



— ANNUAL REPORT OF THE —  
**Director of Child and Family Services**  
**2018-19**

— RAPPORT ANNUEL DU DIRECTEUR —  
**Des services à l'enfance et à la famille**

Government of Northwest Territories    Gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest

If you would like this information in another official language, call us.

English

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Si vous voulez ces informations dans une autre langue officielle, contactez-nous.

French

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Kīspin ki nitawih̄tīn ē nīhīyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsinān.

Cree

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Tłıchq̄ yatı k'èè. Dı wegodı newq̄ dè, gots'ō gonede.

Tłıchq̄

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?erih̄tł'ıs Dēne Sųh̄né yatı t'a huts'elkēr xa beyáyatı thezq̄ zat'e, nuwe ts'ēn yółtı.

Chipewyan

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Edı gondı dehgáh got'ıe zhatıé k'éé edat'éh enahddhę nıde naxets'é edahłı.

South Slavey

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K'áhshó got'ıne xədə k'é hederı zedıhtl'é yerııwę nıde dúle.

North Slavey

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Jii gwandak izhii ginjik vat'atr'ijāhch'uu zhit yinohtan jı', diits'at ginohkhıi.

Gwich'in

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Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququaqluta.

Inuvialuktun

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Ć'đ< 00<sup>sb</sup>Δ<sup>c</sup> Λ<LJΔ<sup>r</sup> Δ<sup>sb</sup>0D<<sup>sb</sup>PL>0<sup>b</sup>, >ε<sup>c</sup>0<sup>a</sup>đ<sup>c</sup> ><sup>sb</sup>ε<<sup>a</sup>ε<sup>sb</sup>00<sup>c</sup>.

Inuktitut

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Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.

Inuinnaqtun

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1-855-846-9601

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR, CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

October 1, 2019

The Honourable Glen Abernethy  
Minister of Health and Social Services  
Government of the Northwest Territories

Dear Minister Abernethy,

I am pleased to submit the 2018-2019 Annual Report of the Director of Child and Family Services, as required under section 51(2)(g) the *Child and Family Services Act*. As the newly appointed Statutory Director of Child and Family Services, I am confident this report reflects a summary of service outcomes along with key system strengths and areas for improvement.

It has been a year of learning and growth for the Child and Family Services system. In October 2018, the Auditor General of Canada completed their report on Child and Family Services in the Northwest Territories, which highlighted areas of deficit and recommendations requiring continued attention. The Auditor General's report along with internal reviews and stakeholder feedback has shaped quality improvement initiatives over the past year. For example, a revised accountability framework was implemented in January 2019 to reflect the new authority structure and feedback from Child Welfare Practitioners to support better outcomes for children and families. This framework serves as a roadmap to underscore accountability, and clarify roles and responsibilities between the HSSAs and the Department.

This annual report enables us to look at the Child and Family Services system from another lens, which helps in growing a more responsive system that supports better outcomes for children, youth, families and communities.

I want to acknowledge Child and Family Services staff and our many stakeholders for their continued contributions toward ensuring the wellbeing of children, youth and their families.

As we enter the upcoming year, I look forward to continue evolving the Child and Family Services system to better serve children, youth and their families across the Northwest Territories.

Sincerely,



Colette Prévost  
Statutory Director, Child and Family Services

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR, CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES.....i

DATA SOURCES AND INTERPRETATION ..... iii

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... 1

2. INTRODUCTION ..... 2

    NWT Child Population ..... 5

3. INITIAL INVOLVEMENT WITH CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES ..... 6

    Requests for Voluntary Support Services..... 7

    Reports of Suspected Child Maltreatment..... 11

    Investigations ..... 13

4. SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES..... 14

    Number of Children Receiving Services ..... 14

    Types of Child and Family Services Statuses..... 18

5. VOLUNTARY SUPPORT SERVICES..... 22

6. PLAN OF CARE AGREEMENTS ..... 24

7. COURT- ORDERED SERVICES..... 26

8. CHILDREN IN PERMANENT CUSTODY..... 27

9. LOCATION OF CHILDREN RECEIVING SERVICES ..... 29

    Placement Resources ..... 30

10. ADOPTION..... 32

11. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS..... 34

12. LIMITATIONS..... 35

13. MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS..... 36

    Moving Forward in 2019-2020..... 39

APPENDIX A: CHILD PROTECTION..... 41

GLOSSARY ..... 43

## DATA SOURCES AND INTERPRETATION

This report presents a summary of child protection and voluntary services data from April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019. The data from 2018-2019 contains information from the Matrix NT system as well as manual data from the regions and/or authorities. This report presents the most accurate presentation of the available data.

The legacy electronic Child and Family Information System (CFIS) was archived and put into read-only mode on September 30, 2017, and the new information system, Matrix NT, was launched October 10, 2017. Files that were active as of September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017, were migrated from CFIS to Matrix NT. Matrix NT accommodated for Structured Decision Making (SDM®) tools to be moved from paper-based assessments to electronic assessments; however, there was a shift from child-level (individual) to household-level (family) assessments. This has brought challenges related to measuring individual child-level service statuses and; therefore, some data is not comparable to previous years. As a result, trends in time were only analyzed where an effective comparison could be made.

The implementation and integration of any new information system is a complex and multi-year initiative. As such, while this new system has the ability to provide data not previously available on the CFIS system, Matrix NT is still being configured to enable some areas of reporting formerly available on CFIS such as data for apprehensions and supervision orders. The Department and Authorities are working to continuously advance the integrity of the Matrix NT system through training and quality assurance checks. Furthermore, as the Matrix NT information system continues to mature, and further queries are developed, new indicators may be added to subsequent annual reports.

In this report, a figure refers to a graphical representation of the data (i.e., pie chart). In each figure, the unit of analysis is presented in the vertical axis. Data is presented for children aged 0 to 18 years<sup>1</sup> in the form of raw counts and rates by 1,000 child voluntary or protection statuses<sup>2</sup>. Raw counts are used to review the overall number of children involved in the Child and Family Services System, whereas rates are used to compare an indicator across different populations. This is necessary when the denominator (child voluntary support services statuses and protection statuses) changes from year to year. Rates by child protection and voluntary support services statuses are used to account for the fact that a child may hold more than one child protection and/or voluntary support service status per year.

The statistical significance of a change in rates over time was calculated using Poisson regression with a p-value of 0.05<sup>3</sup>. In other words, statistical testing was done to see if trends in the data have increased or decreased significantly over a ten year period. If the change was statistically

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report, the term 'child' refers to both children and youth ages 0-18.

<sup>2</sup> "Status" refers to the arrangement under which services are provided. The major division is between voluntary status (e.g., Voluntary Services Agreement) and Court-ordered status (e.g., Temporary Custody Order).

<sup>3</sup> Poisson regression is a form of statistical analysis for examining the number of events and determining the likelihood that a change in the number of events over time is due to random variation. If it is extremely unlikely that the change observed could have occurred by chance, the conclusion is that this represents a true ("statistically significant") change over time.

significant, a trend line is added to the figure to demonstrate the direction of the trend. If there is no trend line, the data has not changed significantly over time, or trend analysis is not appropriate given the format of the data presented (i.e. raw counts).

A trend line demonstrates that the data has statistically increased or decreased. Caution needs to be exercised in interpreting a trend, because there may be a variety of factors that may have impacted the trend. The information provided in this report describes the basic features of the data; it is not possible to interpret the data or draw conclusions as to why these changes are being seen.

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Annual Report of the Director of Child and Family Services presents data on the delivery of services under the *Child and Family Services Act* between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2019. This 2018-2019 report meets the requirement under the *Child and Family Services Act* to provide an annual report to the Minister of Health and Social Services.

There are several Child and Family Services statuses through which a child may receive services. These statuses include services that are established *by agreement* with parents or youth (Voluntary Services Agreements, Support Services Agreements, and Plan of Care Agreements), and *court-ordered* services (Supervision Orders, Temporary and Permanent Custody Orders). The 2018-2019 data shows an increased number of statuses by agreement, compared to statuses that are court-ordered.

In some circumstances, a child may be placed outside of the family home by agreement or by court order. The placement of children while receiving services is discussed in this report. During the fiscal year 2018-2019, 84% of children remained in their home or home community while they and their family received services. Meanwhile, of the 16% of children who were removed from their home community, 9% of these children were receiving services outside the NWT.

