

Government of Nunavut
Department of Family Services

2024–2025 Annual Report

**Director of Child and Family Services,
Family Wellness Division**

Director's Message

The 2024–2025 Annual Report of the Director of Child and Family Services highlight The Department of Family Services, Family Wellness Division's steadfast commitment to providing services that are culturally grounded, community-led, and guided by Inuit societal values. It captures both the progress made in strengthening child and family services across Nunavut and the challenges that remain as we continue this important work.

Over the past year, the Family Wellness Division has deepened its focus on delivering services that reflect the culture, values, and priorities of Nunavut communities. Guided by the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023-2028) and the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), services have been strengthened to ensure approaches respectful of Inuit knowledge and values. This work has been supported by the launch of the Training and Development Division, the implementation of a territory-wide onboarding program, expansion of cultural safety training, and the introduction of revised service standards in consultation with Inuit Societal Values (ISV) Implementation Advisor, the Representative for Children and Youth (RCYO), and key frontline and leadership staff members.

While important progress has been made—including stronger onboarding practices, wider access to training, and targeted efforts to recruit Inuit and northern staff—significant challenges persist. Staffing shortages, limited housing, and infrastructure constraints continue to affect service delivery in many communities. Recruitment barriers and regional disparities in access to community-based supports also shape the ability to provide care that is both consistent and culturally safe. These realities are not without consequence, but even in the face of these challenges, our commitment remains firmly with the safety and well-being of children and youth, and in supporting families to thrive. Addressing these systemic barriers requires sustained, coordinated action, and we continue to work in partnership with communities and across government to find lasting solutions.

The voices and lived experiences of Nunavummiut remain the foundation of this work, guiding how services are shaped to be culturally grounded, community-led, and focused on healing. In carrying these priorities forward, the dedication of frontline staff, caregivers, and community partners is essential. Through community feedback sessions, collaborative practice discussions, and ongoing reviews of service delivery, their contributions help ensure a system that is responsive, accountable, and reflective of the needs of children, youth, and families across Nunavut. At its core, this work is about ensuring that every child in Nunavut grows up in a place of safety, belonging, and care.

Looking ahead, the Division's work will continue to center on ensuring children and youth are safe, families are supported, and services reflect the culture and strength of Nunavut communities. This includes advancing early intervention and culturally grounded programming, while also creating more placement options close to home and supporting the staff who carry out this important work. Building capacity is not only about introducing tools like the Matrix Case Management System or setting consistent standards but about using them in ways that strengthen relationships and honour language, identity, and community connections. By working in

partnership and sharing accountability, we can create a future for Nunavummiut rooted in wellness, safety, and cultural continuity.

Respectfully—ma'na, nakurmiik, quana. Tavvauvutit.

Colette Prevost

Statutory Director of Child and Family Services

Family Wellness Division

Department of Family Services

Executive Summary

The 2024–2025 fiscal year was defined by purposeful action and steady progress within the Family Wellness Division. Guided by the key priorities of the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028), the Division focused on strengthening the foundation of child and family services across Nunavut. Initiatives this year emphasized cultural safety, greater service consistency, and more placement options closer to home. Investments in staff development and wellness, enhancements to quality assurance practices, and closer collaboration with Inuit organizations and community partners have together moved the system toward one that is trauma-informed, culturally grounded, and responsive to the needs of children, youth, and families in every region.

The 2024–2025 Annual Report of the Director of Child and Family Services provide a territory-wide overview of services delivered by the Family Wellness Division between April 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025. These include child protection, early intervention and support services, family preservation, out-of-territory coordination, adoption, and culturally informed programming. Services were delivered in all 25 communities across the four regions of North and South Qikiqtaaluk, Kivalliq, and Kitikmeot.

This report provides an account of progress and ongoing challenges, reflecting our responsibility to be accountable for the services that affect the lives of children, youth, and families in Nunavut. It highlights the steps taken to strengthen cultural safety, bring greater consistency to practice, and deepen connections with communities, while also acknowledging the barriers that must still be addressed.

Key accomplishments for 2024–2025 include:

- **Launch of the Training and Development Division**, delivering foundational training sessions and expanding access through a blended in-person and online model.
- **Implementation of new service standards of practice** developed with cultural advisors, regional managers, and frontline staff to ensure consistency, accountability, and cultural alignment.
- **Establishment of a centralized Out-of-Territory Coordination Team** to strengthen oversight, cultural continuity, and transition planning for children and youth placed outside Nunavut.
- **Launch of new service delivery tools**, including the Matrix Case Management System and Cultural Continuity Plan Tracker, improving documentation, coordination, and culturally responsive planning.
- **Expansion of Inuit-led cultural and wellness programming** through Family Resource Worker initiatives, including sewing groups, Elders' gatherings, on-the-land programs, and community presentations on Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ).

In addition, steps were taken to respond to recommendations from the 2023 Office of the Auditor General report, including clarifying roles and responsibilities, strengthening case documentation practices, and creating more opportunities to invite feedback from the families we serve.

Children and youth remain central to the work of the Division. Ongoing efforts focus on ensuring their voices are heard, maintaining their connections with family and community, and providing services that reflect Inuit values, language, and traditions.

Children at the Heart of Our Work

Children and youth in Nunavut have the right to grow up in environments that promote stability, identity, and development. When it is not possible for them to remain safely with their parents or caregivers, and they come into the care of the Director, we take on the responsibility to ensure their safety and to support them with dignity, respect, and compassion.

This responsibility is significant and demands thoughtful, consistent, and accountable action. Creating safe and supportive environments for children and youth requires meaningful relationships that foster identity, build trust, and help them see a hopeful future. Every decision we make affects real lives—and our actions must always reflect that truth.

The Family Wellness Division recognizes that long before government systems existed, Inuit societal values guided the care and protection of children. These values honour children as gifts to be cherished and protected and remind us that our collective strength is measured by how well we care for the youngest among us. As we carry out our responsibilities, we are committed to doing so with deep respect and accountability, grounded in these enduring principles.

Introduction

The Family Wellness Division operates within the Department of Family Services and is responsible for the delivery of child and family services across Nunavut. The Child and Family Services (CFS) system in Nunavut plays a critical role in supporting the safety, well-being, and cultural identity of children and youth across the territory. Through a network of prevention services, family support programs, out-of-care arrangements, and child protection interventions, the CFS system aims to promote healthy development while respecting Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) Principles and community-led care approaches.

The 2024–2025 Director’s Annual Report provides a summary of services delivered between April 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025, under the **Child and Family Services Act (CFSA)**, the **Nunavut Adoption Act**, the **Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act (ACARA)**, and the **federal Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families**. In addition, the **Representative for Children and Youth Act**, provides an important voice of accountability and advocacy that informs and influences how services are experienced by children and youth. Together, these legislative frameworks guide the delivery of child and family services in Nunavut and affirm the rights of Indigenous children to remain connected to their culture, language, and communities.

This report also serves as an important accountability and planning tool, helping to monitor outcomes, evaluate system effectiveness, and guide continuous improvements in service delivery. It reflects the Division’s commitment to culturally relevant, child-centered, and prevention-focused approaches grounded in collaboration with families, communities, and Inuit organizations.

By documenting lived experiences and trends across the territory, the Annual Report aims to inform decision-making at all levels and support the vision of safe, stable, and connected futures for all children and youth in Nunavut.

Inuit Societal Values Principles

1. **Inuuqatigiitsiarniq** (respect and relationship-building)
2. **Tunnganarniq** (fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming, and inclusive)
3. **Pijitsirniq** (service to the families and communities of Nunavut)
4. **Aajiiqatigiinni** (decision-making through discussion and consensus)
5. **Pilimmaksarniq** (development of skills through observation, mentoring, practice, and effort)
6. **Piliriqatigiinni/Ikajuqtigiinni** (working collectively)
7. **Qanuqtuurniq** (innovation and resourcefulness)
8. **Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq** (respect and care for the land, animals, and the environment)

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) Principles and Child Welfare Practices

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) Principles represent a body of knowledge developed by Inuit through generations of lived experience, observation, and connection with the land, animals, environment, and one another. Today, these principles remain central to how Inuit navigate social challenges and solutions in Nunavut, offering culturally grounded perspectives that shape how services are delivered, and decisions are made.

Integrating IQ Principles into child welfare practice is essential to ensuring that services are both culturally respectful and effective. These values guide the Family Wellness Division's overall approach to service delivery, promoting holistic well-being, fostering collaboration with families and communities, and affirming the importance of cultural identity. We continue to prioritize the role of extended family, Elders, and community networks in guiding decision-making and supporting children and youth in care.

In 2024–2025, we deepened our commitment to IQ integration through initiatives aligned with the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028). These includes:

- **Completing and launching the Family Resource Worker Manual (2024-2025)**, a culturally grounded guide that strengthens prevention-focused, community-based programming and supports consistent delivery of family and parenting initiatives rooted in Inuit societal values.
- **Completing community consultations** to inform the creation of a **Reunification Framework**, aimed at guiding children's safe return to family care through Inuit-informed processes; a draft framework is **under review**.
- **Progressing cultural competency and Inuit-specific training** for staff and specialized caregivers, including curriculum emphasizing language, traditional knowledge, and trauma-informed practice, co-developed with Elders and cultural advisors.
- **Ongoing training for Client Liaison Officers (CLOs)** to enhance their capacity to support cultural continuity and advocacy for Inuit children in out-of-territory placements.
- **Increasing interpreter resources** and clerk/interpreter positions to improve access to services in Inuit languages and initiating a review of translated materials to ensure alignment with updated standards.
- **Beginning implementation of a Cultural Program Participation Tracker** to assess how children in care engage in traditional practices.

IQ Principles also provide a foundation for strength-based practice. This means recognizing and building upon the existing strengths, resilience, and cultural resources of individuals, families, and communities. Through culturally relevant supports, we aim to empower children, youth, and families to overcome challenges while remaining connected to their identity, language, and traditions. By centering IQ in all aspects of our work, we foster trust, strengthen relationships, and promote better outcomes for those we serve.

Throughout the Family Wellness Division, IQ Principles are embedded across programs and services. For example:

- **In Family Safety programming**, traditional conflict resolution and community-based approaches are used to promote healing and accountability in culturally appropriate ways.
- **In cultural programming**, land-based activities, Inuit language revitalization initiatives, and Elder-led circles support identity development and community connection.
- **In caregiver training**, new kinship caregiver and foster parent training frameworks are being developed to strengthen culturally grounded, trauma-informed caregiving.
- **In policy and quality assurance work**, community and stakeholder consultations ensure that practice standards reflect Inuit societal values and local realities.

By embedding the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028) and IQ principles into all aspects of our work, the Family Wellness Division continues to strengthen culturally responsive care that honours Inuit knowledge, promotes accountability, and supports the wellness of children, youth, and families across the territory.

SECTION 1
NUNAVUT'S CHILD AND
FAMILY SERVICES

Child and Family Services Act

The Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) establish the legal framework for the delivery of child welfare services in Nunavut. Originally developed under the framework of the Northwest Territories, the Act has evolved through multiple amendments to better reflect the needs, voices, and cultural values of communities across Nunavut. Since being established as a separate territory (April 1, 1999), Nunavut has shaped the CFSA to ensure it supports services that are culturally appropriate, community-based, and grounded in Inuit societal values.

At its foundation, the CFSA recognizes that the care and well-being of children are deeply rooted in relationships, kinship, and cultural identity. It reflects the significance of Inuit societal values and the collective responsibility to support children and families. Section “2” of the Act specifically acknowledges the importance of cultural continuity, family involvement, and traditional knowledge in promoting safety and wellness for young people.

More than a legal framework, the CFSA is a tool for empowerment and healing. It is designed not only to intervene when necessary to protect children from harm, but also to proactively support families through connection, early services, and culturally relevant care. The Act outlines the responsibilities and processes for identifying and addressing concerns when a child may be at risk of harm or neglect and provides the foundation for taking supportive action to ensure children’s safety and well-being. In doing so, the Act emphasizes early intervention, family supports, and community-led responses that reflect the realities and strengths of Nunavummiut.

The CFSA affirms that meaningful support must be accessible, de-stigmatizing, and responsive. It recognizes the role of services such as counseling, parenting programs, and land-based healing in strengthening families and preventing unnecessary separation. These measures are intended to preserve relationships, restore dignity, and promote long-term well-being for children and caregivers.

As youth transition to adulthood, the CFSA provides legislative pathways to support their continued development in areas such as education, housing, employment, and financial independence. This approach reinforces a holistic, strengths-based framework for care and transition planning.

This Director’s Report, prepared in accordance with Section 42, provides an annual overview of the services delivered under the CFSA. The report not only fulfills a statutory requirement—it reflects how child and family services are experienced in the day-to-day lives of families, Elders, children, youth, and service providers across Nunavut. It also highlights areas of transformation and opportunity, as the Division continues to examine how the CFSA can better align with trauma-informed, anti-oppressive and decolonial practice, and community-driven approaches.

This work is also informed by the *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* (referred to in this report as the Federal Act), which came into force on January 1,

2020. This Act affirms the right of Indigenous peoples to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services and establishes guiding principles such as cultural continuity, substantive equality, and the best interests of the child. In the context of Nunavut, it reinforces the Family Wellness Division’s responsibility to involve Inuit organizations in service planning and to prioritize placements and care arrangements that support a child’s connection to their culture, language, and community.

◆ **What Do We Mean by Anti-Oppressive and Decolonized Practice?**

Anti-oppressive and decolonized practice recognizes the enduring impacts of externally imposed governance system and works to transform how child and family services are delivered. It is about building trust, restoring dignity, and centering Inuit knowledge, values, and ways of being.

This includes:

- **Recognizing families as capable, resilient, and resourceful**, even when facing challenges
- **Understanding that many struggles stem from systemic inequities**—not personal failure
- **Replacing surveillance with support**—shifting from monitoring compliance to nurturing connection
- **Valuing Inuit parenting, teaching, and kinship systems** as legitimate, protective, and central to child well-being
- **Rejecting “neutral” Western standards** that may conflict with Indigenous family life, language, and cultural traditions
- **Challenging power imbalances** by working in true partnership with families and communities

By committing to anti-oppressive and decolonized practice, we aim to ensure that services are not only safe, but culturally meaningful, healing, and rooted in justice.

In the coming years, the Government of Nunavut is committed to reviewing the CFSA to ensure its language, structure, and principles are consistent with Inuit values, culturally safe practice, and the voices of children, families, and communities it is intended to serve.

◆ **What is the Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families?**

This Federal Act, often referred to as Bill C- 92, came into force on **January 1, 2020**. It affirms the rights of **Indigenous peoples to oversee their own child and family services** and ensures that **cultural identity, language, and community connection** are central to how services are provided.

Key principles include:

- **The best interests of the child**
- **Cultural continuity** and identity
- **Substantive equality** and non-discrimination

In Nunavut, the Act reinforces the role of **Inuit organizations in service planning** and helps ensure children remain connected to their **culture, family, and community**.

Child and Family Services in Nunavut

Family Wellness Division employees in Nunavut plays a vital role in supporting the well-being, safety, and cultural identity of Inuit children, youth, and families. Services are guided by **Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ) Principles**, which emphasize family unity, community responsibility, and the strengths of traditional knowledge. In practice, this means respecting traditional parenting, involving Elders in service planning, and recognizing community knowledge as central to child and family wellness.

While Family Wellness Division refers to the overall territorial system, its services are delivered locally through Family Wellness Offices Teams based in each of Nunavut's 25 communities. These teams are made up of frontline personnel whose composition varies by community and may include Community Social Services Workers (CSSWs), Family Resource Workers (FRWs), Clerk Interpreters, Receptionists, Case Aides, Coordinators, Supervisors and Managers. Their work goes beyond day-to-day operations; it embodies a living connection between Inuit families and their communities.

Family Wellness employees play a vital role in Nunavut's child and family services system. Their presence in each community reflects a strong commitment to building trust, walking alongside families, and delivering care rooted in respect, dignity, and cultural connection. Because many team members live and work in community, they are deeply connected to local families, languages, and traditions. Their work is grounded in trauma-informed practice, culturally safe, and strengths-based service delivery, supporting the well-being of children, youth, and caregivers across the territory.

Frontline workers provide a full continuum of services, including intake and case management, support services, family preservation, child protection, adoption support, and out-of-territory specialized services coordination. Services are delivered in partnership with families, Elders, local Inuit organizations, and other territorial departments, with a shared focus on community healing and intergenerational wellness.

◆ What Do We Mean by Trauma-Informed Practice?

Trauma-informed practice recognizes that many families carry visible and invisible wounds from intergenerational trauma, colonial harm, and systemic inequities. It means creating environments that foster safety, trust, and dignity—where families are seen through a lens of healing, not judgment. In Nunavut's child and family services system, this includes:

- Responding with empathy rather than surveillance
- Supporting families through connection, not control
- Recognizing trauma responses as survival strategies, not personal failings
- Providing predictable, respectful care rooted in Inuit values and community strengths

Regional Overview of Services

To support the delivery of child and family services (CFS), Nunavut is organized into four service regions: **North Qikiqtaaluk, South Qikiqtaaluk, Kivalliq, and Kitikmeot**. Services are delivered in partnership with local Inuit organizations and supported by the Family Wellness Headquarter, which provides leadership in legislation, policy, and system-wide practice. The Family Wellness Headquarter also oversees out-of-territory specialized services, adoption registration, training and quality assurance, and supports regional teams with tools, guidance, and intergovernmental collaboration to ensure consistent and culturally grounded care. Together, Family Wellness Offices and Family Wellness Headquarter form a unified system that balances centralized leadership with community-informed service delivery.

Nunavut CFS Service Regions and Communities

1. North Qikiqtaaluk Region

Regional Office: Pangnirtung

Communities Served: Pond Inlet, Arctic Bay, Clyde River, Grise Fiord, Resolute Bay, Hall Beach (Sanirajak), Igloolik, Pangnirtung, Qikiqtarjuaq

2. South Qikiqtaaluk Region

Regional Office: Iqaluit

Communities Served: Iqaluit, Kinngait (Cape Dorset), Kimmirut

3. Kivalliq Region

Regional Office: Rankin Inlet

Communities Served: Rankin Inlet, Arviat, Baker Lake, Naujaat, Chesterfield Inlet, Coral Harbour, Whale Cove, Sanikiluaq

4. Kitikmeot Region

Regional Office: Cambridge Bay

Communities Served: Cambridge Bay, Kugluktuk, Kugaaruk, Gjoa Haven, Taloyoak

Strengthening the Workforce and Infrastructure

In 2024–2025, Family Wellness Division continued efforts to recruit, support, and retain staff rooted in community and cultural values. While staffing shortages, housing constraints, and infrastructure gaps remain key challenges, active efforts were made to improve working conditions and community presence. These efforts are aligned with the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028), which emphasizes the importance of strengthening recruitment, retention, and workforce development.

Key initiatives included:

- **Enhanced local recruitment strategies and cultural orientation for new hires:** Efforts focused on attracting Inuit and northern applicants, using community-based hiring

methods and providing early cultural orientation to strengthen retention. This supports the priority's aim of building a strong and culturally connected local workforce.

- **Structured onboarding models, including case consultation and cultural mentorship:** New employees supported through staged onboarding that included peer-led case discussions, mentorship from experienced staff, and access to cultural knowledge holders.
- **Development of Inuit-led caregiver and cultural safety training modules:** Training content is being co-developed with cultural advisors and knowledge keepers to reflect community values and foster culturally grounded service delivery.
- **Peer support networks and ongoing leadership coaching for supervisors:** Frontline workers and supervisors were connected to regional peer networks and received targeted coaching to build leadership skills, manage complex cases, and support team wellness.

