and exploring innovative approaches to maintain financial sustainability without compromising the quality of services provided.

Sustainability Activities



Lower Boarding Expenditures

- OPR boarding costs will be reduced by repatriating youth to family with added in-home supports.

Maximizing Revenues

- Jordan's Principal: \$108,925.87
- Child Disability Benefit: \$210,668.33
- Travel Grants, Child Tax, RESP, RDSP etc.

Cost Containment

- Youth Wellness Hub Application
- Grant Funding / NOHFC

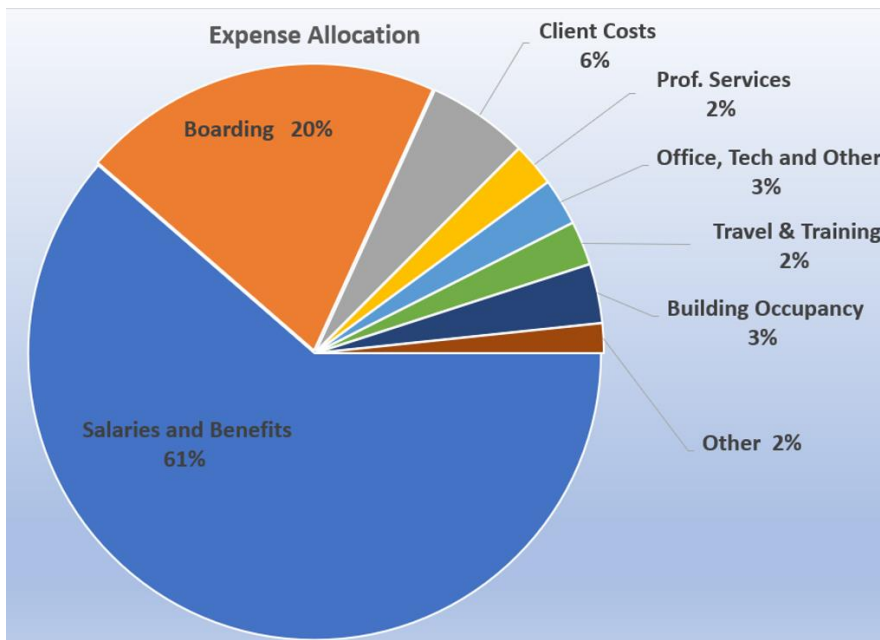
Shared Services

- Meeting of the Minds

Staffing Alignment

- Realignment of management portfolios

The Society responded to the ruling that Bill 124 – Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019, was deemed unconstitutional by renegotiating salaries through binding arbitration for the period of April 2022 to March 31, 2024.



As a human service organization, compensation represents the largest cost component of the Society's budget. While the complexity of working with families continues to increase, the Society has already made significant reductions to full-time equivalent positions and is unable to reduce staffing further without compromising service delivery. The Society remains mindful of managing overall FTE levels and associated costs while ensuring compliance with its mandate under the Child, Youth, and Family Services Act. This balance is critical to maintaining appropriate service delivery while adhering to

the requirement for the submission of balanced budgets.