During the 2018-2019 fiscal year, the Department and Authorities have developed a quality review process, in addition to the Department's auditing process. Related to the implementation of quarterly quality reviews, the Department has implemented system-wide audits every two years. Quality reviews provide timely information to frontline staff and management regarding the performance of the system on key indicators and these processes provide a foundation for the development of strategies to improve compliance. The focus of the quality reviews takes into consideration the results of previous system-wide audits and best practices. Over the past year, the Authorities have fully implemented quality reviews for Investigations and Foster Care. Preliminary findings of the quality reviews are highlighting areas for more intensive strategies to improve compliance.

This annual report identifies many accomplishments achieved in the 2018-2019 fiscal year. The report also outlines the next steps to continue to improve the services offered to children, youth and their families in the Northwest Territories.

## 1. RÉSUMÉ

Ce rapport annuel de la directrice des Services à l'enfance et à la famille présente les données sur la prestation des services en vertu de la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille au cours de la période allant du 1er avril 2018 au 31 mars 2019. Le rapport 2018-2019 répond aux exigences de la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille qui prévoit qu'un rapport annuel soit présenté au ministre de la Santé et des Services sociaux.

Un enfant peut recevoir des services en fonction de plusieurs statuts attribués par les Services à l'enfance et à la famille. Ces statuts s'appliquent notamment aux services prévus par des ententes avec les parents ou avec les jeunes (ententes de services volontaires, accords de services de soutien et accords concernant les projets de prise en charge), et aux services ordonnés par le tribunal (ordonnances de surveillance, et ordonnances de garde temporaire ou permanente). Les données pour 2018-2019 indiquent une augmentation du nombre de statuts prévus par des ententes, par rapport aux nombres de statuts ordonnés par le tribunal.

Il peut arriver qu'un enfant soit retiré de son domicile en raison d'une entente ou d'une ordonnance du tribunal. Le présent rapport porte sur le placement des enfants pendant qu'ils reçoivent des services. Au cours de l'exercice 2018-2019, 84 % des enfants ont pu demeurer dans leur foyer ou dans leur collectivité d'origine pendant que leur famille et eux-mêmes recevaient des services. Néanmoins, parmi les 16 % d'enfants qui ont été retirés de leur collectivité d'origine, 9 % ont reçu des services à l'extérieur des Territoires du Nord-Ouest.

Au cours de l'exercice 2018-2019, le Ministère et les administrations ont élaboré un processus d'examen de la qualité, en plus du processus de vérification du Ministère. Pour ce qui est de la mise en œuvre des examens trimestriels de la qualité, le Ministère a instauré des vérifications de l'ensemble du système à réaliser tous les deux ans. Grâce aux examens de la qualité, le personnel de première ligne et les membres de la direction reçoivent dans un délai raisonnable des renseignements concernant le rendement du système par rapport aux indicateurs clés. Ces processus servent de base à l'élaboration de stratégies visant à améliorer le degré de conformité. L'objectif des examens de la qualité prend en considération les résultats des vérifications antérieures menées à l'échelle du système et des pratiques exemplaires. Au cours de la dernière année, les administrations ont procédé à la mise en œuvre intégrale des examens de la qualité pour les volets Enquêtes et Familles d'accueil. Les constatations préliminaires des examens de la qualité mettent en évidence certains secteurs nécessitant la mise en place de stratégies plus intensives pour améliorer le degré de conformité.

Le présent rapport annuel fait état des nombreuses réalisations ayant été accomplies au cours de l'exercice 2018-2019. Il décrit également les prochaines étapes à suivre pour continuer à améliorer les services offerts aux enfants, aux jeunes et à leur famille dans les Territoires du Nord-Ouest.



## 2. INTRODUCTION

The Director of Child and Family Services report for 2018-2019 provides a summary of services delivered under the Northwest Territories (NWT) *Child and Family Services Act* from April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019.

There are several principles on which the *Child and Family Services Act* is designed, including promoting and protecting the best interests and well-being of children and their families and protecting children from harm and abuse. Assessing the best interest of the child includes consideration of the child and family's unique cultural values and practices and their capacity to meaningfully participate in planning and decision-making processes. Promoting the integrity and stability of the family is an essential measure when considering the best interest of the child.

In 2016, a planned, major restructuring of the Health and Social Services Authorities (HSSAs) was achieved, resulting in the integration of six former Authorities into a single Authority, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA). The Tłı̨chǫ Community Services Agency (TCSA), and the Hay River HSSA, continued as separate entities. Since that time, significant enhancements to the child and family services system were implemented, and this work is expected to continue beyond 2018-2019, enabling the Department and Authorities to continue to expand on the opportunities associated with system integration. For example, the establishment of Deputy Directors of Practice within the Authorities to work collaboratively with the Statutory Director and the Departmental Deputy Directors; the implementation of the training team which includes representation from the Department and Authorities; and the intersection of the Departmental audits and Authorities' quality reviews.

The Director of Child and Family Services is appointed by the Minister of Health and Social Services and has delegated duties and powers under the *Child and Family Services Act*. The Director's duties are supported by Deputy Directors, who are appointed by the Director to carry out certain decision-making functions in the NWT. Assistant Directors can also be appointed for specific NWT regions and/or communities. Assistant Directors act on behalf of the Director at the regional level, in accordance with their appointed duties. Frontline Managers, Supervisors, Community Social Services Workers and Family and Community Social Workers, receive specialized training to become appointed as "Child Protection Workers". The appointment of Deputy Directors, Assistant Directors, and Child Protection Workers ensures that the Child and Family Services system provides appropriate supports and services to children and families, who are served under the *Child and Family Services Act*.

On March 31, 2019, there were 78 individuals across the territory appointed by the Director of Child and Family Services under the *Child and Family Services Act*.

Table 1  
Number of Individuals with Statutory Appointments by Authority/Region

Authority/Region	Number of individuals with a child protection appointment	Number of individuals with an assistant director (AD) or deputy director (DD) appointment
<b>NTHSSA</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>5 AD</b>
Beaufort-Delta	12	1 AD
Sahtu	5	1 AD
Deh Cho	6	1 AD
Yellowknife	17	1 AD
Fort Smith	5	1 AD
<b>Hay River</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1 AD</b>
<b>Tłı̨chǫ</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1 AD</b>
<b>Department</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3 DD</b>
<b>NTHSSA Executive</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2 DD</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>12</b>