During the 2024–2025 fiscal year, the Division also advanced key initiatives to enhance staff safety and workplace well-being. Three new policies—the *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*, *Lone Worker Policy*, and *Respectful and Harassment-Free Workplace Policy*—were developed to strengthen the Division's commitment to safe, supportive, and respectful work environments. Together, these policies outline clear procedures for risk assessment, communication, and emergency response; reinforce the right to a harassment-free workplace; and align safety practices with Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit values and territorial legislation. These policies were moving through the consultation process towards the end of the reporting year before full implementation.

To support long-term workforce planning and community accountability, Family Wellness Offices and Family Wellness Headquarter continued to enhance its data collection and monitoring systems in 2024–2025. This work emphasizes the value of accurate, culturally relevant data—not only as a management tool, but also as a reflection of respect, transparency, and accountability to Inuit communities. Improved monitoring and evaluation also reinforce efforts under this priority to create consistent, accountable recruitment and retention practices.

The Family Wellness Division have refined how it tracks staffing needs and service capacity by distinguishing between total positions within the child and family services system and those classified as frontline roles. As of March 31, 2025, there were 136 approved positions, encompassing both community-facing and administrative roles. Of these, 101 were frontline positions, directly delivering services to children, youth, and families across Nunavut. Frontline roles include CSSWs, Family Resource Workers, Client Liaison Officers, Case Aides, and other community-based support staff.

The remaining positions consist of Headquarters Specialists, Regional Managers, Directors, and other administrative or oversight roles. This distinction enables child and family services to more accurately track community service capacity, identify gaps in local delivery, and guide future staffing and recruitment initiatives. Such refinements echo the strategic commitment to strengthen recruitment and retention processes and support overall workforce stability.

These figures reflect approved positions, which are not always filled throughout the year; understanding vacancy rates is therefore critical, and work is underway to strengthen our systems

to track these rates more effectively. While vacancy data provides an important snapshot, it does not fully capture the proactive measures taken to sustain service delivery throughout the year. Across the 2024–2025 fiscal year, many positions—particularly in frontline roles—were temporarily filled through casual employment and short-term contracts. These flexible staffing arrangements allowed the Division to maintain service continuity in communities while longer-term recruitment processes were underway. Although not reflected in vacancy calculations, this strategic use of casual staff effectively offset pressures in key service areas and supported operational stability during transition periods.

Total Workforce Composition (2024–2025)

Category	Number	% of Total
 Frontline Community-Based Positions	101	74.3%
 Administrative and HQ-Based Positions	35	25.7%
Total Approved Positions	136	100%

As of March 31, 2025, Family Wellness Division reported a total of 136 approved positions across Nunavut communities. Of these, 72 positions were filled and 64 remained vacant, resulting in a vacancy rate of approximately 47%.

Among these roles, Community Social Services Workers (CSSWs)—who carry out much of the frontline case management work—held 67 indeterminate positions, of which 37 were filled and 30 remained vacant, representing a 45% vacancy rate. For Family Resource Workers (FRWs), there were 14 approved positions, with 5 filled and 9 vacant, resulting in a 64% vacancy rate.

A total of 11 new indeterminate (permanent employees with no fixed end date) hires were made during the fiscal year. Despite these recruitment gains, staffing pressures remain significant. These figures highlight both the magnitude of current staffing needs and the ongoing importance of sustained investments in recruitment, retention, and workforce wellness. It is important to note that many community offices operated with supplemental casual staffing throughout the year, ensuring that essential supports for children, youth, and families remained consistent despite ongoing recruitment challenges.

Approved vs Filled Positions (March 31, 2025)

Position Type	Approved	Filled	Vacant	Vacancy Rate
CSSW	67	37	30	45%
FRW	14	5	9	64%
CLO	5	4	1	20%
Other	50	26	24	48%
Total	136	72	64	47%

High vacancy rates and workforce instability in Nunavut stem from unique challenges, including limited housing, high living costs, geographic isolation, and competition for skilled professionals across Canada. Many roles require specialized qualifications, and recruitment often draws from outside the territory, leading to longer hiring timelines and higher turnover. To address these realities, the Family Wellness Division is advancing targeted recruitment strategies, strengthening retention initiatives, and investing in workforce wellness and housing supports. Together, these measures reflect the Division’s broader strategy to build a resilient workforce that is well-trained, well-supported, and rooted in the strengths and values of Nunavut communities. In this context, the Division’s ability to mobilize a flexible casual workforce represents an adaptive strategy that supports service continuity while advancing long-term recruitment efforts.

Central to this vision is a focus on local recruitment and workforce development—hiring from within communities to strengthen service continuity, reduce vacancy rates, and ensure services are delivered by people who share local languages, cultural knowledge, and lived experience. By investing in training, mentorship, and career development for Nunavummiut, Community Family Wellness Offices and Family Wellness Headquarter is creating pathways for long-term employment and reducing reliance on out-of-territory recruitment. This focus on local talent development is key to building a resilient, community-connected workforce that supports our vision of stable, sustainable services rooted in the strengths and values of Nunavut. This approach strengthens stability in child and family services and ensures that the workforce continues to reflect Inuit societal values and community priorities.

Continuum of Supports and Services for Children, Youth, and Families

The Family Wellness Division delivers child welfare services under the guidance of the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA). The CFSA establishes a flexible continuum of care, designed to meet the diverse and evolving needs of children, youth, and families in Nunavut. This continuum is grounded in **Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ) Principles**, which emphasize family unity, community wellness, and the importance of cultural identity.

Services within this continuum are offered through two main pathways: Support services and child protection services. These services are available to children, youth, families, and expectant parents when challenges exceed what their natural supports can provide. The goal is to work alongside families and communities to promote healing, strengthen family well-being, and ensure children and youth are safe and supported—all in ways that are culturally grounded and built on respectful, trusting relationships.

Note on Language:

In previous years, support services were referred to as *prevention services*. This report adopts the term *support services* to better reflect the voluntary, strengths-based nature of the work. We recognize that language matters—terms like “prevention” may unintentionally suggest that families are on a path toward protection involvement, which is not the case for many who receive support. As part of our commitment to decolonization and anti-oppressive practice, we

are working to move away from deficit-based terms and toward language that reflects dignity, partnership, and respect.

Support Services

Support services focus on building on the existing strengths of families and communities by offering early, culturally rooted assistance that enhances wellness, reduces stress, and promotes long-term stability. These services are voluntary, tailored, and guided by the strengths, needs, and values of each family.

Community Social Services Workers (CSSWs) and Family Resource Workers (FRWs) work in close collaboration with families to identify goals and implement supports that reflect their priorities. This work is grounded in trust, connection, and the belief that families are capable and resourceful, even when navigating complex challenges.

Examples of support services include:

- Housing advocacy and basic needs support;
- Referrals to prenatal, parenting, or mental wellness resources;
- Short-term financial assistance or food security support;
- Support in accessing services through the Inuit Child First Initiative;
- Help accessing culturally relevant healing and wellness services;
- Community-based or land-based programs that foster resilience and belonging.

Protection Services

Protection services are available when concerns arise that a child or youth may be at risk of harm, neglect, or abuse. These services are rooted in the principle that all children have the right to grow up in a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment.

When concerns about a child's safety or well-being are identified, individuals are required under the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) to promptly share those concerns with a Community Social Services Worker (CSSW) and/or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). In turn, the Family Wellness Division has a parallel obligation—to respond with care and compassion, to uphold the dignity of families, and to ensure services are delivered in a trauma informed, culturally grounded, and non-discriminatory manner that supports healing and well being.

The CSSW then conducts a collaborative, trauma-informed assessment to determine what support or intervention may be required. This process may involve:

- Speaking with the child or youth, their caregivers, extended family, and others who know the family well;
- Coordinating with service providers and Elders to assess safety and strengths;
- Offering support services when appropriate or initiating protection measures when necessary.

We recognize that many of the challenges leading to protection concerns are not the result of personal failure but are rooted in systemic barriers such as poverty, housing insecurity, mental health challenges, and the intergenerational impacts of systems that have caused lasting harm. Yet, despite these challenges, families and communities hold deep strengths and resilience. Our role is to stand alongside them as partners in safety, healing, and long term well being, supporting pathways that build on those strengths and promote lasting wellness.

Whenever possible, the Division focuses on voluntary support services and community led solutions, working collaboratively with families to strengthen safety and well being. Protection services are used only when necessary, with every effort made to keep children safe within their family networks. Our approach strives to be nonintrusive and culturally grounded, empowering families to build safety and resilience through supports designed to strengthen, not control.

All decisions are guided by a commitment to cultural safety, family preservation, and community connection. Wherever possible, protection services aim to keep children connected to their families, culture, and communities, recognizing that healing and safety are best achieved through respectful relationships and meaningful support.

Why Language Matters

The words we use shape how families experience services. In past years, early supports were described as *prevention services*. While widely used in child welfare, the term “prevention” can suggest that families are being steered away from inevitable protection involvement. In Nunavut, we recognize that many families access support services voluntarily and do not require protection services.

By shifting to the term **support services**, we honour the strengths of families and communities. This language reflects our trauma-informed, anti-oppressive approach—one that prioritizes dignity, connection, and cultural identity in all areas of service delivery.

Support and Protection Service Options

Support Services

Voluntary Services Agreements (VSA):

Agreement with parents and children from the ages of 0 to 15 (inclusive) who may benefit from additional supports to strengthen well-being, family unity, and cultural connection. These agreements are not tied to protection concerns but are part of a proactive and community-based approach to family wellness. Services may include wellness programs, counselling, parenting supports, or other culturally informed resources.

Support Services Agreements (SSA):

An agreement with youth aged 16 to 18 (inclusive) who are unable to live safely in their parents' home and are working toward independent living. Services often focus on life skills development, housing assistance, and preparation for independent living. SSAs are designed to empower youth with tools and resources that reflect their strengths, choices, and aspirations.

Extended Support Agreements (ESA):

Agreement that allows the Division to support young adults between the ages of 19 and 26 (inclusive) as they transition to independence. These agreements support a safe and supported transition to adulthood, including help with housing, employment readiness, and community connections. ESA services reflect a strengths-based view of youth development and recognize the importance of cultural identity, belonging, and autonomy.

Protection Services

Plan of Care (POC) Agreements:

An agreement between the parent(s) and the Division that outlines a case plan to ensure the child's protection and well-being. These agreements are an alternative to court and are less intrusive than formal legal proceedings. They are rooted in collaboration, with a focus on keeping families together while addressing safety concerns in culturally appropriate and restorative ways.

Child Protection Court Orders:

If a child is found to need protection under the Child and Family Services Act, the court has three types of orders it can use to help keep the child safe and supported.

The types of orders include:

1. **Supervision Order (SO)**– The child stays in the home, but the family works with Child and Family Services under court supervised conditions to ensure safety and support. These orders are time-limited and cannot exceed one year. They are intended to provide oversight while supporting the family to address specific challenges with dignity and support.

2. **Temporary Custody Order (TCO)** – The child lives in the care of Child and Family Services or an approved caregiver for a limited period while steps are taken to address safety concerns. The primary goal remains family reunification wherever possible, supported by culturally informed planning and trauma-informed care
3. **Permanent Custody Order (PCO)**– The child remains in the care of Child and Family Services or another permanent caregiver when returning home is not safe or possible - until age 16. This can be extended to age 19 if the youth agrees or if the court orders it. These decisions are made with careful consideration of long-term stability, cultural continuity, and the child’s holistic well-being.

◆ Reflecting Values Through Language

We are intentional about using language that moves away from the colonial legacy of surveillance, compliance, and control. Terms like *monitoring*, *supervision*, and *prevention* often reflect a lens of suspicion and authority, one that places families under watch rather than beside them in support.

Instead, our language reflects the approach we strive to embody:

- **Partnership** rather than oversight
- **Cultural safety and respect** over judgment
- **Healing and connection** instead of control
- **Guided support** in place of monitoring

This shift is more than words — it is about affirming dignity, restoring trust, and grounding child and family services in relationships, not restrictions. It reflects our commitment to Inuit societal values, where care is rooted in connection, respect, and cultural continuity.

Strengthening Support Services: A Closer Look at Voluntary Services Agreements

Voluntary Services Agreements (VSA), as outlined in Sections 5 and 6 of the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA), provide a collaborative framework for families and guardians to access services in partnership with the Family Wellness Division. These agreements affirm family strengths and offer culturally appropriate supports without requiring formal protective involvement. This approach is rooted in the principles of early support, cultural respect, and healing-centered engagement.

Under a VSA, families can access support with their full consent and can withdraw from the agreement at any time. Services may include parenting support, counseling, respite, or referrals to other programs aimed at strengthening family relationships and supporting children's well-being. The flexibility of the VSA allows families to receive timely assistance while maintaining autonomy, dignity, and connection to their community.

Section 6 of the CFSA outlines the procedures and expectations related to VSAs, including how the agreement is documented, the nature of services to be provided, and the process for setting goals. It also includes steps for ongoing engagement to ensure the agreement continues to meet the family's evolving needs. Provisions are also in place for ending the agreement if circumstances change, with clear guidance provided for both families and service providers.

In 2024–2025, Family Wellness Division continued to expand their use of VSAs to support families. A key development this year was the strengthened integration of case planning tools, staff training on cultural humility, and trauma-informed practices. These efforts are helping ensure that VSA agreements are not only accessible, but also responsive, meaningful, and rooted in Inuit values. As of March 31, 2025, there were 54 children and youth receiving services through a Voluntary Services Agreement.

For example, VSAs are commonly used to help families access specialized supports that may not be available in their home community. This includes supporting children with chronic health conditions who require access to services available only in urban centres. These children often require frequent monitoring, access to hospital-based care, or ongoing medical follow-up.

Based on 2024–2025 service trends, the limited availability of complex medical and developmental services in some regions continues to be a key driver of out-of-territory placements. A significant portion of these placements are accessed through Voluntary Services Agreements (VSAs), reflecting families' need for accessible, wraparound support. Families receiving support under VSAs may also need homecare nursing, case coordination, or adaptive housing solutions to safely care for their children. These agreements enable families to maintain involvement in their child's care while navigating complex needs that require shared planning and respect for family voice.

As part of broader support efforts, the Family Wellness Division continues to enhance VSA-related tools and practices to better reflect Inuit values and build trust-based relationships.

Through updated training, strengthened documentation standards, and ongoing dialogue with communities, VSAs remain a vital tool for delivering culturally safe, family-driven support across Nunavut.

In summary, the Voluntary Services Agreement (VSA) is a relationship-centered approach that enables families to receive support in a collaborative, strengths-focused manner. These agreements reflect a commitment to walking alongside families, offering timely, culturally grounded support that promotes well-being, stability, and strengthen family systems.

Services Available Through a Voluntary Services Agreement (VSA)

Counseling Services

Referral to professional support to help children and families address emotional, psychological, or behavioural concerns.

In-Home Support

Assistance within the home to support daily routines and help manage specific family or child needs, in alignment with family values and goals.

Respite Care

Short-term relief for caregivers to reduce stress and support caregiver wellness and balance.

Parenting Programs

Culturally informed programs designed to affirm parenting strengths, build confidence and promote healthy family dynamics.

Financial Assistance

Support aimed at helping families stabilize their financial situation, including flexible emergency or transitional aid when appropriate.

Housing Services

Navigation services to help with securing or improving stable housing that meets the family's needs and supports long-term family unity.

Substance Treatment and Rehabilitation

Referral services to support youth and families in addressing substance use concerns and restoring health and well-being through a non-judgemental care.

Mediation of Disputes

Supports to help resolve conflict within families in a respectful, strengths-based and collaborative manner.

Health Services

Supporting families in managing physical or mental health conditions affecting a child or caregiver, including access to specialized and culturally appropriate care when needed.

Other Services

Any other services agreed upon by the Director of Child and Family Services and the child's legal guardian, based on the individual strengths, needs and best interests of the child and family.

◇ Honouring Culture in Support Services

Voluntary Services Agreements (VSAs) are not just about accessing resources—they're about **honouring family strengths, cultural identity, and emotional connection**. Families are encouraged to draw on their community knowledge and traditions as part of their healing and wellness journey.

Support may include:

- Involvement of Elders or Cultural Support Workers
- Cultural practices such as drumming, sewing, language, or storytelling
- On-the-land or community-based supports
- Activities that reflect daily family life and traditions

These approaches affirm Inuit values, promote dignity, and create spaces where families can reconnect, heal, and thrive—on their own terms.

Children and Youth Receiving Services from Family Services in 2024–2025

As of March 31, 2025, a total of **454** Nunavummiut children and youth were receiving support through in-territory services delivered by the Community Family Wellness Division. These services are grounded in Inuit values and community-based relationships and are provided under the Child and Family Services Act.

This section presents only in-territory services. Out-of-Territory Specialized Services are reported separately in the section on Out-of-Territory Specialized Services.

In-Territory Data Presented as a Point-in-Time

This information presents in-territory data as of March 31, 2025, providing a clear year-end snapshot. With Matrix continuing to be implemented across all aspects of service delivery and with additional Matrix training underway, the Division anticipates reporting the full fiscal-year in-territory data in future years. This will enable stronger trend analysis and more informed decision-making.

Regional Distribution of In-Territory Services

Of the 454 children and youth served in Nunavut, the regional breakdown is as follows:

- **39.6% (180)** – South Qikiqtaaluk Region
- **27.5% (125)** – North Qikiqtaaluk Region
- **23.6% (107)** – Kivalliq Region
- **9.3% (42)** – Kitikmeot Region

Service Types

Children and youth may receive support through different types of services, which can be voluntary, or court ordered, depending on their individual needs and circumstances. The breakdown of these service types is as follows:

- Plan of Care Agreements (POC): 37.7% (171)
- Permanent Custody Orders (PCO): 20.9% (95)
- Temporary Custody Orders (TCO): 14.8% (67)
- Voluntary Support Agreements (VSA): 11.9% (54)
- Support Services Agreements (SSA): 5.5% (25)
- Supervision Order: 4.2% (19)
- Interim Orders: 2.9% (13)
- Extended Service Agreement: 2.2% (10)

Age Profile of Children and Youth Receiving In-Territory Services

Understanding the age distribution of children and youth supported by the Family Wellness Division helps to inform service planning and delivery. As of March 31, 2025, a total of 454 children and youth were receiving services under the Child and Family Services Act. Together, children aged 0–12 years accounted for nearly 70% of all in-territory service recipients, underscoring the importance of early childhood and primary-age supports in service planning and delivery. The following breakdown reflects the proportion of individuals served by age group:

Age Group	Number of Children/Youth
0–5 years	29.1% (132)
6–12 years	40.5% (184)
13–15 years	15.2% (69)
16–18 years	11.0% (50)
19–26 years (ESA)	4.2% (19)

Why this data matters

Tracking the number of children and youth receiving services—and understanding where and how they are supported—helps to identify emerging community needs, shape responsive policies, and guide planning that reflects Inuit priorities. This data also supports transparency and accountability, ensuring that service delivery reflects both community realities and systemic responsibilities. We acknowledge that each number represents a child, a family, and a story. These figures are not just statistics—they reflect the collective effort to support well-being, healing, and cultural connection across Nunavut.

Intake Calls and Community Support (2024–2025)

In 2024–2025, Community Family Wellness Employees responded to 2,485 intake calls across Nunavut. These calls came from families seeking support, community members fulfilling their responsibility to care for one another, and other partners concerned for the well-being of a child or youth. **Each call represents a moment of outreach and an opportunity to respond with compassion, respect, and culturally safe support.**

Regional Distribution of Intake Calls

- **North Qikiqtaaluk:** 817 (32.9%)
- **Kitikmeot:** 640 (25.8%)
- **Kivalliq:** 546 (22.0%)
- **South Qikiqtaaluk:** 482 (19.4%)

Child Protection Intakes and Maltreatment Overview

Over the past year, the Family Wellness Division received a total of 2,485 request for service. Not all these calls or request were related to child protection concerns. Each call was carefully

reviewed through a screening process to determine the appropriate response. Of these, 1,657 calls were identified as involving child protection issues.