### Child and Family Services Intervention in the Northwest Territories

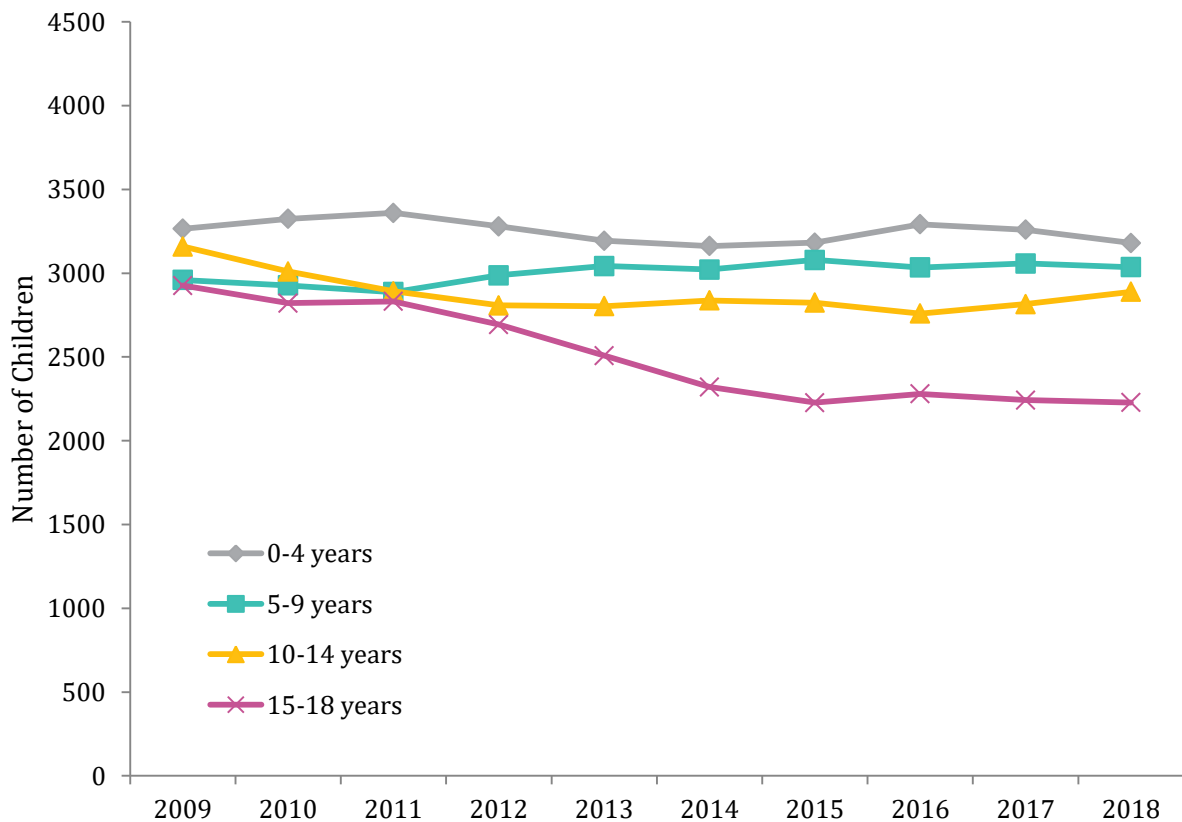
The nature of the work involved in the delivery of Child and Family Services is highly sensitive, complex, and challenging. Community Social Services Workers and Family and Community Social Workers must deliver, and/or facilitate the delivery of prevention services through voluntary support services agreements, and they are also required to deliver child protection services. They are appointed as Child Protection Workers under the *Act*, and they are required to take great care in ensuring the protection of children. Child and Family Services staff are required to pay close attention to the full range of factors affecting a child’s safety, healthy growth and development, including, but not limited to the preservation of the child’s connection to their family, extended family, community and culture. In the process of carrying out their work, Child and Family Services staff are expected to successfully manage and navigate complex relationships and communication with multiple stakeholders, while following legislative requirements, policy and best practices.

In this context, collaborative processes with parents, children, family members and caregivers are key to addressing conflicts and seeking the most appropriate solution while ensuring consideration is given to cultural and socio-economic influences. Child and Family Services staff must demonstrate sound clinical judgment skills in accordance with leading child and family services practices, and a thorough understanding of legal procedures and processes.

## NWT Child Population

According to the NWT Bureau of Statistics population estimates, between 2009 and 2018, the overall population of the Northwest Territories grew by 3.2% (from 43,156 to 44,541). However, in that same ten year time period, the population aged 0 to 18 years of age decreased by 8.0%, from 12,310 in 2009 to 11,333 in 2018. An overall decrease in the child population aged 0 to 4 and 10 to 18 was observed between 2009 and 2018, with a decrease of 2.6% in children aged 0 to 4, 8.5% in children aged 10 to 14 and 23.9% in children aged 15-18. The change in child population has not been consistent across all age groups; this can be observed in Figure 1.

Figure 1  
NWT Child Population by Age Group



### 3. INITIAL INVOLVEMENT WITH CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Child and Family Services provide supports and/or services to children and families in one of three ways: 1) A report of suspected child maltreatment; or 2) a request for voluntary support services; or 3) a referral to another service for help. Referral sources in all three cases vary. Some parents, caregivers, children, or youth contact Child and Family Services to ask for help, while others may be brought to the attention of Child Protection Workers through a report of suspected child maltreatment.

In situations where families or youth are requesting assistance, a wide range of services can be facilitated. Those seeking assistance are assessed to determine needs. An assessment includes meeting with the parent(s) and/or child(ren) to identify resources within the household, any community resources required and the provision of referrals for services needed to address short and long-term needs of the family. Youth aged 16 to 18 can also apply for these services.

When a report of suspected child maltreatment is received, a Child Protection Worker will complete an initial screening to assess and prioritize the concern. Child maltreatment is any situation where a child may need protection according to the conditions that are set out in Section 7 (3) of the *Child and Family Services Act* (Appendix A). During the initial screening of a report, a Screening Response and Priority Assessment® tool is used to assist the Child Protection Worker in responding appropriately. If child maltreatment is suspected after the initial screening, a full investigation is initiated.

Table 2 shows the total number of reports of suspected child maltreatment, and requests for voluntary support services through Voluntary Services Agreements (children 0-18 years) and Support Services Agreements (youth 16-18 years). Information on these services is provided in Table 2. As this information has only become available with the launch of Matrix NT, tables in this section include data from April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019.

Table 2  
Total Reports of Suspected Maltreatment and Voluntary Support Services  
April 1, 2018 – March 31, 2019

	Number	Percentage
Report of Suspected Maltreatment	1427	79%
Request for Voluntary Services Agreement	330	18%
Request for Support Services Agreement	54	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1811</b>	<b>100%</b>

The majority of instances where Child and Family Services initiates involvement are through a report of suspected maltreatment (79%). 18% of requests were for Voluntary Services Agreements and 3% for Support Services Agreements.

## Requests for Voluntary Support Services

There are a variety of reasons why a caregiver or youth may request voluntary support services. Table 3 illustrates the number of voluntary service agreement requests made. Often there can be more than one service for each request; therefore, the total number of services is higher than the total number of requests.

The requests for Voluntary Services Agreement (children 0-18) and Support Services Agreement (youth 16-18) are shown in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3  
Number of Voluntary Services Agreement Requests\*  
April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019

Reason for Request	Number of Requests	Percentage
Services to Improve Financial Situation	171	27%
Counselling	85	13%
Any Other Service Agreed to by the Director	70	11%
Services to Improve Housing Situation	54	8%
Respite Care	48	7%
Services to Improve Mental/Physical Development	48	7%
Parenting Programs	41	6%
Drug or Alcohol Treatment	38	6%
In-Home Support	36	6%
Education	30	5%
Illness of a Family Member	8	1%
Counselling, Training, or other Assistance to Obtain Employment	7	1%
Mediation of Dispute	x*	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Data has been suppressed due to small cell counts ( $\leq 5$ )

Table 4  
 Number of Support Services Agreement Requests  
 April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019

Reason for Request	Number of Requests	Percentage
Services to Improve Housing Situation	27	25%
Services to Improve Financial Situation	19	18%
Education	15	14%
Any Other Service Agreed to by the Director	9	8%
Counselling	9	8%
Services to Improve Mental/Physical Development	9	8%
Drug or Alcohol Treatment	x*	4%
In-Home Support	x*	4%
Mediation of Dispute	x*	4%
Counselling, Training, or other Assistance to Obtain Employment	x*	3%
Parenting Programs	x*	2%
Illness of a Family Member	x*	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Data has been suppressed due to small cell counts ( $\leq 5$ )

The majority of caregivers seeking assistance through a Voluntary Services Agreement are requesting services to improve their financial situation (27%) with the second most common reason being counselling (13%). The two top reasons for youth seeking assistance through a Support Services Agreement are for services to improve their housing situation (25%) and their financial situation (18%).