The chart below shows the proportion of maltreatment types reported at intake:

- **Neglect:** 44.0% of all maltreatment reports
- **Emotional maltreatment:** 40.0% of all maltreatment reports
- **Physical maltreatment:** 11.9% of all maltreatment reports
- **Sexual maltreatment:** 4.1% of all maltreatment reports

These results highlight the types of concerns most often identified when families first come to the attention of the Family Wellness Division. In 2024–2025, neglect was the most frequently reported form of maltreatment in Nunavut, followed closely by emotional maltreatment. While these are the most reported concerns, it is important to recognize that not all reports are verified or substantiated. Each report is reviewed carefully on its own merit, with an emphasis on understanding the full context of the situation.

Concerns related to neglect are often linked to the complex issues stemming from intergenerational trauma resulting from colonialism experienced by parents and caregivers. Increasing awareness and knowledge of these root causes is a critical step toward developing interventions that more effectively promote the safety and well-being of children and youth. Each report represents not just a concern, but an opportunity to respond in a way that reflects our shared commitment to safety, support, and well-being

Service Trends Over Time

In 2024–2025, service delivery patterns reflected both long-standing realities and ongoing efforts to strengthen culturally grounded, family-centered care across Nunavut. Tracking the balance between support services and protection-based court orders is a key trend, as it highlights how practice shifts and prevention efforts are influencing service pathways.

As of March 31, 2025, approximately 19.6% of children and youth were supported through voluntary pathways—Voluntary Support Agreements (VSA – 11.9%), Support Services Agreements (SSA – 5.5%), and Extended Service Agreements (ESA – 2.2%). These approaches prioritize partnership, cultural continuity, and proactive engagement. This steady use of voluntary agreements reflects an ongoing emphasis on supporting wellness and maintaining family unity.

Another 37.7% of children and youth were served under Plan of Care Agreements (POC), which represent a significant share of in-territory services and reflect the intent for collaborative planning between families and the Division.

By contrast, approximately 42.8% of children and youth were supported under protection-based court orders—including Permanent Custody Orders (PCO – 20.9%), Temporary Custody Orders (TCO – 14.8%), Supervision Orders (SO – 4.2%), and Interim Orders (2.9%). While these pathways remain essential to protecting children in high-risk situations, the trend we continue to monitor is whether improved prevention and early intervention can reduce reliance on protective interventions over time.

Over the past three years, the proportion of young people supported through Extended Service Agreements (ESA) has remained relatively stable, underscoring the consistent need for services that help young adults transition safely into independence and community life. Permanent Custody Orders (PCOs) continue to represent the largest share of protection-based involvement, while Plan of Care Agreements (POCs) and Voluntary Support Agreements (VSAs) together remain the most frequently used family-focused pathways.

As data tracking and reporting systems improve, future analysis will focus on whether prevention and family support efforts are shifting the overall service landscape—reducing high-risk interventions and increasing culturally grounded, strengths-based supports that keep families safely together.

Out-of-Territory Specialized Services

When children or youth require highly specialized medical, therapeutic, or developmental services that are not available in Nunavut, Out-of-Territory (OOT) specialized services are arranged to ensure access to the support they need. These placements are guided by a commitment to continuity of care, cultural safety, and family connection whenever possible.

Why Data Is Presented as a Point-in-time

A point-in-time count provides a snapshot of data at a specific moment, offering a clear picture of the situation as it stands on that day. For this report, the Out-of-Territory (OOT) service data is presented as of March 31, 2025. This timing was chosen to align with two significant developments: the implementation of the Matrix case management system and the establishment of the new Out-of-Territory Services team in January 2025.

While Matrix has already begun to improve the accuracy and reliability of reporting for in-territory cases, its use for OOT cases only started later in the fiscal year. Because of this, the current data reflects a point-in-time perspective rather than a full fiscal-year overview. Looking ahead, with Matrix becoming more fully integrated for OOT cases and with a dedicated team in place, the Division anticipates being able to provide more comprehensive fiscal-year OOT data in future years. This will support stronger trend analysis and more informed decision-making as reporting continues to improve.

Point-in-time (March 31, 2025)

Total receiving out of territory specialized services: 85 children and youth were receiving OOT specialized services under the Child and Family Services Act

Distribution of Out of Territory Placement by Age Group (2024-2025)

Age Group	Number and Percentage
0-5	15 (17.6%)
6-12	37 (43.5%)
13-18	33 (38.8%)

Legal Status of the 85 Children and Youth in OOT Placements:

- Permanent Custody Order (PCO): 41 (48.2%)
- Voluntary Support Agreement (VSA): 27 (31.8%)
- Temporary Custody Order (TCO): 7 (8.2%)
- Plan of Care Agreement (POC): 5 (5.9%)
- Support Services Agreement (SSA): 3 (3.5%)
- Supervision Order (SO): 1 (1.2%)
- Interim Order: 1 (1.2%)

Region of Origin for Children and Youth in OOT Placements

- Kivalliq Region – 27 (31.8%)
- South Qikiqtaaluk Region –25 (29.4 %)
- North Qikiqtaaluk Region –24 (28.2 %)
- Kitikmeot Region –9 (10.6%)

Reasons for Placement and Types of Care

The reasons children and youth are placed outside of Nunavut vary and often involve layered care needs that require multiple supports:

Reason	Number and Percentage	Additional Context
Medical (Foster or Group Care Placements)	50 (58.8%)	These placements support children and youth with complex medical needs—such as seizure disorders, post-surgical care, or long-term specialist involvement—that require caregivers with medical training or proximity to specialized health services not available in Nunavut.
Foster Family Placement	14 (16.4%)	Some children and youth relocate with foster families who move out of territory, ensuring continuity of attachment and care in stable, trusted relationships.
Group Care Living	7 (8.2%)	Group care is used when children and youth require highly structured environments and therapeutic supports to address behavioural, emotional, or developmental needs beyond what can be provided in a family-based setting.
Purpose of Adoption	12 (14.1%)	In many of these cases, long-term foster families outside of Nunavut develop strong and enduring bonds with children, and when reunification is not possible, adoption can be pursued to provide

		permanency and lifelong stability.
Short-Term Placement	2 (2.3%)	Short-term placements are used in urgent situations—such as during medical assessments, while waiting for specialized care, or during transitions between longer-term care arrangements.

These placements are not decisions made lightly—they represent necessary care pathways for families navigating situations that cannot be safely or effectively supported in territory.

Why This Matters

Out of Territory placements represent necessary pathways for children and youth whose care needs cannot be met within Nunavut. By strengthening data systems through Matrix and enhancing oversight with a dedicated OOT team, the Family Wellness Division is improving transparency, accountability, and collaboration with interjurisdictional partners. These steps ensure that children placed out of territory remain connected to family, culture, and community while receiving the specialized care services they require.

Out-of-Territory Specialized Services New Initiatives

This year, several system-wide initiatives were introduced or expanded to improve oversight, support, and cultural responsiveness for Nunavummiut receiving care out of territory:

■ Revised Licensing and Emergency Placement Standards

Launched in March 2025, new Out-of-Territory (OOT) Specialized Services and Emergency Placements standards were finalized and implemented to strengthen accountability and improve practice consistency across jurisdictions. The revised standards require that all in-territory supports be fully explored before an OOT placement is considered, making such placements a measure of last resort. They also establish clearer processes for application, approval, and monitoring, ensuring consistent documentation in Matrix and stronger interjurisdictional collaboration.

In emergency situations, the standards provide a structured pathway for urgent placements, requiring immediate safety assessments and supervisory approvals while mandating that all formal documentation and agreements follow within seven days. Both planned and emergency standards embed Inuit Societal Values and emphasize Family-Centred Wellness Planning, cultural support planning, and proactive follow-up with children, families, and Client Liaison Officers. Together, these updates ensure that every OOT placement decision is grounded in cultural safety, relational continuity, and long-term well-being, while reinforcing oversight and service integrity across all four regions.

■ Centralized Out-of-Territory Coordination Team

In January 2025, the Division launched a Centralized Out-of-Territory (OOT) Coordination Team to improve oversight and coordination of specialized placements for children, youth, and young adults receiving care outside Nunavut.

The new team is structured to ensure that every OOT placement is supported through consistent communication, data tracking, and care planning across all four regions. By consolidating coordination under a centralized team, the Division is better equipped to:

- Maintain **consistent oversight and documentation standards**
- Ensure **timely and culturally responsive case planning**
- Strengthen **partnerships with provincial and territorial partners**
- Support the assignment of **Client Liaison Officers (CLOs)** and **Courtesy Workers**
- Improve responsiveness to placement changes, family contact, and repatriation planning

This structural shift promotes more efficient workflows and enables more trauma-informed, relationship-centred service delivery. It also ensures that data is collected and analyzed uniformly, helping guide strategic decisions and identify gaps in service that can be addressed through future investments.

■ Expanded Interjurisdictional Agreements and Oversight

In 2024–2025, the Family Wellness Division made significant strides in improving oversight for children and youth placed outside of Nunavut. As of the March 31, 2025, standpoint, key improvements included:

- **100%** of OOT placements had an assigned **Client Liaison Officer (CLO)**.
- **85.8%** had a signed **Interprovincial Placement Agreement (IPA)** -remaining where in progress
- **97.6%** of cases were assigned a **Courtesy Worker** — with the small number not covered due to Ontario no longer assigning workers for VSA cases.

Between 2023–2024 and 2024–2025, the Division achieved major improvements in interjurisdictional oversight for children and youth placed outside of Nunavut. The proportion of signed Interprovincial Placement Agreements increased from 28% last year to 85.8% as of March 31, 2025, representing a threefold improvement in formal agreements that strengthen accountability and service continuity across jurisdictions. Similarly, the proportion of cases with assigned Courtesy Workers rose from 55% to 97.6%, ensuring that nearly all out-of-territory children and youth now benefit from active case oversight and local supervision support. These gains demonstrate the impact of the new Out-of-Territory Services team and the rollout of Matrix, both of which have contributed to stronger tracking, follow-up, and interprovincial collaboration.

■ Transition Planning

In 2024–2025, the Division initiated preliminary work on the development of a Reunification Framework and began designing Transition and Repatriation planning tools for use in Out-of-Territory (OOT) placements. These tools, once finalized, will become a required component of all new OOT applications, embedding long-term planning from the outset of placement.

Repatriation planning supports the eventual return of children and youth to their home communities, while transition planning ensures service continuity when return is not immediately possible. These plans will be developed in collaboration with the child or youth, their family, and regional teams, grounded in principles of cultural safety, relational continuity, and long-term well-being.

This work represents a significant shift toward more proactive, child- and community-centred care planning.

◆ Looking Ahead

Some out-of-territory specialized services will continue to be necessary, particularly for medical or therapeutic services that are not currently available in-territory. These include specialized supports for children and youth with complex health conditions, intensive behavioural needs, or safety requirements that require facility-based care in urban centres. These services remain essential to ensuring all children receive the care they need—regardless of location.

At the same time, the Family Wellness Division is committed to reducing reliance on out of territory specialized services by expanding local services that enable children and youth to remain connected to their home, culture, and family. This work includes ongoing engagement with Inuit organizations and community partners to identify future opportunities for in-territory resources and ensure that any new facilities or services reflect community needs, values, and cultural strengths.

The introduction of a centralized Out-of-Territory Coordination Team, improved data tracking through the Matrix case management system, and the ongoing development of tools such as the Cultural Continuity Plan Tracker and Repatriation and Transition Planning Frameworks are all strengthening the system's ability to understand, anticipate, and respond to emerging trends. These investments are helping to ensure that planning is not only evidence-informed but also guided by Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and trauma-informed practice.

As these tools continue to evolve, they will support more responsive, community-driven solutions—and help ensure that out-of-territory services remain available only when necessary and always aligned with the best interests and dignity of the child.

The Role of Community Social Services Workers in Nunavut

Community Social Services Workers (CSSWs) play a vital and challenging role in Nunavut's child and family services system. In many remote communities, a CSSW may be the sole practitioner, providing both professional expertise and a consistent, stabilizing presence. Their work is deeply connected to community life and guided by Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) Principles, trauma informed practice, and a strong commitment to cultural safety.

Each CSSW works in partnership with families at every stage of support—promoting healing, strengthening connections, and responding to complex needs with compassion and care.

From the **Intake and Assessment phases**, CSSWs gather information and engage with families to understand their unique experiences. This process often involves home visits, discussions, and collaboration with Elders and community members. Assessments are approached with humility, seeking to understand the root causes of concern—including intergenerational trauma and systemic barriers—rather than assigning blame.

In the **Case Planning phase**, CSSWs co-develop culturally respectful, strength-based plans with families. Supports may include counseling, respite, parenting programs, or community-led healing initiatives. Flexibility, relationship-building, and cultural knowledge are central to designing meaningful, relevant plans.

CSSWs often take on diverse responsibilities, such as transporting children, accompanying them to medical appointments, or arranging safe and appropriate placement when needed. In communities with limited infrastructure or no available placement options, CSSWs may coordinate care creatively, sometimes even arranging overnight support themselves. These efforts reflect a deep commitment to child safety and community connection, even under challenging conditions.

During **Implementation and Ongoing Support**, CSSWs maintain regular contact with families, adjusting services as needed while promoting dignity and autonomy. CSSWs engage in guided support, working with families to sustain progress, nurture cultural identity, and ensure safety through trusted relationships.

In the **Review and Closure phase**, CSSWs reflect with families on what has been achieved, identify any ongoing supports that may be helpful, and assess whether the goals of safety, connection, and well-being have been met. Case closure is not viewed as an endpoint, but as a transition—one that recognizes the progress made and supports the family in continuing their journey with confidence. It is a time to affirm the family's strengths, ensure culturally relevant community supports are in place, and honour the relationships built throughout the process. Closure planning is collaborative and forward-looking, grounded in shared understanding, mutual respect, and a commitment to continued well-being beyond formal involvement.

Why This Work Matters

The demands of child and family Service practice in Nunavut are profound. Many Communities Social Services Workers (CSSWs) operate in isolated environments with limited professional support, often remaining on call 24/7 to respond to urgent needs. They may be required to make critical decisions with few local resources, all while navigating the complex impacts of intergenerational trauma, systemic inequities, and the legacy of colonial harm.

Yet despite these challenges, CSSWs continue to show deep dedication, adaptability, and cultural humility. Their work extends far beyond meeting statutory responsibilities—it is about walking alongside families in partnership and supporting healing.

They help uphold the right of every Nunavummiut child and youth to grow up in safety, connection, and cultural strength. Through strengths-based practice, cultural safety, and trauma-informed care, CSSWs strive to honour the knowledge and values of the communities they serve. Their role reflects a commitment to relationship over restriction, dignity over surveillance, and belonging over judgment—core principles in Nunavut’s evolving approach to child and family wellness.

Training and Development: Building a Skilled, Culturally Grounded Workforce

Delivering child and family services in Nunavut requires not only technical knowledge, but deep cultural understanding, resilience, and compassion. The realities of intergenerational trauma, systemic barriers, and the unique contexts of Nunavut communities mean that ongoing training and professional development are essential to building a confident, culturally safe, and responsive workforce. This work is aligned with the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028), which emphasizes the importance of enhancing standards, training, and collaboration for effective child and family services.

In January 2025, the Family Wellness Division officially launched the **Training and Development Division**, marking a major step forward in establishing a structured, territory-wide training system. This new Division is responsible for coordinating learning across all roles, improving training access, and embedding **Inuit Qaujimaqatugangit (IQ) Principles**, trauma-informed care, and culturally safe practice into all program areas.

Key Milestones and Enhancements

The Family Wellness Division strengthened its territory-wide training system through a combination of infrastructure upgrades and program-specific innovations. These changes reflect a broader shift toward training that is culturally grounded, accessible, and responsive to the realities of frontline practice in Nunavut.

Infrastructure and Delivery Enhancements

- A **new tracking system** was introduced to monitor participation, identify gaps, and proactively support training needs across roles and regions.
- A **revised territory-wide training calendar** was launched to improve access and better align delivery with regional staffing realities.
- Ongoing collaboration with the **Inuit Societal Values team** led to expanded cultural safety training, wellness supports, and values-based learning modules.

Program and Content Innovations

- **Matrix Training** (Family Wellness Integrated Information System – FWIIS) was delivered across all four regions to support consistent documentation and case planning.
- **Family Wellness training** was offered both online and in person, introducing CSSWs and frontline staff to culturally respectful practice in Nunavut.
- **Anti-Racism and Discrimination Training Module** was in development.
- A **specialized workshop for non-Inuit fosters parents** caring for Inuit children was in development to support culturally safe caregiving.
- A **specialized workshop specifically for Inuit families who are interested to become extended foster family** was in development.

These innovations reflect the Division’s continued commitment to decolonialized learning, relationship-centered practice, and **Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) integration**.

Training Participation Overview (2024–2025)

A total of **298 training participants** were recorded across Nunavut in 2024–2025. This figure reflects total attendance across all sessions and may include individuals who participated in more than one training program. Compared to the previous fiscal year, participation increased significantly, particularly in newly launched or expanded training programs.

As of March 2025, 89% of Family Wellness staff have completed at least one training session since the new system’s rollout in October 2024.

Training Program	Participants	Sessions
Matrix Training	145	17
Family Wellness Training (online)	65	Online-self-paced modules
Family Wellness Training (In-Person)	35	5
StepWise Interviewing	27	4
Supervisors/Manager Training	9	3
Receptionist/ Clerk Interpreter Training	4	1
Family Resource Worker Training	6	1
Client Liaison Officer Training	7	1

Professional Learning Networks

The Family Wellness Division remained an active member of **Practice and Research Together (PART)**. Through this partnership, staff gained access to national webinars, peer-to-peer learning, and evidence-informed practice tools, further enhancing the learning culture across the territory.

Evolving Access and Delivery Models

To improve flexibility and accessibility, the Division introduced a **blended learning model**, combining online self-paced modules with live, facilitator-led sessions. This approach supports various learning styles and reduces barriers to participation, especially in remote locations.

Courses are now available in multiple formats, including:

- **Self-paced e-learning** for foundational knowledge
- **Live online sessions** for skills application and discussion

- **In-person workshops** for experiential, land-based learning where possible

Looking Ahead

Training demand is expected to grow in 2025–2026, particularly in areas such as Matrix documentation, cultural safety, and competency-based onboarding. Continued investments in culturally grounded content, flexible delivery models, and cultural advisors’ involvement will remain priorities to ensure all staff feel equipped, supported, and connected to the values that shape child and family services in Nunavut. As part of these efforts, the Training and Development team has reached out to the Director of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit at the Department of Culture and Heritage to support the establishment of an Inuit Working Group. Additionally, the development of a comprehensive Training Framework is currently underway to strengthen future training initiatives.

These actions are helping ensure that staff training keeps pace with new service standards and that policies, tools, and quality assurance measures are embedded into everyday practice. They are also aligned with the vision of the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028), which emphasizes the importance of strong standards, expanded cultural and professional training, and collaboration to improve child and family services.

SECTION 2
PROTECTION OF
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Protecting Children and Youth from Abuse and Neglect

Every child and youth in Nunavut has the right to grow up in safety, belonging and with cultural connection. Protecting this right is a shared responsibility—one that involves not only reporting risks when they are present, but also responding with care, respect, and dignity

The **Child Abuse and Neglect Response Agreement (CANRA)** remain a foundational tool in Nunavut’s child and youth protection system. Building on the collaborative work of the Sursuniit Ikajuqtigiit working group in 2023, CANRA was revised to strengthen coordination, community responsiveness, and culturally safe practices. In February 2024, Cabinet formally approved its renewal, reaffirming its importance in guiding how Family Wellness staff, community partners, and the public work together to protect Nunavummiut children and youth.