Table 5  
Accepted Voluntary Services Agreement Requests\*  
April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019

Reason for Request	Number of Requests	Number of Accepted Requests	Percentage of Requests Accepted
Mediation of Dispute	x**	x**	100%
Education	30	29	97%
Counselling	85	79	93%
Respite Care	48	44	92%
In-Home Support	36	33	92%
Drug or Alcohol Treatment	38	34	89%
Parenting Programs	41	35	85%
Services to Improve Housing Situation	54	45	83%
Services to Improve Mental/Physical Development	48	39	81%
Any Other Service Agreed to by the Director	70	56	80%
Illness of a Family Member	8	6	75%
Counselling, Training, or other Assistance to Obtain Employment	7	5	71%
Services to Improve Financial Situation	171	109	64%
<b>Total</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>81%</b>

\*The number of accepted Voluntary Services Agreement Requests may be underestimated. There is no secondary contact with the individual whose request was initially accepted and this could be due to a variety of reasons including no longer requiring the service or change of mind. Thus, the child protection worker changes the status of the accepted request to closed when it was initially accepted

\*\*Data has been suppressed due to small cell counts (≤5)

Table 6  
Accepted Support Services Agreement Requests\*  
April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019

Reason for Request	Number of Requests	Number of Requests Accepted	Percentage of Requests Accepted
Any Other Service Agreed to by the Director	9	9	100%
Counselling, Training, or other Assistance to Obtain Employment	x**	x**	100%
Education	15	15	100%
Illness of a Family Member	x**	x*	100%
In-Home Support	x**	x**	100%
Services to Improve Mental/Physical Development	9	8	89%
Services to Improve Financial Situation	19	15	79%
Counselling	9	7	78%
Drug or Alcohol Treatment	x**	x**	75%
Services to Improve Housing Situation	27	15	56%
Mediation of Dispute	x**	x**	50%
Parenting Programs	x**	x**	50%
<b>Total</b>	106	83	78%

\*The number of accepted Support Services Agreement Requests may be underestimated. There is no secondary contact with the individual whose request was initially accepted, and this could be due to a variety of reasons including no longer requiring the service or change of mind. Thus, the child protection worker changes the status of the accepted request to closed when it was initially accepted

\*\*Data has been suppressed due to small cell counts (≤5)

There are some instances when a caregiver or youth do not meet the requirements for the services that they are seeking. In these circumstances, families and individuals are provided with information and referral to other programs and services that might better meet their needs.

The accepted requests for Voluntary Services Agreement (children 0-18) and Support Services Agreement (youth 16-18) are shown in Table 5 and Table 6. Of all the requests for voluntary services, 81% of requests for Voluntary Services Agreements and 78% of Support Services Agreements were accepted. As there can be multiple services per request, there are also multiple accepted reasons per request.

The top accepted services for Voluntary Services Agreement requested were the mediation of a dispute (100%), education (97%), counselling (93%), and respite care (92%). There were 1207 individual children associated with the 519 accepted requests for voluntary support services.

The top accepted services for Support Services Agreements requested were any other service agreed to by the Director (100%), counselling, training, or other assistance to obtain employment (100%), and education (100%). There were 57 youth associated with the 83 accepted requests for support services.



## Reports of Suspected Child Maltreatment

Any individual is required by law to report a concern to Child and Family Services if they suspect child maltreatment. Each report undergoes an initial assessment before being closed or before an investigation is initiated. Table 8 captures the number of suspected child maltreatment reports.

Table 7 shows the source of the report of suspected child maltreatment.

Table 7  
Source of Report of Suspected Child Maltreatment  
April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019

Source of Report	Number of Reports	Percentage
Police	456	32%
Community*	259	18%
Relative	245	17%
Non-Relative / Community Member	175	12%
Custodial Parent	91	6%
Unknown	82	6%
Non-Custodial Parent	58	4%
Child Protection Service	39	3%
Child (Subject of Referral)	22	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1427</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Community refers to government and non-government agencies

The most common source of reported suspected maltreatment was the police (32%), followed by community (18%), and a relative (17%). Reports from relatives, custodial parents, non-custodial parents, and children accounted for 29% of all reports received.

There are 20 conditions set out in Section 7(3) of the *Child and Family Services Act* (Appendix A) where a child may be found to need protection. These conditions are classified into five common categories: Neglect, Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Exposure to Family Violence.

Table 8 shows the number of reports of suspected child maltreatment by type. As there can be multiple children with more than one type of suspected maltreatment within the same report, the total number of reported suspected maltreatment types (3803) is higher than the total number of reports (1427).

Table 8  
Type of Suspected Child Maltreatment Reported  
April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019

<b>Type of Suspected Child Maltreatment Reported</b>	<b>Number of Reported Types</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Neglect	1692	44%
Exposure to Family Violence	861	23%
Emotional Abuse	860	23%
Physical Abuse	233	6%
Sexual Abuse	157	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3803</b>	<b>100%</b>

Neglect accounted for 44% of suspected child maltreatment reports. Exposure to family violence accounted for 23% of suspected child maltreatment reports, followed by emotional abuse (23%), then physical abuse (6%) and sexual abuse (4%).

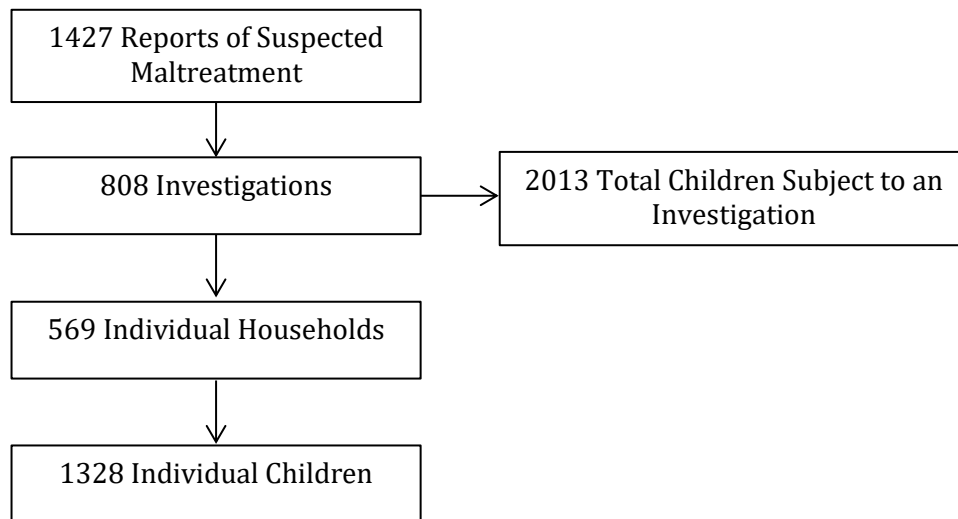
Child Protection Workers also receive reported concerns that do not meet the conditions of child maltreatment. In those instances, the report is closed after the initial screening, and a full investigation is not conducted. Voluntary support services may be offered to these families.

## Investigations

When a report has been initially screened, and there is a reason to suspect child maltreatment, an investigation is initiated. Investigations include but are not limited to a visit to the family home, and interviews with the child(ren), parents and other family members residing in the home. To ensure objective and consistent practice, a Safety Assessment® and Risk of Future Harm Assessment® are completed as part of the investigation. These assessments assist the Child Protection Worker in determining the child's immediate safety needs as well as their risk of abuse or neglect in short to medium term.

Chart 1 shows the number of individual children whose safety was subject to an investigation between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2019.

Chart 1  
Investigations  
April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019



The number of reports of suspected maltreatment is higher than the number of investigations started between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2019. There is a difference in the number of reports and the numbers of investigations because some reports are closed at screening; while others are multiple reports of suspected child maltreatment leading to a single investigation. There were 2013 children associated with the 808 investigations, and there were 1328 individual children whose safety was subject to an investigation.

## 4. SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

### Number of Children Receiving Services

When a family or youth is receiving voluntary support services, or when a child is found to be in need of protection, the child and/or household is given a type of Child and Family Services legal status. Legal status is required to enable Child and Family Services to provide support or services. The status is identified through the *Child and Family Services Act*, which enables the provision of services to the child and family.

Figure 2 shows the number of Child and Family Services statuses, as well as the number of children who had a status during the fiscal year 2018-2019. As a child can have more than one status within one fiscal year, the number of statuses is considerably higher than the number of children who had one or more statuses during the fiscal year.