Duty to Report Under Child and Family Services Act

Under Section 8 of the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA), the duty to report suspected child abuse and neglect is a shared responsibility across Nunavut. This obligation recognizes the importance of collective care in identifying children and youth who may be at risk of harm. But reporting is only one part of the responsibility. As community members, service providers, and caregivers, we also hold a duty to offer meaningful support—to walk alongside families, to build on existing relationships and strengths, and to uphold each child’s right to safety, connection, and cultural identity.

Children and youth who may be experiencing harm are encouraged to speak with a Community Social Services Worker (CSSW) or another trusted adult. The CFSA guides CSSWs in their role to assess safety concerns, take protective steps when needed, and coordinate supports grounded in cultural safety and trauma-informed practice.

The Family Wellness Division holds a duty to respond with compassion, respect, and accountability when reports of child abuse and neglect are received. Every report must be met with meaningful supports that prioritize healing, family preservation, and cultural identity. This is about more than process—it is about ensuring children are never seen as cases or files, but as young people with lives and futures that matter. This includes ensuring that interventions are grounded in **Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles** and guided by a vision of dignity, belonging, and long-term well-being.

Together, the duty to report and the duty to support reflect a shared commitment to protecting children and youth—not only by addressing risks, but by keeping their best interests at the centre of all we do. The children of Nunavut are at the heart of our work, and their safety and well-being remain our constant priority.

For legislative framework (CFSA/Federal Act), values, and all service statistics (intake counts, maltreatment types, service type distributions), please see Section 1

 **Shared Responsibility: Duty to Report and Duty to Support**

In Nunavut, we all share the responsibility to not only report harm, but to respond with care, support, and a focus on keeping children safe, and connected to their culture.

Child or Youth Who Needs Protection Under Child and Family Services Act

According to Section 7(3) of the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA), a child or youth may need protection if they have experienced, or are at substantial risk of experiencing, any of the following forms of harm and/or maltreatment.

Physical Harm

Physical harm inflicted or caused by a caregiver's actions, or by their inability or unwillingness to supervise, protect, or care for the child adequately.

Sexual Harm, Exploitation or Unsafe Environments

Sexual abuse, sexual exploitation including exposure to child pornography, or situations where a caregiver knew or should have known the child was at risk of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and failed to protect them. This can include repeated exposure to individuals who pose a risk of sexual abuse or exploitation.

Emotional Harm

Evidence of severe anxiety, depression, aggression, withdrawal, or other serious behaviours where caregivers are unable or unwilling to seek supports.

Neglect and Failure to Provide Basic Needs

A child's development or safety is jeopardized due to unmet needs, such as nutrition, supervision, or safe shelter—this can include caregiver unavailability, unwillingness, or inability to provide care.

Failure to Obtain Health Services

When a child needs medical care or support for their physical, emotional, or developmental health, and their caregiver is unwilling, unable, or not available to provide or consent to that care.

Caregiver-Related Concerns

A caregiver's substance use, or mental illness result in an inability or unwillingness to care for the child safely.

Exposure to Family Violence or Unsafe Environments

Including repeated exposure to family violence.

Understanding Socio-Economic Contexts and Neglect

Not all unmet needs are indicative of abuse or neglect by parents or caregivers. Frequently, factors such as poverty, food insecurity, and inadequate housing are the primary underlying causes. It is imperative within child and family services to carefully distinguish between harm resulting from caregiver actions and hardships arising from broader systemic conditions.

Socio-economic hardship is not evidence of maltreatment under the Child and Family Services Act. These situations reflect broader inequities in access to basic resources. In such cases, the appropriate response is not protection intervention, but rather the provision of practical, community-driven supports to strengthen the family's well-being and stability.

Assessments must treat all families fairly and respectfully, considering their culture and the ways colonization and systemic barriers still affect the life of people in Nunavut. For example, workers should consider whether challenges like limited housing or food insecurity are linked to systemic issues rather than caregiver neglect.

How Protection Reports Are Assessed

When a report of suspected abuse or neglect is received, the assigned Community Social Services Worker (CSSW) gathers relevant referral information, consults with their supervisor, and applies structured assessment tools to guide next steps.

Community Family Wellness Offices team uses the **Structured Decision Making® (SDM®) Screening and Response Priority Assessment** tool to determine whether:

- An investigation is required,
- Further intervention is needed, or
- No further action is necessary.

In situations requiring a protection response, the **SDM® Risk Assessment** tool is used in consultation with the family to evaluate potential risks and inform case planning.

Standardized assessments are essential to ensure consistency and fairness when reviewing protection concerns. Without them, decisions can be influenced by personal perspectives, experiences, and cultural viewpoints, which vary from person to person. Tools like the SDM® system provide a common, trauma informed, and culturally respectful framework so that decisions are guided by evidence and shared standards rather than individual opinion or bias.

The assessment tools used in Nunavut have been adapted to reflect Inuit societal values and the realities of northern communities. They are designed to promote safety while also respecting family strengths, community context, and cultural continuity. A consistent, culturally grounded approach helps ensure that every report is assessed with the same level of care, accountability, and respect across the territory.

Apprehension and Return of a Child

When is a child apprehended?

Under the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA), a child may be taken into protective care if there are reasonable grounds to believe that their immediate safety or well-being is at risk. These situations may require protective intervention to prevent further harm and ensure the child's security. This risk may arise from situations involving:

- Abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional),
- Neglect,
- Exposure to harmful environments, or
- Other circumstances that pose danger to the child.

The specific legal criteria are outlined in Section 7(3) (a) to (r) of the CFSA and are used to guide protection decisions with care, cultural sensitivity and a focus on the child's best interest.

Who is responsible for making this decision?

Community Social Services Workers (CSSWs) and designated authorities such as law enforcement may be involved in the decision to bring a child or a youth into care when urgent protection is needed. These decisions are informed by structured risk assessment tools, consultation with supervisors, and the legal framework set out in the CFSA.

The use of a standardized and culturally adapted assessment process ensures that the decision is made carefully, objectively, and with respect for the child's cultural and family context. Efforts are made to engage extended family, or community supports before a child or youth is brought into care.

Return of the Child

Return to Family and Community: Reunification as a Core Value

Section 12 of the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) affirm that, whenever it is safe and appropriate, efforts must focus on supporting children and youth to return to their families and home communities. When safe, reunification remains the central pathway for care—grounded not just in policy and legislation, but in Inuit values that honour family and community connection, healing, and cultural identity.

This principle is further reinforced by the Federal Act, which affirms the importance of preserving a child's cultural identity and family connections. The Act establishes that services must prioritize placement with family or within the child's Indigenous community whenever possible, and support the child's language, culture, and sense of belonging.

Reunification planning involves:

- Holistic assessments of family strengths, needs, and circumstances;
- Collaborative planning with caregivers, service providers, and extended family; and
- Coordinated supports to address the concerns that led to the apprehension.

Community-Based Supports and Relational Healing

The reunification is supported through culturally relevant and community-led services such as parenting programs, counselling, substance use supports, and land-based wellness initiatives. These resources help families regain stability and create safe, supportive environments where children can grow and thrive.

Guided by the CFSA, collaboration with extended family, Elders, and community members is recognized as vital to building long-term safety, identity, and relational continuity. These connections strengthen a child's sense of belonging and support lasting stability through meaningful relationships and cultural grounding.

Cultural and Familial Considerations

1. Inuit Societal Values (ISV):

Inuit Societal Values are central to child protection decisions across Nunavut, ensuring cultural humility and respect for Inuit knowledge, traditions, and community input. Embedding these values in every step of the process supports interventions that honour a child's cultural identity and promote long-term well-being.

2. Family Preservation:

A core goal of Nunavut's child and family services approach is to maintain strong familial and community connections. The CFSA encourages efforts that keep children safely within their family networks whenever possible, including with extended family members. Culturally grounded practices are embedded in planning and service delivery to support stability, belonging, and continuity for the child.

In summary, Child protection in Nunavut is built on a culturally grounded approach that safeguards children while strengthening family ties, Inuit identity, and community values. This commitment to cultural continuity and respectful decision-making is reflected in the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA).

This approach is aligned with the Federal Act, which emphasizes keeping Indigenous children connected to their families, cultures, and communities as a matter of both law and cultural continuity.

◆ How Federal and Territorial Laws Work Together

Both the *Child and Family Services Act (CFSA)* and the *Federal Act* emphasize:

- Keeping children connected to their families and communities
- Prioritizing cultural identity, language, and belonging
- Supporting family reunification whenever it is safe and possible

Plan of Care Committee and Agreement

The Plan of Care Committee and Agreement is a collaborative process under the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) that centers children, youth, and families in developing a plan for care. This approach ensures that services are not only responsive to safety and developmental needs, but also uphold a child's cultural identity, connections, and community relationships.

Under Section 14 of the CFSA, clear steps are laid out for initiating a Plan of Care Committee. These include the requirement for the Child Protection Worker to provide written notice to the child's legal guardian(s), and to the child themselves if they are 12 years or older. These steps ensure families are informed, included, and respected in decisions that affect their lives.

The Plan of Care Committee brings together people who know and support the child. As outlined in Section 15, this may include:

- Child Protection Workers
- Child and Family Services Committee Members
- Service providers who are part of the child's circle of care

Elders and extended family members may also participate, reflecting the importance of community guidance and support.

The Committee is responsible for building a plan that reflects the whole child well being—their strengths, their needs, and their goals. As outlined in Section 19, this includes:

- Developing care plans that are tailored to each child or youth
- Addressing areas such as housing, education, family access, healing supports, and recreation
- Coordinating appropriate services to support the child and family

The CFSA also sets out procedures for reviewing, renewing, or closing Plan of Care Agreements under Sections 20, 21, and 22, depending on the child's safety and evolving circumstances. These mechanisms help ensure that plans are continuously responsive, grounded in Inuit societal values, and focused on long-term well-being.

Temporary Custody Orders and Permanent Custody Orders

In some circumstances, children and youth may need to live away from their family for an extended period—particularly when families are navigating complex challenges that cannot be immediately resolved through available supports and services.

When safety concerns persist despite intervention, the child may be placed in the temporary or permanent care and custody of the Statutory Director under the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA). These decisions are never made lightly and are guided by a commitment to the safety, cultural identity, and holistic well-being of each child.

Children and youth in temporary or permanent care are placed with alternative caregivers. Placement decisions are guided by the principle of maintaining connection to family, extended kin, community, and culture. Whenever possible, Community Social Services Workers (CSSWs) prioritize placement with extended family or kin and explore community-based options that allow for cultural continuity and belonging.

Out-of-home placements are intended to provide safety, stability, nurturing care, and culturally safe support—never to sever relationships or disconnect children from their roots. Whenever safe and appropriate, reunification with family is the preferred goal, guided by trauma informed, strengths-based practice and **Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) values**.

When reunification is not possible, children and youth may find long term care with foster caregivers, extended family, or through adoption, depending on what best meets their individual needs and supports their sense of belonging.

✦ More information on adoption as a permanency option can be found in Section 3: Adoptions.

For overall counts and distributions by service type (e.g., % PCO, % TCO), see Section 1.

SECTION 3

ADOPTIONS

Overview of the Nunavut Adoption Act and the Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act

In Nunavut, two distinct legal pathways support adoption: the **Nunavut Adoption Act** and the **Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act (ACARA)**. Together, these frameworks recognize the importance of preserving Inuit customs while ensuring child safety, transparency, and the best interests of the child.

The **Nunavut Adoption Act**, established in 1998, sets out the legal procedures for adopting a child or youth within the territory. It outlines eligibility, consent, placement, and legal implications of adoption, ensuring that every child's adoption process is safe, fair, and centered on their well-being.

The **Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act (ACARA)**, introduced in 1995, honors long-standing Indigenous practices by recognizing custom adoptions as valid and binding. Aboriginal custom adoption allows Indigenous families to formalize adoptions according to cultural traditions and kinship networks, without the formal legal processes required under other legislation. These practices have existed for generations and remain vital to community wellness and child development.

Understanding Adoption Options in Nunavut

In Nunavut, there are **five types of adoption**, each with its own legal process and responsibilities.

Custom Adoption

Custom Adoption is the **most common type of adoption** in Nunavut. It is a long-standing Inuit practice based on **traditional laws, kinship ties, and community values**. These adoptions are formally recognized through the Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act (ACARA).

- Custom Adoptions are facilitated by **Custom Adoption Commissioners**, nominated by Indigenous governments or local authorities and appointed by the Minister of Health and Social Services.
- Adoption Commissioners review and confirm the adoption according to local customary practices.
- These adoptions are **not managed by the territorial government, and no court application is needed** through the Family Wellness Division.
- Once confirmed, the adoption is legally registered with the **Nunavut Court of Justice**.

Departmental Adoption

Departmental adoption may be considered when a child or youth is already in the permanent care and custody of the Director of Child and Family Services under the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA), and adoption is determined to be in the child's best interests after all other options have been fully explored.

Adoption Following Protective Intervention

This applies when a child or youth has entered the care of the Director due to protection concerns, and the court has determined that reunification is not in the child's best interest.

- The court places the child in the permanent care of the Director of Child and Family Services when reunification is no longer considered to be in the child's best interest.
- Once all reunification efforts have been exhausted and adoption is determined to be in the child's best interest, the Family Wellness Division may proceed with permanency planning through adoption.
- As part of this process, the Family Wellness Division notifies the child's Regional Inuit Association, ensures the child consent to the adoption placement if 12 or older, and notifies birth parents (where appropriate) to discuss adoption planning and openness agreements.

Voluntary Surrender

In some situations, birth parents may decide at birth to place their child for adoption through the Director of Child and Family Services.

- In these situations, the Family Wellness Division must obtain a court order placing the child in the permanent care of the Director before proceeding with adoption planning.
- Birth parents must provide informed consent, and the Indigenous government or cultural organization, must also be notified and consulted when applicable.
- The child may be temporarily placed in a foster home until an adoption match is made with an adoptive family approved through the Nunavut Adoption Program.

In both instances, adoption is pursued only when it is in the best interests of the child, and all cultural, legal, and emotional factors are considered in collaboration with the child (where age-appropriate) and relevant community supports.

Protecting Cultural Connection in Departmental Adoptions

- Children age 12 and over must consent to their adoption under the Nunavut Adoption Act
- Birth parents are notified once an adoption plan is underway, when appropriate
- The child's Regional Inuit Association is formally notified and given opportunity to respond
- Since the Federal Act came into effect in 2020, adoption planning emphasizes:
 - Early Indigenous organization involvement
 - Placement within Nunavut
 - Prioritization of Indigenous families

Under current Nunavut practice, Regional Inuit Associations (RIAs) or other applicable Indigenous organization are notified when an adoption placement is being proposed for a child in permanent care and are invited to respond before placement proceeds. This reflects a commitment to ensuring culturally appropriate permanency options for Indigenous children and youth.

Private Adoption

Private Adoptions are arranged directly between birth families and adoptive families, with the involvement of the Adoption Program. It can occur within Nunavut or out of territory

- These adoptions are typically processed through the Nunavut Court of Justice and must follow all legal requirements under the Nunavut Adoption Act.
- The Family Wellness Division provides support to both parties to ensure the process is legally compliant and child centered.
- Private adoption requires legal documentation and consent but does not involve foster care or court orders by the Director.

Stepparent Adoption

Stepparent Adoption involves a non-biological parent (more frequently a stepparent or common-law partner) adopting the child or youth of their spouse.

- Follows similar procedures to private adoptions with respect to assessments and legal safeguards.
- The Family Wellness Division ensures that all required legal consents are obtained and that the placement promotes safety and stability.

Intercountry Adoption

Intercountry Adoptions involve the adoption of a child from another country by Nunavut residents.

- These adoptions are governed by the Intercountry Adoption (Hague Convention) Act and must meet both territorial and international legal standards.
- While less common, the Nunavut Adoption Program assists families with the process, including liaison with federal authorities and overseas adoption agencies.
- The Family Wellness Headquarter also participates in regular national discussions on intercountry adoption issues.

Adoption Oversight in Nunavut

While **five types of adoption are recognized**, only four falls under the direct oversight of the **Family Wellness Division**:

- Departmental Adoptions
- Private Adoptions
- Stepparent Adoptions
- Intercountry Adoptions

These are coordinated through the **Nunavut Adoption Program**, which ensures legal compliance and puts the best interests of the child at the centre of every decision.

Custom Adoptions are overseen independently by **Custom Adoption Commissioners** and are not managed by the Family Wellness Division.

Every child and youth has the right to grow, belong, and be cared for within a family environment. Adoption is one of the ways to help meet a child's or youth's need for lifelong connection and stability. Through adoption, children and youth can gain lasting benefits that support their health, well-being, and development— while honouring and protecting their cultural identity, language, and traditions, and ensuring they maintain meaningful connections to their home community, extended family, and social networks.

This work is aligned with the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028), which emphasizes the importance of strengthening adoption, foster care, and kinship services. Oversight of departmental, private, stepparent, and intercountry adoptions reflects the Division's commitment to safe, accountable, and culturally grounded processes that ensure children experience permanency and stability.

By maintaining strong adoption standards, enhancing collaboration with Custom Adoption Commissioners, and respecting Inuit kinship traditions, the Division is strengthening permanency planning and family supports so that children's well-being, identity, and belonging remain at the centre of care.

Adoption Program and Statistical Data

Department and Private Adoptions

In 2024–2025, the Family Wellness Division was responsible for the Nunavut Adoption Program, ensuring it operated in alignment with the Nunavut Adoption Act. The program is designed to guide and support families through every stage of the adoption journey—from application to placement and legal finalization—with a core focus on ensuring children and youth are connected to safe, stable, and lifelong family relationships. Central to this approach is a commitment to honouring each child’s cultural identity, community ties, and extended family connections.

To enhance permanency planning and reduce delays, a dedicated adoption team was established within the Family Wellness Headquarter to provide direct support across all regions. In 2025, new onboarding and support strategies were introduced for Community Social Services Workers (CSSWs) engaged in adoption-related work. These included case consultations, mentorship opportunities, and refresher training designed to strengthen practice and improve outcomes for children and families. The adoption team also expanded its staffing capacity to support regional teams and to prioritize the identification of long-term permanency options for children receiving services.

The following figures summarize adoption activity either *administered* (Footnote 1) or *granted* (Footnote 2), during the 2024–2025 reporting period, across private, stepparent, departmental, and intercountry adoptions.

Private and Stepparent Adoptions

Private and Stepparent Adoptions are arranged independently between birth parent(s) and adoptive parent(s).

67 total private and stepparent adoptions were **administered**, including:

- **66** private adoptions
 - 12 in-territory
 - 54 out-of-territory
- **1** stepparent adoptions
 - 1 in-territory
 - 0 out-of-territory

19 private and stepparent adoption orders were **granted**, including:

- **19** private adoption orders
 - 5 in-territory
 - 14 out-of-territory
- **0** stepparent adoption orders

Departmental Adoptions

Departmental Adoptions are processed when a child being adopted is in the permanent care and custody of the Director of Child and Family Services under a court order.

- 7 Departmental Adoptions were **administered**, representing cases in which legal and administrative steps were actively managed by the Division during the year.
- 2 Departmental Adoption Orders were **granted**, meaning the court formally approved the adoption and transferred full parental rights to the adoptive parent(s).
 - 2 in-territory (both children were adopted by families residing in the South Qikiqtaniq region)

Intercountry Adoptions

Intercountry Adoptions involve Canada (Nunavut) and a second country. All Intercountry Adoptions are governed by the *Intercountry Adoption (Hague Convention) Act*. Although these adoptions are less common in Nunavut, the Nunavut Adoption Program receives inquiries and assists families in completing these adoptions.

- In 2024–2025, no applications were received from Nunavut families, and no intercountry adoptions were finalized.