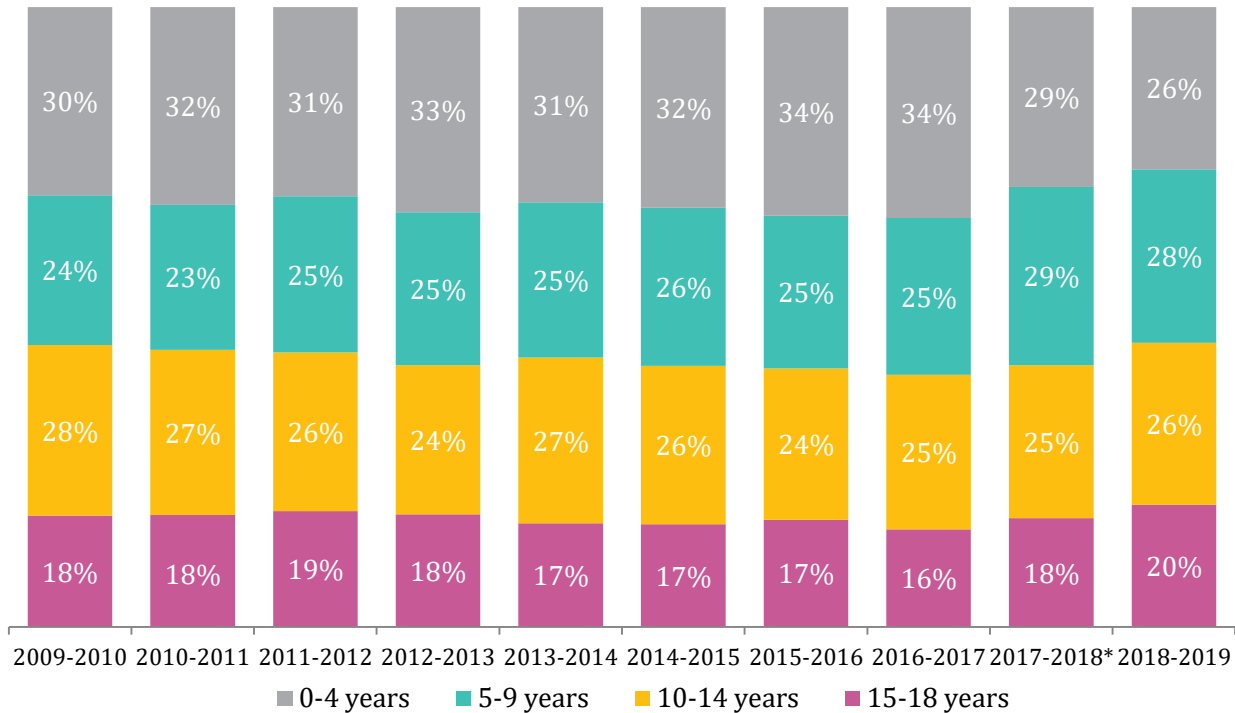
Figure 2  
Total Number of Children with a Child and Family Services Status, and Total Number of Statuses  
April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019



During the 2018-2019 fiscal year, there were 1364 Child and Family Services statuses, and there were 1067 unique children with a Child and Family Services Status.

Figure 3 shows the proportion of children with a Child and Family Services status by age group.

Figure 3  
Proportion of Children with a Child and Family Services Status by Age Group  
April 1, 2009, to March 31, 2019

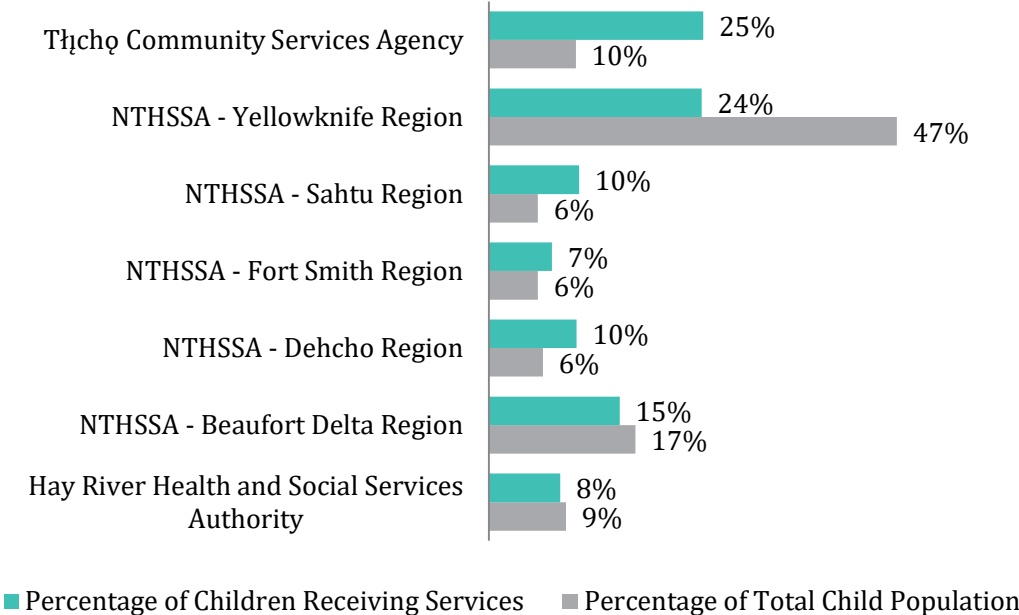


\*2017-2018 data is for a six month period only (April 1, 2017 – September 30, 2017). Comparison to previous years should be done with caution.

While there has been some variation over the past ten years, there has not been a statistically significant change in the percentage of children in the 0-4 years, 10-14 years and 15-18 years age category among children with a Child and Family Services status. There has been a statistically significant decrease in the percentage of children in the 5-9 years age category.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of children with a Child and Family Services status from April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019, by Authorities and Regions. The distribution of the overall NWT child population is also presented as a comparison.

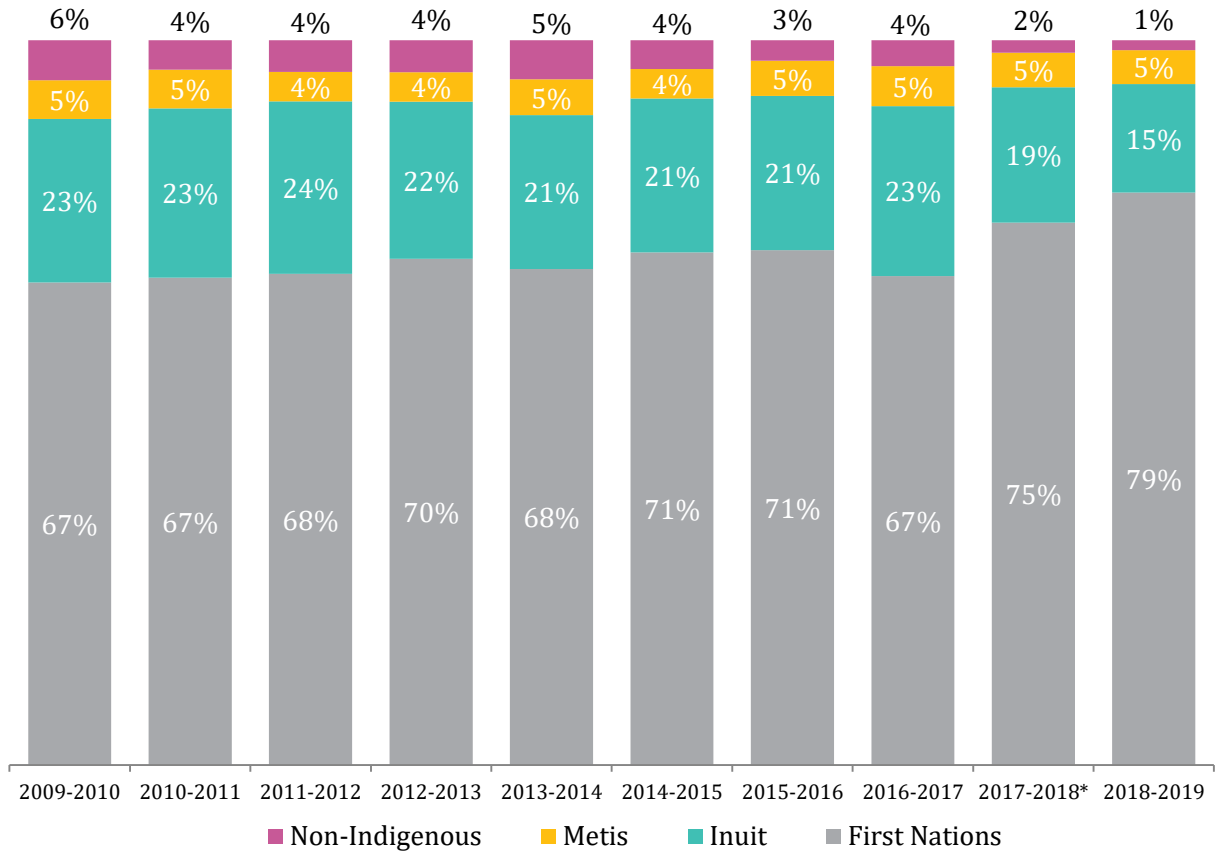
Figure 4  
 Distribution of Children Receiving Services by Authority/Region  
 April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019



As shown above, there is a disproportionate percentage of children receiving voluntary and protection services in the TCSA and the NTHSSA – Yellowknife Region when compared to the general child population. While children in the TCSA represent 10% of the population, they account for 25% of children receiving services. The NTHSSA - Yellowknife Region, which represents 47% of the overall child population, accounts for only 24% of children receiving services.

Figure 5 shows the percentage of children with a Child and Family Services status by ethnicity.

Figure 5  
Proportion of Children with a Child and Family Services Status by Ethnicity  
April 1, 2009, to March 31, 2019



\*2017-2018 data is for a six month period only (April 1, 2017 – September 30, 2017). Comparison to previous years should be done with caution.

During the past ten years, there has been a statistically significant change in the proportion of children with a Child and Family Services Status who are First Nations, Inuit, and Non-Indigenous children. However, there has not been a statistically significant change in the proportion of children who are Metis.

## **Types of Child and Family Services Statuses**

The *Child and Family Services Act* identifies that services can be offered to children and families either by agreement between the Child Protection Worker and the family or via court order. Services by agreement allow families to access supports and services to strengthen families and address or prevent child protection concerns. When child protection concerns cannot be adequately addressed by agreement in this way, a child protection order may be sought from the court to ensure the safety of the child.

### **Services by Agreement**

The three types of services by agreement that are included are Voluntary Services Agreements (birth to 18 years), Plan of Care Agreements (birth to 15 years), and Support Services Agreements for youth (16 to 18 years).

Voluntary Service Agreements are used where it is determined that the child and family have the potential to benefit from services that are preventative in nature. Plan of Care Agreements are used when child protection concerns are present, but an agreement with the family is determined to be the most appropriate tool to address these concerns. Examples of services provided or facilitated under both Voluntary Services Agreements and Plan of Care Agreements include counselling, addictions treatment, interim foster or respite care, and financial or material assistance such as food or rent. Support Services Agreements address the needs of youth, who may require supportive services such as counselling, housing supports or addictions treatment.

On April 1, 2016, amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act* came into force, which included Extended Support Services Agreements (ESSAs). These agreements are for any young adult (previously under the permanent custody of the Director until they reach their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday) who requests an extension of support services prior to their nineteenth birthday. An ESSA can be offered to these young adults until age 23. Since 2016-2017 was the first fiscal year that ESSAs were put into place, young adults with an Extended Support Services Agreement are not included in the analysis but are reported on separately.

### **Court-Ordered Services**

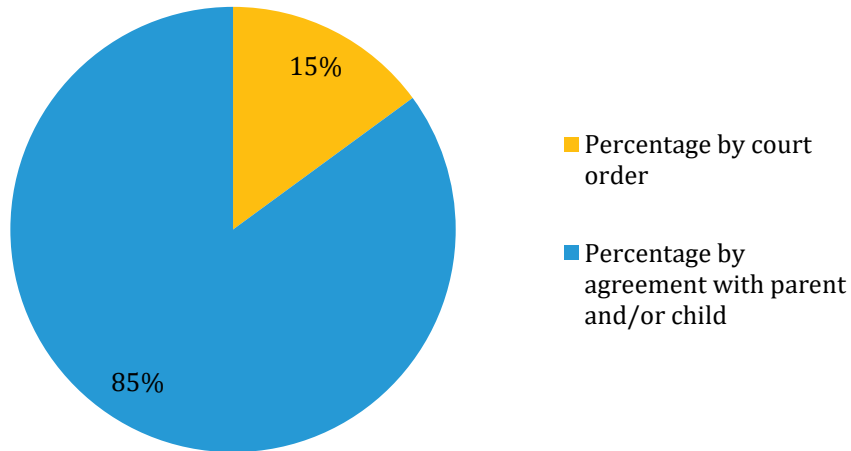
In circumstances where child protection concerns cannot be resolved to ensure the safety of the child, a court order may be sought. Court-ordered actions include Supervision Orders (under which the child remains in the home), Temporary and Permanent Custody Orders. In these circumstances, the parent has a right to be represented by legal counsel, and in many situations, especially in Permanent Custody applications, the child/youth is also entitled to legal counsel.

Under the recent amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*, youth (age 16-18) can now be found in need of protection. When this occurs, a Child Protection Worker must apply to the court for either a temporary custody order or permanent custody order.



Figure 6 illustrates the percentage of children with a status by court order or by agreement.

Figure 6  
Percentage of Statuses by Court Order\* and by Agreement\*\*  
April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019



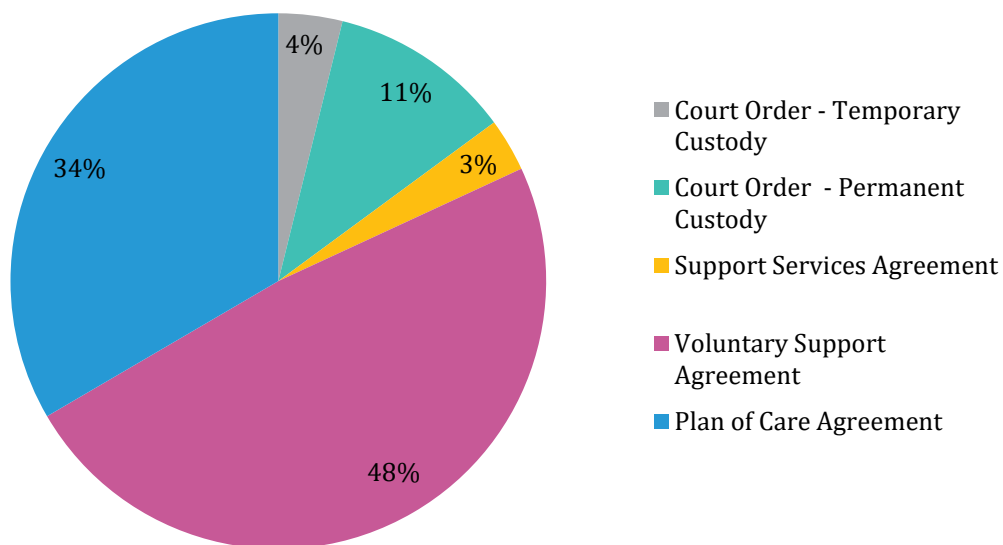
\*Supervision orders and apprehensions have been removed from the statuses considered in this analysis. Supervision orders are not collected accurately in the Matrix NT system; therefore, they were excluded. Apprehensions can be a precursor to both statuses by court order and statuses by agreement, and therefore including them in the analysis as a “court-ordered status” was inaccurate.

\*\*With the shift from CFIS to Matrix NT, the number of Voluntary Services Agreement (VSA) have increased because reporting practices have changed and VSAs are now assigned to the household, and include the full number of children in the household. The calculation of the number of VSAs is completed by assigning a VSA to each child in the household. Comparison to previous years should not be completed for this reason.

Between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2019, 85% of statuses are by agreement with the parent and/or child/youth, and the remaining 15% are by court order.

Figure 7 presents the percentage of statuses by type between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2019.