In contrast to departmental or intercountry adoptions, private adoptions represented a significant portion of those managed by the Nunavut Adoption Program in 2024–2025. Of the 19 private adoption orders granted, the majority (74%) involved adoptive families residing outside the territory. Similarly, of the 67 private adoptions administered during the year, 54 (81%) involved out-of-territory adoptive families.

Private adoptions are arranged directly between birth families and adoptive families, with the Nunavut Adoption Program providing support to ensure that all legal requirements are met under the Nunavut Adoption Act. While the Department does not initiate or match families in private adoptions, it plays an important role in facilitating a child-centred, legally compliant, and culturally informed process.

Given the high proportion of private adoptions involving out-of-territory placements, the Family Wellness Division is committed to a deeper analysis and ongoing review of these adoption trends. While all adoptions are intended to provide children with safe and supportive homes, private adoptions in Nunavut must be approached with care, as they can carry the risk of children becoming disconnected from their Inuit culture, language, and community ties. It is therefore important to closely examine the circumstances surrounding out-of-territory placements to ensure that adoption processes reflect the values of cultural continuity, community connection, and the long-term well-being of children and youth in Nunavut.

Building on this commitment, the Division is working toward formalizing cultural safeguard practices within the adoption process. These include ensuring that adoptive parents—particularly those residing outside the territory—receive information on Inuit culture, language, and community values; encouraging voluntary cultural openness agreements between birth and adoptive families; and strengthening post-adoption follow-up protocols to maintain connections where possible.

These measures reflect the Division’s policy commitment to uphold children’s right to cultural identity and belonging, consistent with Inuit societal values and the Federal Act. Through continued monitoring, cross-jurisdictional collaboration, and culturally informed follow-up, the Division seeks to ensure that every adoption—whether in or out of territory—supports the lifelong connection of Inuit children to their heritage, families, and communities.

Footnote 1: In the context of adoptions, the distinction between an adoption being administered and an adoption order being received and granted relates to different stages of the legal and administrative process. Administered refers to the overall handling and management of the adoption case, including the initial application, preparation of legal documents, and steps taken to ensure the adoption meets all legal requirements. It encompasses the full scope of work from intake to completion.

Footnote 2: An adoption order is considered granted when the court has formally reviewed and approved the adoption, legally transferring parental rights to the adoptive parent(s). Until that point, the adoption remains in the administered stage.

Registered Inuit Custom Adoptions

Inuit Custom Adoption is a long-standing practice rooted in Inuit values of kinship, family connection, and collective responsibility. These adoptions reflect traditional Inuit law and are not governed by the statutory procedures of the Nunavut Adoption Act. Instead, they are formally recognized and registered through the Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act (ACARA).

Custom Adoptions continue to be the most common form of adoption in Nunavut. This longstanding practice reflects the strength of Inuit cultural traditions, and the importance placed on ensuring children remain connected to their extended families, communities, and cultural identity.

In 2024–2025, Custom Adoptions accounted for approximately 86% of all adoptions completed in the territory, reflecting the continued importance of Inuit customary law, kinship care, and community-based child-rearing practices across the territory.

Custom Adoptions are managed by Custom Adoption Commissioners, who are appointed by the Minister of Health and Social Services for three-year terms. Any Nunavut Land Claim Beneficiary may apply to serve as a Commissioner. As part of the application process, applicants are required to provide a letter of support from their local hamlet or regional Inuit association representative.

While the Minister appoints these individuals, the Family Wellness Division does not guide or influence the registration process. Its role is to support Commissioners, including by providing compensation for the work they complete.

Once a Custom Adoption is confirmed, the Commissioner submits the necessary documentation to the Nunavut Court of Justice to ensure the adoption is legally recognized. This formal registration allows children to access key rights and entitlements, including birth registration, health care, and inheritance.

In 2024–2025:

- **129** Custom Adoptions were registered in the Nunavut Court of Justice.
- **12** Custom Adoption Commissioners were appointed in Nunavut.
- Last training for Custom Adoption Commissioners occurred in June 2023 with 9 participants in attendance. Plans for the next training are underway, with the goal of offering it in the next fiscal year (2025-2026).

This year, a review of Custom Adoption training and supports for Commissioners was launched to strengthen alignment with Inuit cultural practices and improve consistency in documentation and record keeping. While the Family Wellness Division does not oversee or direct the Custom Adoption process, it recognizes the importance of ensuring Commissioners are well-supported in fulfilling their responsibilities. Providing training, resources, and compensation is one way the Division honours the critical role Commissioners play in sustaining Inuit child-rearing traditions and community wellness.

Upholding Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ) in Adoption Practices

In alignment with Inuuqatigiitsiarniq and Piliriqatigiinniq—core IQ Principles that emphasize respect, working together for the common good, and nurturing healthy relationships—the Adoption Program continues to support Nunavut families through culturally responsive and community-informed practices.

A central goal of the program is to ensure that adoption decisions are not only in the best interests of the child but also grounded in respect for Inuit identity, cultural heritage, and family ties. This includes recognizing that children are often cared for not just by their immediate parents, but by a wide circle of extended family and community members—and that these caregiving relationships are a vital part of Inuit culture and child-rearing.

Maintaining a child’s connection to their language, culture, and community remains a core priority in all adoption-related planning. Wherever possible, the program seeks to uphold family continuity and cultural belonging, recognizing these as protective and essential to a child’s long-term well-being and identity formation.

The Role of Community Social Services Workers (CSSWs) in Adoption and Cultural Preservation

Community Social Services Workers (CSSWs) play an essential role in supporting children, youth, and families throughout the adoption journey. Whether working with birth parents, extended family, or prospective adoptive families, CSSWs help navigate the process with care, ensuring each child’s unique needs are prioritized.

To support CSSWs in this role, the Adoption Program delivered targeted training sessions and informational presentations across the territory. These learning opportunities were integrated into the CSSW Core Training curriculum and reinforced through ongoing regional mentorship and consultation. Emphasis was placed on understanding cultural considerations in permanency planning, supporting family-led decision-making, and engaging with Inuit child-rearing practices.

Efforts are made at every stage to ensure that adoption placements:

- Honour the child’s cultural background and community ties;
- Support lifelong connections to Inuit identity, including language and traditional knowledge;
- Reflect the collective values of safety, belonging, and well-being.

Legislative Collaboration and Policy Renewal

In 2024–2025, the Family Wellness Headquarter worked in collaboration with **Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI)** to support the development of a new **Policy Intention Paper (PIP)**

related to the future modernization of the **Nunavut Adoption Act** and **Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act (ACARA)**.

This work is part of broader legislative renewal efforts initiated in 2024–2025, which include proposed updates to the Child and Family Services Act, Adoption Act, and ACARA. These modernization efforts are being guided by community consultation and cultural alignment, with a focus on strengthening the integrity and responsiveness of adoption-related laws in Nunavut.

By centering Inuit knowledge, lived experiences, and legal traditions within these reforms, the Family Wellness Headquarter aims to ensure that future adoption legislation reflects the values and realities of the communities it serves, and that children and youth can grow up with a strong sense of identity, belonging, and connection.

Departmental Adoption Subsidy Program

The Departmental Adoption Subsidy Program provides targeted financial assistance to support families who adopt children from the Permanent Custody of the Director of Child and Family Services. The program is designed to help offset the ongoing costs associated with meeting the needs of children whose circumstances require additional resources, ensuring their stability and well-being in permanent family placements.

The subsidy aims to complement, rather than replace, existing government and community supports. Funding may assist with expenses related to the child's medical care, therapeutic interventions, educational needs, and other essential supports. It can also contribute to opportunities that strengthen a child's sense of identity and belonging, including maintaining meaningful connections to their culture, language, and community.

While the program primarily serves adoptive families residing in Nunavut, families living outside the territory may also be eligible following a comprehensive assessment and approval process. Eligibility is based on several factors, including the child's age, identified or diagnosed needs (such as medical, developmental, emotional, behavioural, or educational challenges), and the family's demonstrated financial need related to ongoing care.

In many cases, the subsidy removes significant financial barriers that could otherwise prevent an adoption from proceeding. When a child is in the permanent care of the Director, the Division assumes responsibility for meeting the child's full range of needs, including any specialized services or supports. Without a subsidy, these costs may shift entirely to the adoptive family, which can be a determining factor in whether adoption is possible. By continuing to provide necessary supports after adoption, the program ensures that children receive consistent care, and families are equipped to meet their needs over the long term.

In 2024–2025, the program provided subsidies to **13 families**, supporting a total of **19 children**. Some families had adopted multiple children and received separate subsidy agreements for each child.

The Departmental Adoption Subsidy Program reflects the Division's commitment to permanency planning that places the child's best interests at the centre, removes barriers to adoption, sustains critical supports, and strengthens families' ability to provide safe, stable, and nurturing homes.

Scope of the Adoption Subsidy Program

The Adoption Subsidy Program applies only to children adopted from the Permanent Custody of the Director of Child and Family Services. The subsidy's purpose is to remove financial barriers to permanency for children in the Director's permanent care. Other adoption types—including custom adoption—are not eligible for this subsidy program. Families pursuing custom adoptions who need support may access services through a Voluntary Services Agreement (VSA).

SECTION 4

FAMILY WELLNESS RESOURCES

By strengthening family wellness resources, the Family Wellness Division aims to achieve the following goals:

■ Enhanced well-being of families, children, and communities in Nunavut.

Services are grounded in prevention, **cultural continuity**, and holistic supports that honour Inuit values and promote **healing, resilience, and family strength**.

■ A healthy, supported, and confident team of professionals providing care across the territory.

Investments in training, **wellness**, and cross-system collaboration ensure staff are **equipped, connected, and culturally informed** in their work with Nunavummiut.

■ Children's best interests, safety, and development are supported through every stage of service.

The Division prioritizes timely, **relational, and culturally meaningful** responses that uphold each child's dignity and contribute to **lifelong wellness**.

■ The distinct rights and best interests of Inuit children are respected and upheld.

Programs honour the central role of **kinship, community, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, and traditional knowledge** in guiding care decisions and supporting belonging.

Placement Resources in Nunavut

Strong family, community, and cultural ties are foundational to the health and well-being of children and youth. When children must receive care outside of their home, the Family Wellness Division works in close partnership with families and communities to identify safe, supportive placement options that honour a child's identity, maintain important relationships, and support long-term connection and belonging. This approach is aligned with the vision of the Iłagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028), which highlights the importance of strengthening adoption, foster care, and kinship services.

Whenever possible, children are supported to remain in their home community and to stay connected with familiar caregivers, extended family, and cultural networks. These relationships provide a sense of belonging and stability during what can be a difficult and disruptive time in a child's life.

The following approach guides placement practice across the territory and reflects the importance of keeping children connected to their families, culture, and home communities. Community Social Services Workers (CSSWs) work collaboratively with families to explore care options in a way that prioritizes stability, safety, and cultural belonging. Whenever possible, efforts are made to identify placement options in the following order of priority:

- **Another parent or guardian**, where this is safe and appropriate.
- **Extended family members** who reside in the child's home community, or elsewhere in Nunavut.
- **Individuals who share a cultural, community, or linguistic connection** with the child, especially within Inuit communities.
- **Other adults known to the child or family**, who can provide a culturally safe and supportive environment.
- **Approved foster families, group homes, or specialized placement resources**, where no other options are available.

This practice reflects the **values of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit** and the principle that children thrive when they are surrounded by people who know and care for them. Outreach to extended family and familiar caregivers is prioritized early in the process, and CSSWs work to support placements that allow children to maintain their language, traditions, and identity.

In 2024–2025, Nunavut had approximately 246 out-of-home resources, with approximately **29.3%** involving extended family or known caregivers through extended and provisional foster homes. This reflects the Division's continued commitment to placing children with familiar, trusted adults to preserve cultural continuity and relational care.

As of March 31, 2025, a total of 245 children and youth were living in foster care placements across Nunavut. This included 140 (57.1%) placed in extended family or provisional foster homes and 105 (42.9%) placed in regular foster homes. In addition, 10 children and youth were placed in residential group care facilities. Most children in foster care as of March 31, 2025,

were placed with extended family members, reflecting the Division’s commitment to preserving kinship, cultural continuity, and trusted relationships whenever possible. While the number of resources reflects overall capacity, these figures capture the actual number of children placed in care at a specific point in time.

In-Territory Placement Resources

Overview of Children and Youth in Placement Resources (2024–2025)

Placement services in Nunavut play a vital role in ensuring that children and youth have access to safe, supportive, and culturally appropriate care when it is necessary for them to live outside of their family home. These services are guided by the principle of *family first*, with an emphasis on keeping children connected to their extended families, home communities, and cultural identity whenever possible.

What We Mean by “Family First”

In Nunavut, *family first* means that every effort is made to place children and youth with relatives, extended family, or trusted community members before exploring other placement options. This approach helps preserve cultural identity, strengthen community ties, and support long-term well-being by keeping children connected to the people and places that matter most to them.

Placement options include:

- **Extended Family Care**
Care provided by a relative, kin, or other known adult with an established relationship to the child or family. This option helps maintain family and cultural continuity.
- **Foster Family Placements**
Placements in homes approved and supported by the Family Wellness Division. Foster families are trained to provide safe, nurturing, and culturally responsive care, when family-based placements are not available.
- **Group Care**
Structured, staff-supported placements for children and youth whose needs may not be met in a family setting. These placements offer therapeutic or specialized supports and are often used for short- or medium-term stays.
- **Other Specialized Placements**
Temporary emergency placements like staffed placements and other unique arrangements such as room and board. These are used when children or youth require distinct supports, or when no other care option is available in their community.

As of March 31, 2025, a total of 246 in-territory placement resources were available.

Placement resource distribution was as follows:

- 146 regular foster home resources (59.4%)
- 68 extended foster home resources (27.7%)

- 4 provisional foster home resources (1.6%)
- 3 residential group care resources (1.2%)
- 1 place of safety resource (0.4%)
- 5 facility-based resources (2.0%)
- 17 other placement resources (6.9%)
- 2 room and board arrangements (0.8%)

In-Territory – All Placement Types: Regional Breakdown

- **Central Arctic – Kitikmeot:** 39 resources
- **Kivalliq – Keewatin:** 51 resources
- **North Qikiqtaaluk:** 28 resources
- **South Qikiqtaaluk:** 128 resources
- **Total:** 246 resources

Inuit and Non-Inuit Placement Resources

Within Nunavut's total of 246 in-territory placement resources, it is important to understand the cultural composition of these resources—specifically, how capacity is distributed between Inuit and non-Inuit caregivers across the territory. This understanding provides valuable insight into where culturally specific supports currently exist and where further development may be necessary.

Of the total available resources, **56 (22.8%) are Inuit placement resources**, distributed relatively evenly across all four regions:

- Central Arctic – Kitikmeot: 18
- Kivalliq – Keewatin: 11
- North Qikiqtaaluk: 9
- South Qikiqtaaluk: 18

The remaining **190 resources (77.2%) are non-Inuit placement resources**, with the largest concentration in the South Qikiqtaaluk region:

- Central Arctic – Kitikmeot: 21
- Kivalliq – Keewatin: 40
- North Qikiqtaaluk: 19
- South Qikiqtaaluk: 110

While Inuit placement resources are present in every region, most of the current capacity remains in non-Inuit resources. Recognizing that a significant proportion of children and youth in care are Inuit, this highlights the importance of continuing to grow capacity with more Inuit Kin care and foster care providers and culturally grounded resources. Strengthening this network will help ensure that more children and youth can remain in placements that support their cultural identity,

language, and community connections, while also meeting their safety and well-being needs close to home.

Foster Care

The Family Wellness Division continued to strengthen the In-Territory Foster Care Program in 2024–2025, as part of broader efforts to enhance kinship, custom, and out-of-home care services. This work is aligned with the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028), which emphasizes stronger recruitment, retention, and support of foster caregivers, alongside culturally grounded care.

Most foster care resources available in the past fiscal year were regular foster homes, extended foster homes, or provisional foster homes. Together, these resource types represented **88.7%** of all foster family resources across the territory. Regular foster care continues to serve as an essential resource when extended family care is not available or appropriate. In alignment with Inuit ways of caring for children, extended family remains the first option whenever possible, providing continuity, cultural connection, and emotional stability.

Throughout the year, the Family Wellness Division prioritized the recruitment and support of foster families—particularly Inuit caregivers—and made active efforts to reduce barriers to fostering.

Recognizing the importance of trauma-informed, culturally respectful care, the Family Wellness Team advanced several key initiatives:

- **Targeted recruitment in communities with limited access to placement services**, with a focus on Inuit caregivers
- **Regular wellness check-ins** and individualized supports for foster families
- **Trauma-informed training opportunities**, to equip caregivers with the tools to support children’s emotional, psychological and cultural needs
- **Bi-weekly financial assistance, respite care, and virtual training options workshops**, ensuring consistent support to foster families
- **Work continued throughout the year to revise Foster Care Standards and Procedures Manual**, with a focus on integrating Inuit societal values and culturally aligned practice expectations
- **On going development of caregiver training rooted in Inuit knowledge**, co-designed with Elders, to support cultural safety in caregiving

Approximately **29.3%** of foster care resources in Nunavut are extended family or kinship resources, reflecting the strength of Inuit kinship systems and the value placed on relational care. The Family Wellness Division continues to prioritize and expand opportunities for kinship-based placements wherever possible, in recognition of the cultural, emotional, and developmental benefits of remaining connected to family and community. As of March 31, 2025, more than half

of children in foster care placements (57.1%) were living with extended family caregivers, highlighting the strength of families and communities in caring for children.

Once approved, foster caregivers receive comprehensive support from the Family Wellness Team, including financial aid, clothing and childcare allowances, access to homemaker services, and ongoing learning opportunities. Caregivers also complete a thorough application process, including vulnerable sector and criminal record checks, to ensure safety and suitability.

When family-based placements are not available, or when the needs of a child or youth exceed what can be supported in a foster home, residential group care living may be used as a temporary alternative. As of March 31, 2025, there were 10 children and youth placed in group care facilities across Nunavut, representing approximately 3.6% of all children and youth in foster or group care placements in-territory. Group care provides 24/7 structured care, but it is used only when other family-based options cannot meet the needs of the child.

Out-of-Territory Specialized Placements

Some children and youth in Nunavut require specialized care and/or services that are not currently available in-territory. In these cases, the Family Wellness Division may coordinate out-of-territory (OOT

placements with licensed or provisionally approved service providers in other provinces. These placements are used only when all local options have been fully explored. This work is aligned with the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028), which emphasizes strengthening oversight and improving the effectiveness of out-of-territory specialized services.

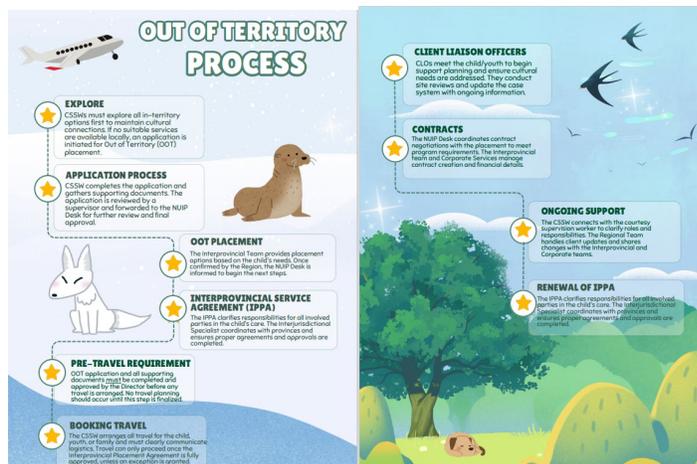
As of March 31, 2025, **50** children and youth—representing **58.8%** of all OOT placements—were placed in medical foster homes or medical group care settings due to elevated health needs. These placements support long-term monitoring, access to specialist care, and coordinated transition planning.