Figure 7  
Percentage of Status (Court-Ordered\* and by Agreement\*\*) by Type  
April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019



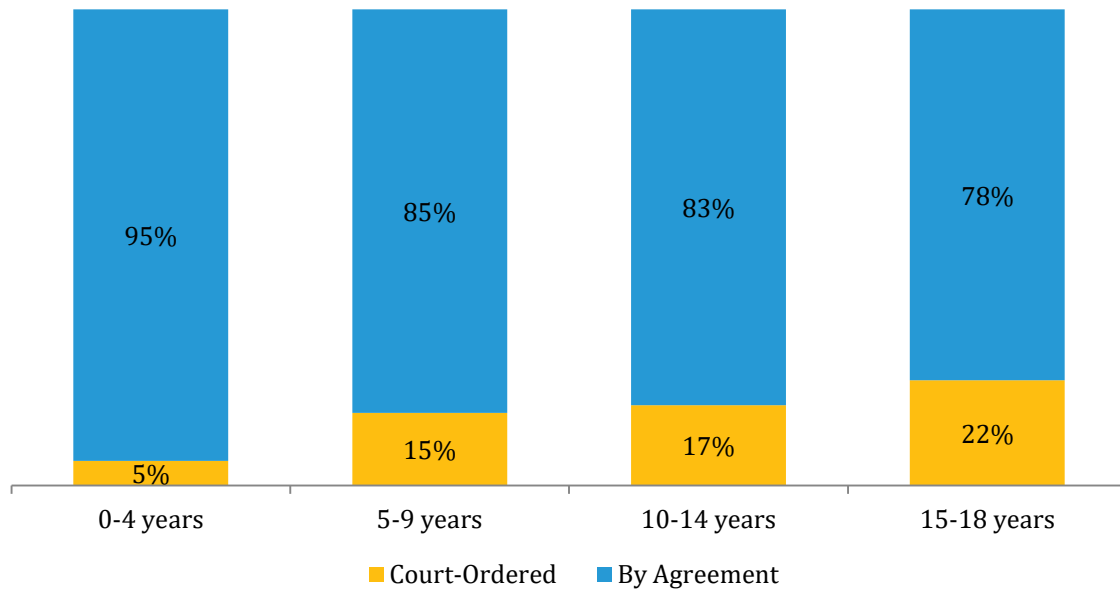
\*Supervision orders and apprehensions have been removed from the statuses considered in this analysis. Supervision orders are not collected accurately in the Matrix NT system; therefore, they were excluded. Apprehensions can be a precursor to both statuses by court order and statuses by agreement, and therefore including them in the analysis as a "court-ordered status" was inaccurate.

\*\*With the shift from CFIS to Matrix NT, Matrix associates Voluntary Service Agreements with a household, rather than a child, as they were thought to benefit all children living in the household. As a result, all children are being attached to a legal status when they may not have a legal status directly related to them. Comparison to previous years should not be completed for this reason.

Between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2019, the majority of children receiving services had a status by agreement (approximately 85%). This included 48% with a Voluntary Services Agreement, 34% with a Plan of Care Agreement, and 3% with a Support Services Agreement. 15% of children received services through a court-ordered status. This included 4% by Temporary Custody Order and 11% by Permanent Custody Order.

Figure 8 shows the percentage of statuses that are by agreement or by court order, by age of the child.

Figure 8  
Type of Status (Court-Ordered\* or By Agreement\*\*) by Age Group  
April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019



\*Supervision orders and apprehensions have been removed from the statuses considered in this analysis. Supervision orders are not collected accurately in the Matrix NT system; therefore, they were excluded. Apprehensions can be a precursor to both statuses by court order and statuses by agreement, and therefore including them in the analysis as a “court-ordered status” was inaccurate.

\*\*With the shift from CFIS to Matrix NT, Matrix associates Voluntary Service Agreements with a household, rather than a child, as they were thought to benefit all children living in the household. As a result, all children are being attached to a legal status when they may not have a legal status directly related to them. Comparison to previous years should not be completed for this reason.

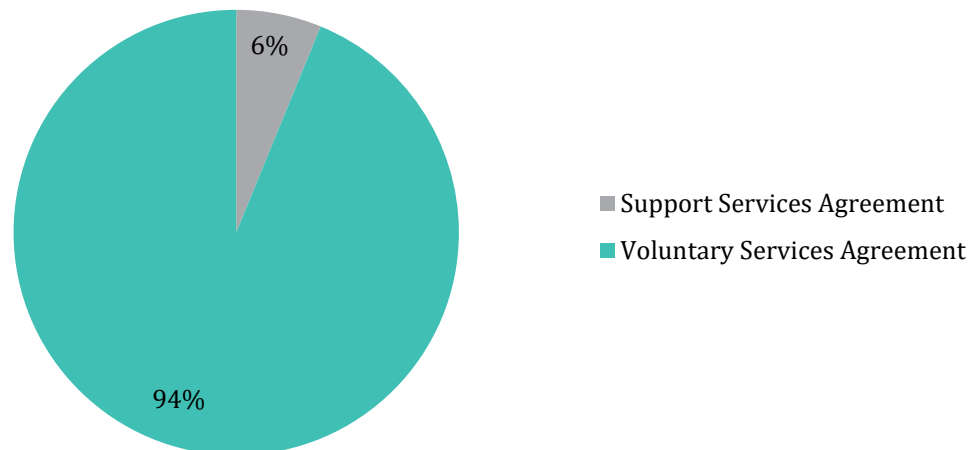
As can be seen in Figure 9, the proportion of statuses by agreement is higher in the youngest age group than in the older age groups, with 95% of statuses by agreement in the 0-4 age group, and between 78% and 85% of statuses by agreement in ages 5-18.

## 5. VOLUNTARY SUPPORT SERVICES

The *Child and Family Services Act* sets out the opportunity for the provision of voluntary support services. Child and Family Services staff meet with the parent or caregiver of the child and any child over 12 and can negotiate a Voluntary Services Agreement that identifies a plan to support the child and family. When a youth is between the ages of 16 to 18, they can enter into individual voluntary support services through a Support Services Agreement. These two agreements combined represent voluntary support services.

Figure 9 presents the percentage of Voluntary Services Agreement and Support Services Agreement.

Figure 9  
Percentage of Voluntary Services Agreement and Support Services Agreement  
April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019



Between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2019, there was a total of 549 Voluntary Support Services statuses. Voluntary Services Agreements and Support Services Agreements comprise 94% and 6%, respectively.

### Voluntary Services Agreements

Voluntary Services Agreements are designed to strengthen families and support children and youth. Under a Voluntary Services Agreement, the care and custody of the child remains with the parents and, as the service is voluntary, families may elect to end the Voluntary Services Agreement at any time. Amendments were made to Voluntary Services Agreements on April 1, 2016, to extend these

services to families with children up until the age of majority. Between April 1, 2018 and March 31, 2019, there were 515 individual children receiving services through a Voluntary Services Agreement.

### Support Services Agreements

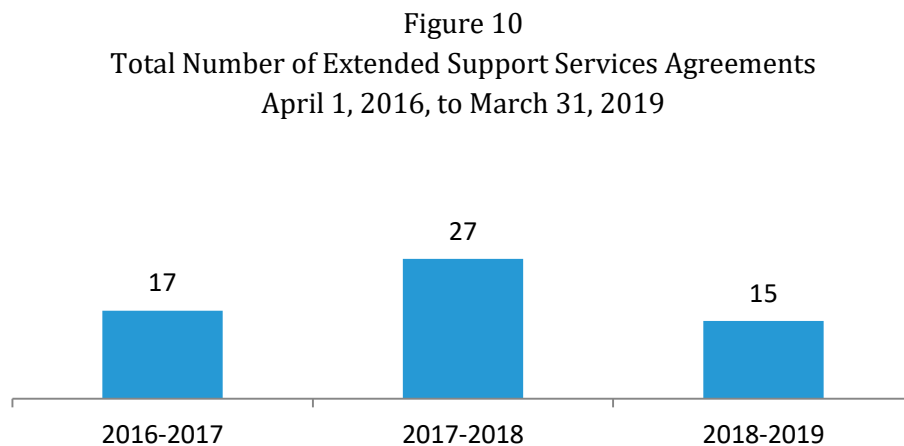
Youth, aged 16 to 18 years, who cannot live with their parents, can similarly access assistance voluntarily through a Support Services Agreement. Under this agreement, the youth may be provided with supports such as housing, financial support and/or addictions treatment. Between April 1, 2018 and March 31, 2019, there were 34 individual youth who received services under a Support Services Agreement.

### Extended Support Services Agreements

These agreements are available to young adults, age 19-22 years, through the newly established Extended Support Services Agreement, provided that they were in the permanent custody of the Director on the day before their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. The purpose of this agreement type is to assist the young adult in transitioning to independent living.

In 2018-2019, 67% of children in permanent care who reached the age of majority signed Extended Support Services Agreements.

Figure 10 shows the total number of Extended Support Services Agreements between April 1, 2016, and March 31, 2019.