In 2024–2025, the Division advanced several system improvements to strengthen the quality, oversight, and cultural relevance of out-of-territory services. These include:

- The establishment of a **centralized OOT coordination team**, enhancing consistency, oversight, and communication across regions
- The phased rollout of the **Matrix Integrated Case Management System**, which began improving real-time documentation, transition tracking, and cultural planning across regions and with OOT partners.
- The introduction of a draft **Cultural Continuity Plan Tracker**, currently being piloted to support meaningful connections to Inuit identity, language, and land.
- The development of a **Quality Improvement framework** on monitoring cultural safety and incorporate feedback from Inuit partners, which is still undergoing refinement.
- The early development of a **training curriculum for OOT care providers** aimed at enhancing their understanding of Inuit societal values and cultural safety in care.

Together, these improvements reflect the Division’s broader commitment to the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028), which highlights the importance of strengthening oversight of out-of-territory services and ensuring that children and youth remain safe, well-supported, and connected to their families, culture, and communities.

Out-of-Territory Specialized Services Process



1. Explore

Community Social Services Workers (CSSWs) must explore all in-territory options first to maintain cultural connections. If no suitable services are available locally, an application is initiated for Out of Territory (OOT) placement.

2. Application Process

The CSSW completes the application and gathers supporting documents. The application is reviewed by a supervisor and forwarded to the NUIP Desk for further review and final approval.

3. OOT Placement

The Interprovincial Team provides placement options based on the child's needs. Once confirmed by the Region, the NUIP Desk is informed to begin the next steps.

4. Interprovincial Service Agreement (IPPA)

The IPPA clarifies responsibilities for all involved parties in the child's care. The Interjurisdictional Specialist coordinates with provinces and ensures proper agreements and approvals are completed.

5. Pre-Travel Requirement

OOT application and all supporting documents must be completed and approved by the Director before any travel is arranged. No travel planning should occur until this step is finalized.

6. Booking Travel

The CSSW arranges all travel for the child, youth, or family and must clearly communicate

logistics. Travel can only proceed once the Interprovincial Placement Agreement is fully approved, unless an exception is granted.

7. Client Liaison Officers (CLOs)

CLOs meet the child/youth to begin support planning and ensure cultural needs are addressed. They conduct site reviews and update the case system with ongoing information.

8. Contracts

The NUIP Desk coordinates contract negotiations with the placement to meet program requirements. The Interprovincial Team and Corporate Services manage contract creation and financial details.

9. Ongoing Support

The CSSW connects with the courtesy supervision worker to clarify roles and responsibilities. The Regional Team handles client updates and shares changes with the Interprovincial and Corporate teams.

10. Renewal of IPPA

The IPPA clarifies responsibilities for all involved parties in the child's care. The Interjurisdictional Specialist coordinates with provinces and ensures proper agreements and approvals are completed.

Interprovincial Requests and Agreements

Managing out-of-territory placements requires strong interjurisdictional collaboration to ensure that all children and youth placed outside of Nunavut receive appropriate care while maintaining meaningful ties to their culture and community. Formal Interprovincial (IP) Requests enable receiving provinces and territories to provide key services such as local supervision, placement monitoring, child welfare checks, or court support.

In 2024–2025, oversight of out-of-territory (OOT) placements was centralized under a dedicated coordination team, improving consistency in service delivery, documentation, and communication across jurisdictions. This team worked closely with regional staff and provincial partners to streamline the IP process and increase oversight.

◆ 2024–2025 Oversight and Interjurisdictional Coordination Snapshot (as of March 31, 2025):

- 85.8% of OOT placements had an active Interprovincial Placement Agreement (IPA) in place
- 97.6% were supported by a local Courtesy Worker (*Ontario no longer assigns Courtesy Workers for new VSA cases*)
- 100% were connected to a Client Liaison Officer (CLO)

These roles are critical to ensuring safety, consistency, and cultural support for children placed out-of-territory.

Interjurisdictional Placement Specialists and Client Liaison Officers (CLOs)

The **Interjurisdictional Placement Specialist (NUIP Desk)** plays a central role in coordinating out-of-territory placements. Their responsibilities include identifying appropriate facilities, liaising with external providers and licensing bodies, ensuring placement standards are met, and monitoring case progress across jurisdictions. Specialists advocate for individualized care while safeguarding quality and cultural safety for Nunavut youth placed outside the territory.

Complementing this role, the **Client Liaison Officers (CLOs)** provide frontline cultural and relational support. CLOs conduct site visits, maintain consistent contact with youth and care teams, and coordinate cultural programming to ensure youth remain connected to their family, language, community, and land-based identity. Their responsibilities include:

- Supporting cultural presentations, activities, and land-based programming
- Participating in annual service reviews and transition planning
- Documenting youth contact and cultural engagement in the **Matrix** system

In 2024–2025, CLOs were instrumental in upholding child rights, fostering cultural identity, and ensuring continuity of care in out-of-territory placements. Their insights are now systematically integrated into care plans and service reviews through updated Matrix protocols, strengthening accountability and consistency.

By embracing the Inuit societal values this model of care reinforces culturally grounded practice and promotes long-term healing and wellness for Nunavut youth living out of territory.

Safeguarding Children in Out-of-Territory Placement

Nunavut maintains layered oversight of all out-of-territory placements to ensure **safety, continuity, and cultural integrity**. These figures represent a point-in-time snapshot as of March 31, 2025.

-  **Licensed Facilities (67.0%)**
Care settings fully licensed under provincial/territorial standards
-  **Unlicensed/Provisional Facilities (32.9%)**
Includes facilities under temporary, provisional, or exceptional approval when no licensed options are available, but the placement is deemed in the child's best interest
-  **Interprovincial Placement Agreement (IPA) (85.8%)**
Formal agreements outlining roles/responsibilities for oversight and service provision
-  **Courtesy Worker (97.6%)**
A local protection worker assigned by the host jurisdiction to assist with visits and monitoring. Courtesy Worker assignments may vary across jurisdictions based on local policies (e.g., Ontario VSAs)
-  **Client Liaison Officer (CLO) (100%)**
Nunavut-based cultural worker maintaining youth connection to identity, language, and land

 *Note: Exceptions to full licensing are typically short-term. While some provisional arrangements remained in 2024–2025, the Division is no longer approving unlicensed facilities. The direction moving forward is to ensure that all children are placed in fully licensed care settings with strengthened oversight.*

Family Resource Worker Program

The Family Resource Worker (FRW) is a dedicated frontline role within the Family Wellness Division. FRWs deliver prevention-focused, community-based services that are rooted in Inuit culture and values. Their work helps support the well-being of children, youth, and families by offering parenting programs, land-based activities, and wellness outreach tailored to each community's strengths and needs.

In 2024–2025, the program focused on:

- Strengthening FRW presence in communities;
- Promoting Inuit knowledge through prevention-based care; and
- Building local partnerships with Elders and community-led organizations.

As of March 31, 2025, there were **five filled FRW positions** serving communities across Nunavut's 25 communities.

To support long-term improvements, the Division initiated a program review to develop a comprehensive training and mentorship model. Training resources are being revised to:

- Reflect Inuit societal values
- Support the use of Inuktitut
- Include more land-based practices identified by Elders and communities
- Clarify the FRW role within the Standards and Procedures Manual and onboarding curriculum to ensure consistency across regions
- Improve collaboration between FRWs and Community Social Services Workers (CSSWs) to provide wraparound support and early identification of families needing help

Inuit-Specific Wellness Programming (2024–2025)

The Family Wellness Division continued to advance Inuit-led wellness programming in 2024–2025, building on the goals outlined in the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023-2028). These initiatives are developed in collaboration with cultural advisors, Inuit organizations, and community leaders, and are grounded in local knowledge, culture, and strengths.

This year's work focused on promoting healing, cultural continuity, and family connection through land-based practices and traditional knowledge. Inuit-specific programming supports key areas of family wellness, including:

- Parenting and reunification
- Language revitalization and intergenerational learning
- Community belonging and identity development

The Division remains committed to embedding Inuit values across all levels of service delivery. By strengthening cultural continuity and intergenerational learning opportunities, these initiatives help foster resilience, identity, and long-term connection to community.

Culturally grounded initiatives delivered in 2024–2025 by the Family Resources Workers

In 2024–2025, Family Resource Workers (FRWs) continued to bring Inuit knowledge and traditions into their programming, creating opportunities for children, youth, and families to strengthen cultural connections and community ties.

In the **Kitikmeot region**, FRWs organized women’s groups and Elders’ gatherings that created safe spaces for sharing knowledge and building intergenerational relationships. A two-week on-the-land program engaged approximately 12 children and youth, offering them hands-on experiences that reinforced cultural practices while fostering wellness and belonging. FRWs also delivered community presentations on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), sharing these values with partners such as the RCMP, nurses, and other local service providers.

In the **Kivalliq region**, FRWs organized sewing groups with children in care, helping to preserve and pass on traditional skills while providing therapeutic, community-building activities. They also collaborated with Mental Health Services staff to deliver an on-the-land program for about 24 children and youth, blending cultural learning with emotional and mental wellness. In addition, sports activities were organized to promote healthy living, teamwork, and positive engagement for young people.

In the **North Baffin region**, FRWs facilitated sewing groups that encouraged youth participation while promoting intergenerational learning and cultural identity.

These initiatives were complemented by case-aid support where needed, ensuring families received holistic and responsive assistance. A key achievement this year was the successful completion and launch of the **Family Resource Worker Manual (2024–2025)**—a comprehensive guide developed by the Family Wellness Division to support consistent, culturally grounded practice across Nunavut. The manual provides step-by-step guidance for planning, implementing, and evaluating family wellness activities, rooted in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) and Inunnguiniq principles. It also outlines standards for collaboration with Elders, community partners, and CSSWs, helping ensure FRWs have clear tools to deliver prevention-based, community-led programs that reflect Inuit societal values. This manual represents an important milestone in professionalizing and strengthening the FRW program, providing a unifying framework for training, mentorship, and ongoing learning.

The completion of the manual also supports the Division’s broader goal of aligning prevention programming with the Ilagiitsiarniq Family Wellness Strategic Framework (2023–2028). It reflects a continued investment in community capacity-building, cultural safety, and the delivery of services that are responsive to each community’s strengths and realities.

In 2024–2025, the Family Resource Worker Program achieved several key milestones. A total of seven Inuit Family Resource Workers were employed across as many communities, with five actively delivering services by year-end. The program delivered eleven culturally grounded wellness activities, reaching over 100 children, youth, adults, and Elders in communities including Kinngait, Arctic Bay, Cambridge Bay, Taloyoak, Kugluktuk, and Coral Harbour.

FRWs facilitated more than 130 engagement sessions — including community visits, support sessions, and collaborative meetings — to strengthen relationships and gather community feedback. To strengthen consistency and accountability, the Division developed three foundational documents: the Family Resource Program Standards Framework (2024–2030), the Family Resource Worker Manual (2024–2025), and Empowering Family Resource Workers: A Supervisor’s Guide (2024–2025). A new Performance Management Plan (PMP) was also established to streamline data collection and reporting.

The Division further piloted a two-layered training model combining self-paced orientation and in-person learning delivered by Inuit-led partners such as Aqqiumavvik Wellness Society. Together, these milestones mark a major step toward a culturally grounded, prevention-focused framework that empowers communities and strengthens family wellness across Nunavut.

Family Resource Worker Program – Key Highlights (2024–2025)

- **7 Inuit Family Resource Workers** employed across 7 communities
- **5 FRWs** actively delivering services by year-end
- **11 culturally grounded wellness activities** reaching **101+ participants** (children, youth, adults, Elders)
- **Activities delivered in** Kinngait, Arctic Bay, Cambridge Bay, Taloyoak, Kugluktuk, and Coral Harbour
- **130+ engagement sessions** (support sessions, community visits, collaborative meetings)
- **3 foundational program tools** completed
 - *Family Resource Program Standards Framework (2024–2030)*
 - *Family Resource Worker Manual (2024–2025)*
 - *Empowering Family Resource Workers: A Supervisor’s Guide (2024–2025)*
- **Performance Management Plan (PMP)** launched to streamline reporting and data collection
- **Two-layered training model** piloted with **Aqqiumavvik Wellness Society**

Family Safety Program

The Family Safety Program is a non-legislated support and funding program that focuses on supporting the immediate safety needs of individuals and families impacted by violence. This program also supports Community Social Services Workers (CSSWs) in responding to high-risk situations and coordinating services to help ensure safety.

The program's core focus is prevention. It supports this through funding, guidance to CSSWs and Supervisors, who are the first responders in complex cases, and coordination with family safety shelters across the territory. The Family Safety Team also leads the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) portfolio for the Division and supports the development of policies and procedures to improve responses to family violence.

The shift in language that took place in 2023—changing the program's name from the “Family Violence Program” to the “Family Safety Program”—has continued to guide how we talk about and deliver services, reflecting a stronger focus on support and well-being.

Throughout 2024–2025, the Family Safety team supported ongoing education and awareness activities across the territory, including core training sessions on risk assessment, trauma-informed response, and safety planning. A revised training module—reflecting feedback from Inuit colleagues on the importance of language and cultural framing—continues to emphasize respectful, strength-based practice that aligns with Inuit societal values.

The Program also provided continued financial and coordination support to women's shelter services across the territory, ensuring that these community-based resources remain available to individuals and families seeking safety.

The Family Safety Program also maintained its focus on coordination between regions, shelter supports, and Gender-Based-Violence-related policy review. Internal efforts remained active in supporting staff and community-based approaches to safety and well-being.

Social Advocacy Initiatives

The Family Wellness Division continues to view prevention as a pathway to success, shaping our work in wellness and social advocacy initiatives in 2024–2025. The Social Advocacy Fund provides \$100,000 annually to support Men and Boys Initiatives and Women Initiatives that promote empowerment, leadership skills, traditional knowledge, wellness, and more. Funding is available to non-profit and Inuit organizations, individuals (in partnership with an organization), societies, and hamlets.

This year, the Division also continued its commitment to support Gender-Based Violence (GBV) initiatives, with over \$1 million in funding available annually over the current and next fiscal year. This long-term investment has generated strong community interest, helping to ensure money remains in Nunavut and supports locally driven initiatives.

In total, 13 community-led projects were funded in 2024–2025: six through the Social Advocacy Fund and seven through GBV funding. These initiatives reflect community priorities and the strength of culturally rooted programming that emphasizes resilience, healing, and leadership development.

One highlight of this year’s programming came through the **Ubluriak Society’s “Empowering Communities” initiative**, delivered in Sanikiluaq. The initiative hosted sewing and beadwork workshops, resume writing, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and stress management sessions. It was offered more than once and engaged youth, men, and women. These activities created transformative experiences fostering confidence, leadership, cultural pride, and mental wellness. The initiative’s success underscored the value of culturally grounded, gender-responsive programming in strengthening community resilience.

Participant voices further highlight the program’s impact:

- *“The beadwork class helped me discover I can create and sell something that comes from my culture. I feel proud of who I am.”* – Program Participant
- *“The Hunt and Heal trip helped me understand what it means to be a good man in our community—strong, kind, and responsible.”* – Youth Participant

The Social Advocacy Initiatives stream continues to encompass:

- Women’s, Men’s, and Boys’ Grants Initiatives
- Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Initiatives Fund
- Attaarnaqtut Inuusiqaarnirq/Having a Safer Lifestyle Program

Together, these programs empower communities to reclaim traditions, foster resilience, and support healing in ways that honour Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit.

Gender-Based Violence Fund

In 2024–2025, the Department administered a Gender-Based Violence (GBV) funding stream under the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence. The total allocation was over \$4 million; of this amount, \$1.37 million was assigned to the Department of Justice, and the remaining funds were managed by the Department of Family Services. Approximately \$2.8 million was distributed during the fiscal year to support community-led initiatives, services, and partnerships.

A total of 18 Family Services–funded proposals advanced diverse approaches to GBV prevention and healing, ranging from culturally grounded land-based programs to resource development, public awareness campaigns, and innovative tools that improve access to support.

Examples of funded initiatives in 2024–2025 include:

- **Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Helpline** – Ongoing helpline services and integration with the Miinga GBV app, enhancing access to crisis support across the territory.
- **Arctic Child & Youth Foundation (ACYF)**: Addressing and preventing GBV through youth-focused programming and outreach.
- **Iqaluit Music Society**: Youth fiddle workshop held in Yellowknife.
- **Qajuqturvik Food Centre**: Inuit Women’s Circle initiative promoting peer support, resilience, and cultural pride.
- **Kitikmeot Heritage Society**: Cultural programming such as “Nurturing Cultural Connections” and the *Hivuralik Kammak* workshop, fostering identity and community bonds.
- **Hamlet of Pangnirtung**: Seal hunting and ice fishing program to strengthen land-based knowledge and intergenerational mentorship.
- **Aqquimavik Society**: Skill-building initiatives to support healing from trauma.
- **Hamlet of Coral Harbour**: Traditional mitts and cooking program focused on cultural continuity and wellness.
- **Hamlet of Nauyasat**: Kammak-making program to connect youth with traditional skills.
- **Qullit Nunavut Status of Women**: Core funding to sustain territory-wide advocacy and GBV prevention activities.
- **Law Society of Nunavut**: Development of a GBV resource handbook and access-to-justice education.
- **Pinnguaq Association**: GBV-related mobile app development.
- **Embrace Life Council**: GBV children’s books, a healthy relationships campaign, and a 2SLGBTQIA+ awareness campaign.

Through this diverse portfolio, the GBV Initiatives Fund has continued to expand community capacity, strengthen prevention, and increase culturally grounded supports for Nunavummiut.

These funding streams not only focus on addressing gender-based violence but also strengthen prevention efforts that reduce the risk of child maltreatment. Gender-based violence and child maltreatment are often interconnected and rooted in broader systemic issues related to imbalances of power and inequality. By supporting culturally grounded, community-led

initiatives, these efforts help create safer environments and provide individuals with tools for healing and resilience. At the same time, it is important that those who perpetrate any form of violence are held accountable in a manner that supports justice and healing. Addressing gender-based violence in this way contributes to breaking cycles of harm, reducing vulnerabilities for children and youth more broadly helping communities respond earlier and prevent violence from being repeated across generations.

2024–2025 Community-Led Wellness and Advocacy Programs

Funded through the Social Advocacy Fund and the Gender-Based Violence Fund

The Social Advocacy Fund continued to support community-based cultural and healing programs during 2024–2025, empowering Nunavummiut to reclaim traditions, foster resilience, and promote wellbeing. These initiatives were funded across the territory in 2024–2025, representing approximately \$230,000 in community investment of which \$140,000 came from the GBV funding.

Community-Led Initiatives Funded in 2024–2025

1. **Cabin Tent Frame Making – Arviat**

Over a period of four weeks, approximately 30 youth boys participated in a hands-on program guided by Elders. The youth constructed a cabin/tent frame and explored the land, with the structure to be used year-round for seasonal traditional activities.

2. **Carving School – Coral Harbour**

Facilitated by a community coordinator, this program engaged youth in learning soapstone carving. Alongside carving, a week of sharing circles provided safe spaces for guidance, peer support, and discussions on positive life choices.

3. **Land Program – Taloyoak**

With many youth lacking opportunities to learn land-based survival skills, this five-day program taught hunting, fishing, and safe land travel. It was facilitated by Elders, guides, helpers, and a coordinator, ensuring skills were passed on to the younger generation.

4. **Women’s and Girls’ Self-Care Basket Initiative – Arviat**

Led by the Hamlet of Arviat, this program focused on promoting self-care among women and girls, with over 50% of participants under 18. One hundred baskets containing self-care products were distributed to encourage wellbeing and reduce anxiety, depression, and frustration.

5. **Parka Making Program – Rankin Inlet**

This program, facilitated by a seamstress and instructor, supported women and girls in building sewing skills and creating warm clothing for themselves and their families. The project also served as a group-based activity to promote mental health and mutual support.

6. **Cultural Activities Base Camp – Sanirajak**

Facilitated by Elders with support from younger helpers, this initiative guided youth in building a sod house while learning traditional values. The program also provided Elders with opportunities to relive and share childhood memories, reinforcing intergenerational bonds.

7. **Seal Hunting and Ice Fishing – Pangnirtung**

A land-based program that engaged participants in traditional hunting and fishing activities while fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer and resilience.

8. **Empowering Communities – Sanikiluaq**

This initiative engaged participants in leadership and group activities that fostered confidence, cultural pride, and community wellness.

9. **Hivuralik Kammak Workshop – Cambridge Bay**
A traditional sewing program that revitalized Inuit skills and cultural pride while supporting wellness and healing.
10. **Traditional Mitts Making & Cooking Program – Coral Harbour**
A program designed to support women’s and girls’ well-being by teaching them how to sew mitts and prepare traditional food.
11. **Making Kamik – Naujaat**
A cultural program that focused on teaching women traditional Inuit footwear-making skills, fostering resilience, pride, and belonging while addressing community wellness needs.
12. **Nurturing Cultural Connections – Cambridge Bay**
A cultural program designed to provide mentorship and traditional skills training to Inuit males who were not in school or employed, fostering cultural identity, resilience and community engagement.
13. **Healing Workshop – Arviat (Aqquimavvik Society)**
Skill-building workshops designed to support trauma recovery and resilience through culturally relevant approaches.

Beyond the immediate skills and cultural knowledge shared, these initiatives reinforce protective factors that are fundamental to the wellbeing of children and families. By nurturing cultural pride, sustaining traditional skills, and providing safe spaces for mentorship and healing, these programs help reduce isolation, build confidence, and support the prevention of violence and neglect. Many initiatives engage children and youth directly, offering meaningful opportunities to connect with Elders and role models. This intergenerational exchange strengthens resilience and contributes to keeping families together by supporting self-reliance, wellness, and healthy relationships. As community-led efforts, these programs are a vital part of the broader prevention approach—empowering Nunavummiut to thrive, reducing risks of child maltreatment, and enhancing the safety and wellness of communities.

Together, these initiatives highlight the enduring importance of culturally grounded, community-led programs in fostering healing, cultural pride, and resilience throughout Nunavut.

→ *See map on the following page for a visual overview of the 2024–2025 Community-Led Wellness and Advocacy Programs.*

2024–2025 Community-Led Wellness and Advocacy Programs

Confirmed programs and locations: Social Advocacy Fund:

- **Arviat – Cabin Tent Frame Making** (Funded through Social Advocacy Fund)
- **Coral Harbour – Carving School** (Funded through Social Advocacy Fund)
- **Taloyoak – Land Program** (Funded through Social Advocacy Fund)
- **Arviat – Women’s and Girls’ Self-Care Basket** (Funded through Social Advocacy Fund)
- **Rankin Inlet – Parka Making Program** (Funded through Social Advocacy Fund)
- **Sanirajak – Cultural Activities Base Camp** (Funded through Social Advocacy Fund)
- **Arviat – Healing Workshop** (Funded through Social Advocacy Fund)

Confirmed programs and locations: GBV Initiatives Fund:

- **Pangnirtung – Seal Hunting & Ice Fishing Program** (Funded through GBV Fund)
- **Coral Harbour – Traditional Mitts & Cooking Program** (Funded through GBV Fund)
- **Naujaat – Kammak Making Program** (Funded through GBV Fund)
- **Sanikiluaq – Empowering Communities** (Funded through GBV Fund)
- **Cambridge Bay – Hivuralik Kammak Workshop** (Funded through GBV Fund)
- **Cambridge Bay – Nurturing Cultural Connections** (Funded through the GBV Fund)

Community-Led Empowerment and Youth Programs

In 2024–2025, the Department continued to invest in community-driven initiatives that empower youth, raise awareness of gender-based violence (GBV), and promote culturally rooted resilience across Nunavut. These programs build on previous efforts by centering Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, strengthening local capacity, and expanding access to innovative tools and resources.

Prevention and Education Initiatives

- **Children’s Books and Campaigns:** New resources were developed to strengthen community understanding and support for vulnerable groups. This included the development of *My Heavy Secret* (version 1), a 62-page illustrated booklet providing affirmations, self-reflections, and resources for children and youth. Printing is ongoing, and formal distribution is scheduled to begin this year, with the target audience being youth, educators, and schools in all communities. Additional videos, campaign content, and educational materials were also created to spread awareness about the higher risks of GBV among 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and to promote healthy relationships among Nunavummiut youth.
- **Miinga Safety App and Community Workshops:** In partnership with the Kamatsiaqtut Nunavut Helpline, Miinga facilitated community visits to **Arctic Bay, Grise Fiord, Resolute Bay, and Kugluktuk** between November 2024 and March 2025. During this period, **56 GBV prevention workshops** were held with **624 participants** across children, youth, young parents, and Elders. Feedback highlighted the app’s cultural grounding and practical accessibility, with participants reporting it provided judgment-free support and vital resources. The app is now available in certain communities. Testimonials included:
 - *“I’m very impressed with how much you’ve brought into one place... This app is IQ personified. It is helpful for bringing new people into the community and supporting those who already live here. It balances the mental health piece with other important information across different categories. I would love to get it into the hands of all educators in all communities in Nunavut”* – Senior Education Administrator, Kugluktuk
 - *“The ming app has been really helping me. (...). I am a single mother, and I have been going through depression. I was ready to give up, then I downloaded the app, and it’s been really helping.”* – Community Member, Arctic Bay
 - *“It’s a good thing that you guys are doing, that’s what Nunavut need nowadays—getting help.”* – Student, Grise Fiord

Resources for Wellness Project

- The *Isumajunnattiarniq (Calm Mind) App* was launched in 2024–2025 as a culturally grounded mobile platform designed to support emotional balance, cultural connection, and mental wellness for Inuit aged 13 and above. Developed in partnership with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and language speakers, and with technical support from Pinnguaq/IKELC, the app integrates Inuit languages and traditions into its design. The app is publicly accessible through app stores and websites, providing culturally relevant

resources for Inuit communities, Indigenous peoples, and others seeking holistic wellness tools.

Youth Initiative Funding (YIF) Program

The YIF Program remained a cornerstone of youth engagement in 2024–2025, continuing its equal allocation of **\$300,000 per region (\$900,000 total)**. Demand for YIF continued to grow, with **proposals exceeding \$2.41 million**, far above the available budget.

The program supported a wide range of youth-led initiatives, including cultural arts, suicide prevention, and community healing projects. One highlight was the **Safe Savvy Kids program**, a community-led safety education effort grounded in Inuit values and mentorship. The initiative provided harm reduction workshops and culturally relevant safety training, engaging more than **1,500 youth across Cambridge Bay, Iqaluit, Sanirajak, and Sanikiluaq**—more than double its original target of 700.

“Safe Savvy Kids Cambridge Bay was able to mobilize in a few months which normally takes years to do. There was so much support for us.” –Recreational Coordinator

In addition to Safe Savvy Kids, the Department also approved several other YIF-funded projects in 2024–2025:

- **Hamlet of Cambridge Bay Youth Shelter:** Continued operation of Nunavut’s first youth crisis shelter, originally opened in 2021 as the Okalik Youth Shelter. The facility provides a safe and stable environment for youth, embodying *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (communal care and mutual support). 20 youth (ages 12–18) registered in 2024–2025. The shelter supported youth facing homelessness, violence, and substance use by offering safety, stability, and personal development opportunities.

“With our support and empathy, youth feel secure and know they are worth it.” Hamlet of Cambridge Bay Youth Shelter – Program team.

- **Hamlet of Gjoa Haven:** Year-round youth programming, including on-the-land activities, guided by *Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq* (connection to land).
- **Redfish Art Society (Cambridge Bay):** Welding and job readiness program that also built literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills while fostering mentorship relationships. In 2024–2025, 14 participants (ages 18–29) registered; several earned or progressed toward high school diplomas and completed certifications including CPR & First Aid, Flash Arc safety, Snowmobile Safety, Defensive Driving, Fire Extinguisher, and computer training.

“The program has helped many young adults acquire skills in a holistic, purposeful way, transforming struggles into pride and leadership.” •Redfish Art Society – Community partner.

“This program has helped me mentally and emotionally more than anything else... it makes me want to do better in life.” Redfish Art Society – Participant.

Funding disbursements for 2024–2025 totaled approximately \$983,000. Through these initiatives, the Department has demonstrated its commitment to strengthening culturally responsive GBV prevention, expanding mental wellness resources, and investing in youth leadership across Nunavut.

Inuit values have long affirmed the importance of nurturing youth through culturally grounded practices. Providing young people with spaces where they can learn, lead, and heal in a respectful and supportive environment helps foster resilience, confidence, and a deep sense of identity. These programs play a vital role in strengthening communities and supporting the growth and well-being of future generations.

Highlights of Youth and Community-Led Programs 2024–2025

Safe Savvy Kids – Cambridge Bay, Iqaluit, Sanirajak, Sanikiluaq

The Safe Savvy Kids program expanded rapidly in 2024–2025, delivering culturally grounded safety education and harm reduction workshops to more than **1,500 youth**—more than double its original target. Rooted in Inuit values and supported through local mentorship, the initiative gave young people the tools to navigate challenges while fostering confidence and resilience. Communities praised the program’s ability to mobilize quickly and meet an urgent need.

“Safe Savvy Kids Cambridge Bay was able to mobilize in a few months which normally takes years to do. There was so much support for us.”

— Recreational Coordinator

Miinga App & GBV Prevention Workshops – Arctic Bay, Grise Fiord, Resolute Bay, Kugluktuk

Between November 2024 and March 2025, the Kamatsiaqtut Nunavut Helpline and Miinga facilitated **56 GBV prevention workshops** across four communities, engaging **624 participants** including children, youth, parents, and Elders. The workshops promoted healthy relationships while introducing the Miinga mobile app as a culturally safe, accessible resource for crisis support. Participants described the app as life-changing, noting its cultural grounding and ease of use.

“I was ready to give up, then I downloaded the app, and it’s been really helping.” – Community Member, Arctic Bay

“This app is IQ personified... I would love to get it into the hands of all educators in all communities in Nunavut.” – Senior Education Administrator, Kugluktuk

Parka Making Program – Rankin Inlet

In Rankin Inlet, women and girls came together to learn traditional sewing skills while addressing the high cost of living in the North. Guided by an instructor and seamstress, participants created warm clothing for themselves and their families, while also building confidence and mutual support. The program combined cultural continuity with mental wellness, showing how traditional practices can strengthen community resilience.

SECTION 5

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

IN 2024-2025

Key Initiatives Completed in 2024–2025

In 2024–2025, the Family Wellness Division advanced several strategic priorities aligned with the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028). Through coordinated efforts and ongoing monitoring, the Division implemented a range of initiatives designed to strengthen service quality, cultural continuity, and organizational capacity. The accomplishments outlined below not only reflect technical improvements but also demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that children and families feel safe, supported, and connected. They are organized according to key areas of priority outlined in the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan.

Priority 1: Strengthening Organizational Efficiency

- **CFS Practice Standards**

A preliminary review of all Child and Family Services (CFS) standards was completed to identify priorities in key areas of practice. As a result, fifteen (15) updated standards have already been introduced into the Matrix Case Management System, making it easier for staff to deliver consistent and culturally grounded services to families. Additional standards are under detailed review by the Standards Review Committee, which incorporates Inuit knowledge and operational feedback to ensure culturally grounded service delivery.

- **Launch of Matrix Case Management System**

The Matrix system was launched to support real-time tracking of case histories, intervention timelines, and follow-ups. Staff training and data migration are ongoing to ensure consistent use across regions. By introducing a territory-wide digital platform, the Division is strengthening consistency in practice, reducing administrative delays, and ensuring more reliable oversight of services for children and families. Matrix strengthens oversight while also supporting trust—families and communities can be confident that decisions are based on accurate, complete, and culturally respectful information.

Priority 2: Enhancing and Optimizing Adoption, Foster Care, and Kinship Services

- **Territory-Wide Care Placement Mapping**

A comprehensive mapping initiative began to assess foster and group care placement capacity across all regions. Early findings are helping identify where families need more support and are guiding recruitment and infrastructure planning so that children can remain closer to home.

Priority 3: Enhancing Culturally Relevant and Community-Centered Family Wellness Programs and Services

- **Expansion of Cultural Programming**

Family Resource Workers supported cultural initiatives such as sewing groups, elder

gatherings, and on-the-land programs for children and youth. These activities created opportunities to share Inuit knowledge, strengthen intergenerational learning, and promote healing through connection to land and tradition. In addition, Family Resource Workers delivered presentations on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and collaborated with community partners such as RCMP and local health staff to embed cultural knowledge into daily practice.

- **Completion of the Family Resource Worker Manual (2024–2025)**

The Division finalized and launched the *Family Resource Worker Manual (2024–2025)*—a comprehensive guide developed under the Family Resource Program. The manual provides clear, culturally grounded guidance for Family Resource Workers across Nunavut, outlining standards for prevention-based programming, collaboration with Elders and community partners, and delivery of services rooted in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) and Inunnguiniq principles. Its completion represents a major milestone in strengthening prevention programming, professionalizing the Family Resource Worker role, and ensuring consistent, community-led support for children, youth, and families.

- **Cambridge Bay Youth Shelter**

The Cambridge Bay Youth Shelter continued to provide safe, stable housing and support for young people in 2024–2025. Funded through the Youth Initiative Fund, the shelter embodies Inuuqatigiitsiarniq (communal care and mutual support) by creating a protective environment for youth at risk. Its continued operation demonstrates the importance of sustained investment in culturally appropriate youth services.

- **Safe Savvy Kids Program**

A Youth Initiative Fund project, Safe Savvy Kids delivered harm reduction workshops and culturally relevant safety training to more than 1,500 youth in Cambridge Bay, Iqaluit, Sanirajak, and Sanikiluaq—over double its initial target. Grounded in Inuit values and mentorship, the program gave young people practical tools to navigate challenges while fostering resilience and cultural pride.

- **Miinga App and GBV Prevention Workshops**

In partnership with the Kamatsiaqtut Nunavut Helpline, Miinga facilitated 56 GBV prevention workshops in Arctic Bay, Grise Fiord, Resolute Bay, and Kugluktuk, reaching 624 participants, including youth, parents, and Elders. These workshops introduced the Miinga mobile app as a culturally safe, accessible support tool giving families and communities more ways to seek help and strengthen safety.

Priority 4: Enhancing Standards, Training, and Collaboration for Effective Child Welfare Investigations

- **Mandatory Monthly Safety Assessments**

New practice was introduced requiring monthly safety assessments be conducted for all children and youth in care. This policy ensures greater consistency and accountability in frontline safety monitoring. This ensures that every child in care is consistently seen, heard, and supported – not merely in written records, but through active and sustained practice.

- **New Training and Development Leadership**

A Manager of Training and Development was hired to oversee delivery of statutory and

Inuit cultural training. This role not only strengthens capacity-building but ensures training is relevant, consistent, and culturally grounded.

Priority 5: Enhancing Case Management Quality, Efficiency, and Collaboration

- **Family Wellness Training Completion Across Roles**

As of March 2025, 89% of Family Wellness staff have completed at least one training session since the new system's rollout in October 2024. This means that nearly nine out of ten staff received new skills to better support families with cultural safety, trauma-informed care, and practical tools for their roles. Training areas included general orientation, cultural competency, and role-specific modules such as Client Liaison Officer and Family Resource Worker training.

- **Re-Engagement of CANRA Working Group**

The cross-jurisdictional review of the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Agreement (CANRA) resumed. This work supports more consistent and coordinated responses to abuse and neglect across regions. This collaboration ensures that risks of abuse and neglect are addressed consistently and in a way that reflects shared responsibility across regions.

Priority 6: Enhancing Oversight and Effectiveness of Out-of-Territory Specialized Services

- **Development of Cultural Continuity Framework**

A Quality Improvement framework was created to guide the development of individualized cultural continuity plans for children in out-of-territory placements. This initiative was shaped by early community consultation and emphasizes cultural identity and kinship. This ensures that even when children are placed away from home, their cultural identity and kinship connections remain at the center of their care plans.

- **New Licensing Requirements for OOT Providers**

All new requests for proposal for out-of-territory (OOT) care placements now require providers to be licensed with the appropriate jurisdiction. This change increases oversight and improves service quality for Nunavut children placed outside the territory. This step strengthens oversight and reassures families that children placed outside the territory are in safe, accountable environments.

- **Implementation of New OOT Placement Standards**

Two new OOT standards were implemented, including one for emergency placements. These standards provide clear expectations for care and help ensure that children remain supported in culturally safe ways, even in urgent situations.

- **Third-Party Reviews of OOT Services**

Reviews of foster placements and residential facilities outside Nunavut were initiated through independent third-party evaluation. This initiative strengthens oversight and ensures alignment with child and family service goals. By inviting external reviewers, the Division strengthens transparency, builds public trust, and ensures that services align with Nunavut's child and family wellness goals.

Priority 7: Strengthening Recruitment, Retention, and Workforce Development

- **Expanded Wellness Supports for Staff**
The Division enhanced wellness resources to include comprehensive counselling services, regular check-ins, and monthly regional wellness sessions. These services support mental health and staff retention. These supports acknowledge the challenging nature of frontline work and ensure that staff can care for themselves while continuing to care for families.
- **Staff Housing Coordination with GN Partners**
The Division worked in collaboration with Human Resources and the Nunavut Housing Corporation to prioritize housing allocations for CSSW positions. This initiative aims to address ongoing recruitment and retention challenges in remote communities. Stable housing for staff directly supports stable services for children and families, particularly in remote communities where recruitment and retention remain a challenge.

Ongoing Strategic Work (as of March 31, 2025)

The following initiatives were actively underway at the close of the 2024–2025 fiscal year. While still in progress, each represents another step toward a stronger, more caring system—supporting both the well-being of the workforce and ensuring children, youth, and families receive services that are safe, consistent, and culturally meaningful.

- A **new standard for reporting critical injury and death** is being developed, with updated workflows and tracking tools to be embedded in the Matrix Case Management system.
- The **Division’s standards review process** is ongoing. Drafts have been completed for 80% of practice standards, and consultations are underway to ensure alignment with Inuit cultural values and practices.
- Work is underway to create a **tailored kinship caregiver training framework**, focused on culturally grounded, trauma-informed caregiving practices.
- Elders, knowledge keepers, and cultural advisors are co-developing a **Nunavut-specific cultural competency training curriculum** for staff.
- A **Reunification Framework** is in development to guide safe and sustainable family reunification outcomes. Consultations have been completed, and a draft is under review.
- A **review of kinship care financial supports** is underway to assess whether current provisions meet the needs of families providing care.
- A **specialized training program for out-of-territory care providers** is being developed to support cultural understanding and responsiveness in service delivery.
- **Three new policies related to staff safety and workplace well-being**—the *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*, *Lone Worker Policy*, and *Respectful and Harassment-Free Workplace*

Policy—were developed in 2024-2025 and were undergoing consultation prior to implementation. These policies collectively strengthen the Division’s commitment to safe, supportive, and respectful work environments, aligning with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit values and territorial legislation.

Matrix Case Management System: A Milestone for Nunavut’s Family Wellness Division

The 2024–2025 fiscal year marked the successful launch and territory-wide rollout of the **Matrix Case Management System (Family Wellness Integrated Information System – FWIIS)**, a major milestone in strengthening child and family services across Nunavut.

Matrix represents more than a technological upgrade—it is a transformational step toward building consistent, transparent, and culturally grounded services that place children, youth, and families at the center of decision-making.

Key Achievements of Matrix in 2024–2025:

- **Real-Time Documentation:** Frontline staff now record case notes, assessments, and plans in real time, ensuring that children’s needs are addressed more quickly and that staff have reliable information at their fingertips when making decisions.
- **Standardized Practice:** Fifteen revised service standards were embedded directly into the system, helping staff across all four regions provide services that are consistent, reliable, and respectful of Inuit cultural values.
- **Improved Oversight:** Supervisors and managers can track timelines, safety assessments, and outcomes more reliably, which strengthens accountability and provides added reassurance to families that services are being closely monitored.
- **Training Across Nunavut:** More than 145 staff participated in Matrix training sessions, building the confidence and skills needed to use the system effectively so they can focus more of their energy on supporting families.

Why Matrix Matters

Matrix strengthens both the efficiency and integrity of the system. It helps ensure that families and communities can trust their stories are documented accurately, their voices are acknowledged, and that services are informed by complete, culturally respectful information. Over time, Matrix will also enhance our ability to report clearly on key outcomes—such as family reunification, placement stability, and participation in cultural programming—offering concrete evidence of how services align with the values and priorities of Nunavummiut.

Matrix is already making a difference. Information about both in-territory and out-of-territory services is now being collected in a more consistent and reliable way. This gives Nunavut stronger control over its own data, makes it easier to work with other provinces and territories, and helps ensure future planning is guided by the real needs of children, youth, and families.

Representative for Children and Youth Office Engagement

The Representative for Children and Youth's Office (RCYO) is a key oversight body ensuring the rights, safety, and well-being of children and youth in Nunavut are protected. Through monitoring, complaint investigation, and systemic advocacy, the RCYO provides independent accountability for the quality and responsiveness of child and family services.

The RCYO's observations, outlined in its 2023-2024 Annual Report, reinforce several priority areas already central to the Division's work, including: enhancing placement planning and in-territory care options, strengthening transition supports for youth leaving care, increasing recognition and support for foster homes, improving oversight of out-of-territory placements, ensuring workforce stability and role clarity, and sustaining trauma-informed, culturally safe training for frontline staff.

Over the past fiscal year, the Division has taken significant steps in these areas:

Improving oversight of out-of-territory placements – Established a centralized Out-of-Territory Services Team to strengthen monitoring, follow-up, and accountability. Implemented new Out-of-Territory Placement Standards and revised licensing and emergency placement requirements to ensure all placements are in licensed or provisionally licensed facilities.

Enhancing training – Appointed a Training Lead to coordinate trauma-informed and culturally safe practice training for all frontline staff, offered in multiple formats (in-person, online, and self-paced). Training modules are being developed in partnership with Elders and community members to ensure cultural relevance

Supporting staff well-being – Introduced regular mental health touchpoints and wellness support for staff, aimed at reducing burnout, strengthening resilience, and improving retention.

Advancing data collection and case management – Further development to the Matrix system to improve data accuracy, organization, and reporting across all service areas. The system is being progressively expanded to capture all aspects of service delivery, ensuring secure, consistent data that supports evidence-based decision-making for improved data quality.

Developing enhanced foster parent training – Initiated updated foster parent training to equip caregivers with trauma-informed, culturally safe approaches and practical skills to support the well-being and stability of children and youth in care.

The Division recognizes that while meaningful progress has been made, there is still substantial work ahead. Many of the RCYO's recommendations address complex, multi-layered issues that require sustained attention. Advancing this work will remain an ongoing priority to strengthen the child and family services system, enhance responsiveness and accountability, and ensure alignment with RCYO guidance in all key areas of service delivery. These priorities are embedded within the Division's Ilagitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023-2028) and annual work planning, guiding our path forward to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families in Nunavut.

SECTION 6
STRATEGIES FOR A WAY
FORWARD

Strengthening Foundations, Advancing Wellness

The Family Wellness Division remains committed to strategic, long-term action that delivers meaningful and lasting change to better the lives of Inuvialuim. Reflecting on the 2024–2025 fiscal year, we acknowledge that transformative progress takes time, sustained effort, and a shared vision. The Division accomplishments are measured not only in policies and programs, but in the ways, they touch the lives of children, youth, and families across Nunavut. While we celebrate key accomplishments, we also recognize persistent challenges—including infrastructure constraints and workforce capacity gaps—that continue to impact service delivery across the territory.

The Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028) continues to serve as our guiding framework, helping align immediate actions with long-term systems change. Over the past year, the Division has prioritized cross-regional collaboration, targeted capacity building, and culturally informed practice development. These efforts reflect a commitment not only to service improvement, but to deeper structural transformation grounded in Inuit knowledge systems, community partnerships, and multi-year planning. Most importantly, they reflect our responsibility to ensure that children and families feel supported, connected, and respected at every point of contact with the system.

With a continued focus on integrating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and the guiding principles of the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action plan, we have taken deliberate steps to improve the systems, relationships, and tools that support families across Nunavut. This includes building culturally grounded prevention models, strengthening accountability and oversight, and expanding resources to better meet the needs of children, youth, and families in all regions.

The work of translating the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan into concrete, sequenced actions is being advanced through the Implementation Plan currently in development. This effort aligns strategic priorities with timelines, accountability measures, and the necessary resources for success. Building on the groundwork already laid, it guides departments, regional offices, and community partners through a coordinated approach that ensures each action is achievable, culturally grounded, and responsive to the realities of Nunavut’s families. As this work progresses, it is creating a clear pathway from vision to practice—strengthening the foundation for long-term, systemic change.

We are guided by Inuit values, particularly *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq* (respect and relationship-building), *Pilirqatigiinni/ikajuqtiigiinni* (working together), *Qanuqtuurniq* (resourcefulness and innovation), and *Pijitsirniq* (service to families and communities). These principles provide the foundation for ongoing efforts to build a more responsive, effective, and equitable Family Wellness system—one that grows over time, through sustained investment, innovation, and shared leadership.

Organizational Excellence

The Division is dedicated to achieving the highest standards of service across all aspects of Family Wellness. These efforts directly reflect the key priorities of the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic

Action Plan (2023–2028), which emphasizes leadership development, consistent practice standards, and system-wide learning. In 2024–2025, the Division advanced this commitment through initiatives designed to enhance service quality, streamline processes, and strengthen accountability across regions.

This year, we advanced several initiatives to improve transparency and consistency in documentation, placement oversight, and compliance. Through our expanded Quality Assurance and Monitoring Program, we strengthened our capacity to analyze service data, track key performance indicators, and share results across regions. The introduction of new quality improvement tools, along with enhancements to the Matrix Case Management System, are supporting better data collection, stronger accountability, and more responsive service planning. These efforts support informed decision-making, highlight areas for growth, and ensure alignment with community needs and Inuit Societal Values.

Building on this foundation, the implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework has positioned the Division to measure progress and outcomes in a more structured, and transparent. The framework integrates Inuit Qaujimaqatun and emphasizes community engagement, whole-of-government collaboration, and accountability to the public. It intends for the development and measurements of clear, outcome-based indicators—such as placement stability, family reunification rates, and participation in cultural programming—while also capturing qualitative insights from children, families, and communities.

The M&E Framework also formalizes regular public reporting, community advisory input, and ongoing review cycles to ensure that services remain responsive to evolving needs. By embedding cultural competence, child-centered approaches, and systemic analysis into performance measurement, the framework ensures that quality assurance is not just about compliance but about fostering a learning system that adapts and improves over time. As it matures, the M&E Framework will guide decision-making, direct resource allocation, and strengthen our shared accountability to Nunavummiut families.

Training and Development

Investing in staff development remains a cornerstone of our strategy. In 2024–2025, we deepened our commitment to workforce excellence by expanding professional development offerings and strengthening onboarding supports. These efforts respond directly to the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan’s multi-year goals under the key priorities, aimed at enhancing staff capacity, cultural competency, and retention across the territory.

In addition to foundational training, staff across regions participated in new learning opportunities focused on cultural safety, trauma-informed practice, and legislative compliance. Training modules were updated to reflect Inuit societal values, and a new Manager of Training and Development was hired to lead culturally informed capacity-building initiatives.

We also laid groundwork for enhanced caregiver training and support models, aligned with community needs and service standards. Progress was made toward the co-design of a Cultural Competency Training Curriculum with Elders and cultural advisors, and a Kinship Caregiver

Training Framework is currently in development. These efforts ensure that all staff and service providers are equipped with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to deliver high-quality, culturally grounded services in every region of Nunavut.

Building and Sustaining a Strong Workforce

A resilient and effective Family Wellness system relies on a strong workforce—skilled, supported professionals equipped to meet the complex needs of Nunavummiut children, youth, and families. In 2024–2025, the Division advanced this priority by focusing on both strengthening staff capacity and enhancing the structures and supports that sustain their work overtime. Guided by the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028) and its key priorities, these efforts recognized that recruitment, retention, training, and wellness are interconnected. The following subsections outline the work undertaken to enhance both professional competence and the systems that make long-term workforce stability possible.

Investing in Skills and Practice

In 2024–2025, the Family Wellness Division advanced its commitment to a confident, culturally competent, and well-supported workforce. Guided by the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028), efforts focused on equipping staff with the tools, knowledge, and values needed to deliver services grounded in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

Foundational training modules were revised, and new learning opportunities were introduced to strengthen trauma-informed practice, cultural safety, and legislative compliance. Staff across all regions participated in interactive sessions developed with subject matter experts and cultural advisors, emphasizing relationship-based practice, scenario-based learning, and regional relevance. Clinical supervision and performance evaluation remained central to service quality, with tailored guidance on case management, documentation, and therapeutic techniques. Feedback from evaluations informed future training priorities, fostering a continuous learning environment that adapts to the evolving needs of Nunavummiut families and communities.

Strengthening Capacity and Support Systems

Recognizing that long-term improvements depend on stability and retention, the Division aligned training, recruitment, and human resource planning with the unique realities of Nunavut's communities. Onboarding processes were strengthened through enhanced orientation pathways, regionally tailored supports, and more structured entry points for new staff. The 19-module online training program, launched the previous fiscal year, continued to provide consistent and accessible learning across all regions, reinforcing a scalable approach to workforce development.

To address persistent recruitment challenges, the Division worked closely with the Department of Human Resources and the Nunavut Housing Corporation to explore long-

term strategies for staff housing and equitable service access. Mental wellness and psychological safety remained core priorities, supported through ongoing counselling, regular debriefings, and proactive wellness initiatives. These investments reflect the understanding that a resilient, well-supported team is essential to delivering trauma-informed, culturally safe services that uphold Inuit societal values.

Securing Our Spaces and Infrastructure Planning

The ability to deliver responsive, high-quality services across Nunavut depends on stable infrastructure and safe, accessible spaces—for both children and staff. As outlined in the key priorities of the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028), the Family Wellness Division is committed to long-term investments that improve service access, reduce displacement, and support staff retention in all regions.

New in-territory group care facilities will help reduce reliance on out-of-territory resources and allow children with higher levels of need to remain closer to their families, communities, and cultural environments. Engagement is underway with community partners and Inuit organizations to ensure new facilities are designed in a way that reflects Inuit societal values and supports healing and cultural continuity.

We also worked closely with the Department of Human Resources and the Nunavut Housing Corporation to explore long-term solutions to staff housing shortages. These efforts included identifying staff accommodation gaps in underserved regions and discussing ways to integrate housing into future recruitment and retention strategies.

Securing appropriate spaces—whether for care or for those delivering it—is essential to long-term service equity. As our system evolves, the Division remains focused on creating environments that are culturally safe, trauma-informed, and designed in partnership with the communities they serve.

Strategic Partnerships and Interdepartmental Collaboration

Meaningful partnerships remain essential to the Family Wellness Division’s ability to deliver responsive and effective services to children, youth, and families in Nunavut. These efforts are central to the key priorities of the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028), which focuses on building trust and coordination across sectors.

In 2024–2025, the Division continued to strengthen its collaboration with territorial departments, Inuit organizations, and external service providers to improve cross-sector coordination and support the wellbeing of Nunavummiut.

These partnerships help bridge service gaps, enhance cultural and clinical expertise, and support shared accountability for child, youth, and family wellness. Interdepartmental efforts have focused on aligning mandates, improving referral pathways, and identifying opportunities for collaborative program development— particularly in the areas of health, education, and out-of-territory placement oversight.

The Division remains committed to growing and sustaining partnerships that reflect Inuit societal values, strengthen frontline practice, and ensure holistic, community-driven service delivery.

Quality Assurance and Accountability

The Family Wellness Division continues to strengthen quality assurance systems that uphold transparency, cultural safety, and consistency in practice across Nunavut. In 2024–2025, efforts aligned with the key priorities of the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028) led to meaningful progress in documentation practices, regional data analysis, and responsive service tracking.

Through the continued development of the Division’s Quality Assurance and Monitoring Program, staff were better equipped to conduct timely placement reviews, support complex case planning, and respond to community-identified needs. These efforts promote evidence-informed decision-making and help ensure that families across all regions receive services grounded in Inuit societal values.

The Division also worked to embed shared learning and reflective supervision into internal processes—fostering a stronger culture of accountability, collaboration, and continuous improvement. This work reinforces the Division’s long-term commitment to building a wellness system that is responsive to Nunavut’s evolving needs and guided by Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

Looking forward, the newly developed Quality Assurance Framework will guide this work by providing a clear structure for monitoring, evaluating, and improving service delivery. Built on the principles of cultural safety, transparency, and continuous learning, the framework integrates Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit with best practices in child and family service oversight. It sets out defined standards, indicators, and processes that ensure all regions operate with consistency while retaining the flexibility to respond to local realities.

The framework emphasizes four interdependent components:

- Standards and Practice Alignment – ensuring policies and procedures are clearly defined, communicated, and upheld across all regions.
- Monitoring and Review – conducting regular file reviews, placement monitoring, and performance audits to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Learning and Capacity Building – using quality findings to inform targeted training, coaching, and resource development.
- Feedback and Adaptation – incorporating community, staff, and rights holder perspectives to refine services in real time.

By embedding these components into day-to-day operations, the Quality Assurance Framework will help the Division move beyond compliance toward a truly responsive and accountable service model. Over time, this will strengthen public trust, help children and families receive the right services at the right time and in the right way, and support a culture where quality is continuously measured, discussed, and improved.

Supporting Families and Community-Led Wellness

Grounded in Inuit societal values and a commitment to culturally safe practice, the Family Wellness Division is advancing efforts to enhance family and community wellbeing. In alignment with the key priorities of the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028), we are working toward a system that affirms family dignity, builds trust, and prevents unnecessary separation.

In 2024–2025, the Division expanded the role of Family Resource Workers across regions and created more opportunities to support and strengthen community-led wellness initiatives. These efforts included sewing groups in Kivalliq and North Baffin, Elders' gatherings and Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ) presentations in Kitikmeot, and on-the-land programming and youth sports activities in collaboration with community partners.

Looking ahead, our focus will remain on co-designing family support programs with communities, ensuring services are accessible, strengths-based, and built around cultural continuity. This means fostering spaces where families feel safe turning to us for support, knowing their dignity, relationships, and cultural identity will be honoured. This includes enhancing caregiver support models, investing in kinship care, and deepening collaboration with Inuit organizations to ensure that prevention services are not only available—but trusted, relevant, and community-driven.

These efforts represent a long-term shift toward healing-centred practice, where families are supported in staying together, thriving, and raising children within their own values, language, and kinship systems.

Building Respectful Data Systems

The wellbeing of children and families in Nunavut is closely tied to how well we gather and use information that is accurate, respectful, and rooted in culture. Data is more than numbers—it reflects lived experiences, community histories, and future possibilities. Each data point represents a child, youth, or family, and must be treated with the same care and integrity we extend to those individuals themselves. High-quality data that can show what is working, where gaps remain, and how supports can evolve to meet the needs of Nunavummiut.

To support transparent public reporting and informed decision-making, we are strengthening data systems to capture both quantitative indicators and qualitative insights that reflect the realities of communities. This includes building robust, secure infrastructure capable of tracking progress across regions while protecting the privacy and dignity of those represented.

Over time, these strengthened data systems will enable us to track progress more effectively, identify emerging needs sooner, and support informed decision-making at every level. Most importantly, they will ensure that the story of child and family wellbeing in Nunavut is told in a way that honours the voices, rights, and self-determination of Nunavummiut.

Conclusion

In 2024–2025, the Family Wellness Division continued to advance a broad range of services and supports that respond to the strengths, needs, and priorities of Nunavummiut. Through ongoing investment in staff development, service quality, infrastructure, and collaboration across sectors, we made progress on the key priorities of the Ilagiitsiarniq Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028).

These efforts reflect a long-term commitment to working alongside communities in ways that are respectful, responsive, and grounded in Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. While we continue to face systemic and structural challenges—including limited infrastructure, workforce pressures, and the impacts of colonization and intergenerational trauma—our approach is guided by the understanding that meaningful, lasting change must be built in partnership with those we serve.

This report reflects both milestones and momentum. As we move forward, we remain focused on trauma-informed practice, collaborative learning, and services that reflect the values and aspirations of Nunavummiut.

Above all, our work is guided by the children and youth of Nunavut. Their voices, experiences, and hopes to shape every step we take. As we look toward 2025–2026, we will continue to walk alongside families, communities, and Inuit organizations—strengthening culturally grounded supports and creating space for healing, growth, and belonging.

APPENDIX GLOSSARY

Apprehension

The legal act of taking a child into custody by child protection authorities due to concerns for their safety or well-being.

Apprehension less than 72 hours

A temporary custody situation lasting less than 72 hours, typically used in urgent situations where immediate protection is necessary.

Child

A person who has not reached the age of majority, typically defined as under 16 years old.

Child Emotional Harm

The infliction of emotional harm or psychological trauma on a child by a caregiver or other person in a position of trust.

Child Exposure to Family Violence

A situation where a child witnesses or is exposed to domestic violence or other forms of family violence.

Child Physical Harm

The intentional infliction of physical harm or injury upon a child by a caregiver or other person in a position of trust.

Child Protection Order

A legal order issued by a court to protect a child from abuse, harm, or neglect, typically involving restrictions on contact with certain individuals or removal from a harmful environment.

Child Sexual Harm

The sexual exploitation or molestation of a child by a caregiver or other person in a position of trust.

Community Social Services Worker

A professional who provides social services and support to individuals and families within a specific community.

Director of Child and Family Services

An official responsible for overseeing child welfare and family support services within a jurisdiction or organization.

Extended Support Agreement

An agreement providing additional support and services beyond the age of majority for youth transitioning out of the child welfare system.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

Traditional Inuit knowledge, values, and cultural practices that guide decision-making and behaviour within Inuit communities.

Inuit Societal Values

Core principles and beliefs held by Inuit communities, shaping social norms, relationships, and governance structures.

Neglect

The failure to provide adequate care, supervision, or support for a child's basic needs, including food, shelter, education, and medical care.

Out-of-territory Specialized Placements

Placements of children or youth in specialized care facilities or services located outside the territory of Nunavut.

Permanent Custody Order

A legal order granting permanent custody of a child to the Director of Child and Family Services, typically issued by a court.

Plan of Care Agreement

A formal agreement outlining the care, support, and services to be provided to a child or youth under the supervision of child welfare authorities.

Plan of Care Committee

A committee responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of a plan of care for a child or youth involved with child welfare services.

Supervision Order

A legal order requiring supervision of a child-by-child welfare authorities or other designated individuals.

Support Services Agreement

An agreement outlining the support services to be provided to a child, youth, or family by child welfare authorities or other service providers.

Temporary Custody Order

A legal order granting temporary custody of a child to the Director of Child and Family Services, typically issued by a court.

Voluntary Services Agreement

An agreement entered voluntarily by a family to receive support services.

Youth

A person who has reached adolescence but has not yet reached the age of majority, typically defined as between the ages of 13 and 18.