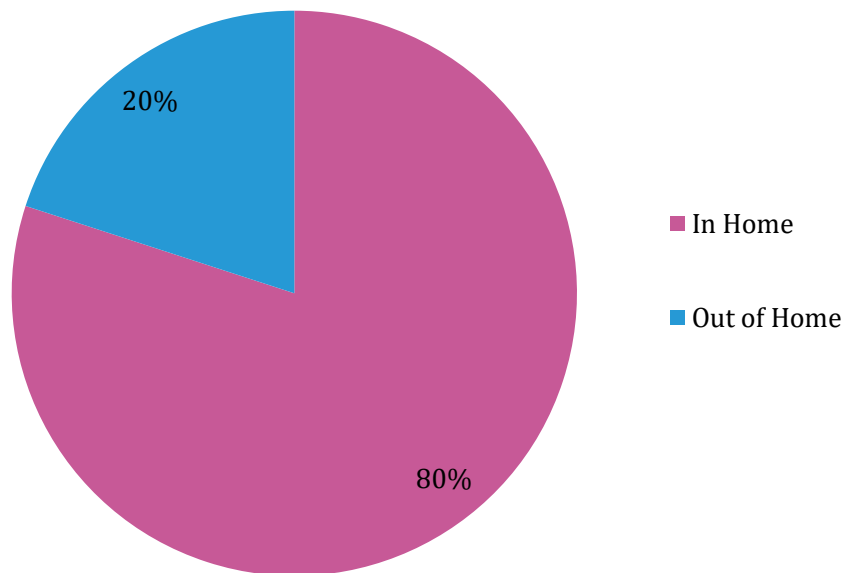
In 2018-2019, 15 young adults participated in an Extended Support Services Agreement.

## 6. PLAN OF CARE AGREEMENTS

Plan of Care Agreements enables parents to retain care and custody of their children while they address child protection concerns. Child Protection Workers work collaboratively with the family to identify the strengths and needs of the family and facilitate a plan to address the child protection concerns in the home while avoiding the court system. During this time, children may be living in the home or in a placement resource such as an extended family foster home or regular foster home. Placements are described in more detail in Section 10.

Figure 11 presents the proportion of children with a Plan of Care Agreement by Location.

Figure 11  
Proportion of children with a Plan of Care Agreement by Location  
April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019



Between April 1, 2018 and March 31, 2019, 34% of statuses were a Plan of Care Agreement and there were 355 individual children who had a Plan of Care Agreement. The majority of children with a Plan of Care Agreement were residing in the home (80%) compared to 20% of children who were in a placement resource.

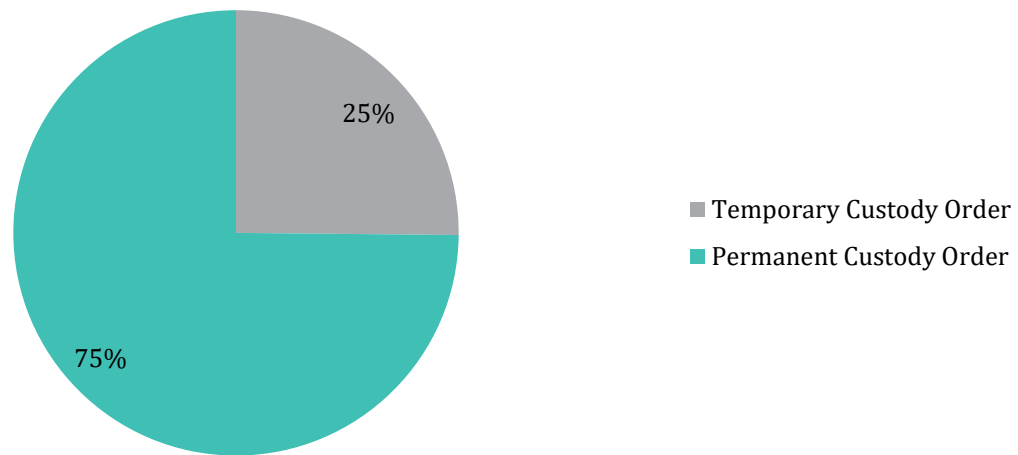
Plan of Care Agreements are distinct from Voluntary Service Agreements and Court-Ordered Services, in that they are agreements established with families where children have been determined to be in need of protection; they are being analyzed separately throughout this report.

## 7. COURT- ORDERED SERVICES

In situations where a Plan of Care Agreement is not able to mitigate child protection concerns, or where a Plan of Care Agreement is not feasible to effectively address a child protection concern, the matter may be referred to the Territorial Court. Under the *Child and Family Services Act*, there are three orders that may be sought; a Supervision Order, a Temporary Custody Order, or a Permanent Custody Order. A Supervision Order allows the child to remain in the home under the supervision of the Director of Child and Family Services so that Child Protection Workers can continue to monitor child protection concerns in the home and act accordingly. A Temporary Custody Order allows the Director to assume temporary care and custody of the child for a period not to exceed two years. A Permanent Custody Order places the child in the custody of the Director until they reach the age of 16, and this may be extended until the child's 19<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Figure 12 presents the percentage of Temporary Custody Order and Permanent Custody Order; a description of the following services is available in the Glossary.

Figure 12  
Percentage for Court-Ordered\* Services  
April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019



\*Supervision order and apprehensions have been removed from the statuses considered in this analysis. Supervision orders are not collected accurately in the Matrix NT system; therefore, they were excluded. Apprehensions can be a precursor to both statuses by court order and statuses by agreement, and therefore including them in the analysis as a "court-ordered status" was inaccurate.

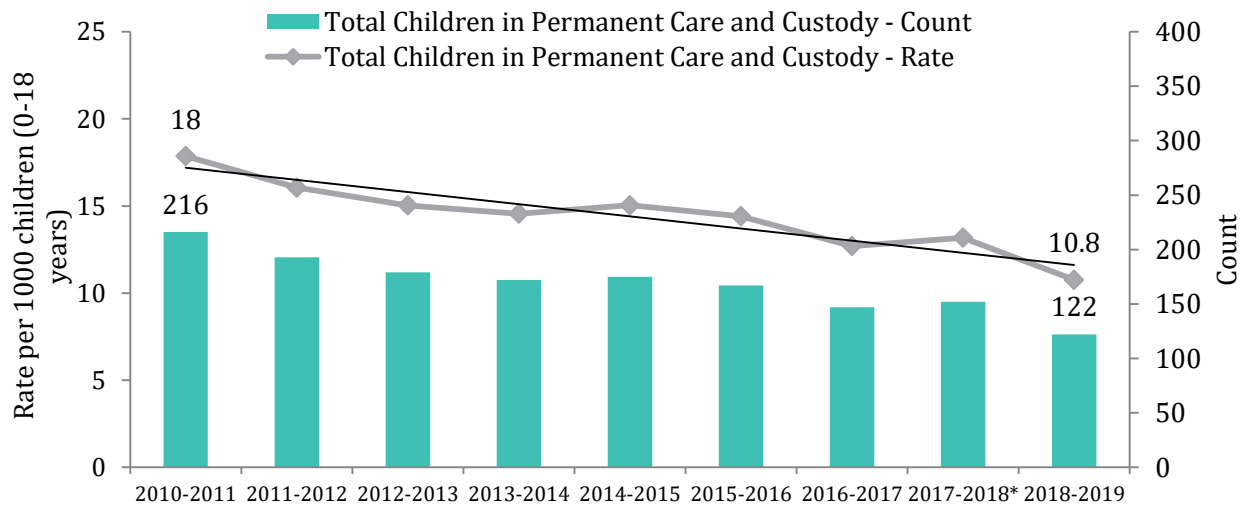
Between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2019, there were a total of 163 Court-Ordered Services. Of the Court-Ordered Services, the percentage for Temporary Custody Order and Permanent Custody Order is 25% and 75%, respectively.



## 8. CHILDREN IN PERMANENT CUSTODY

Figure 13 shows the total number of children as well as the rate of children who are in permanent custody of the Director of Child and Family Services.

Figure 13  
Total Children in Permanent Custody  
April 1, 2009, to March 31, 2019



\*2017-2018 data is for a six month period only (April 1, 2017 – September 30, 2017). Comparison to previous years should be done with caution.

Over the past ten years, there has been a significant decrease in the population-based rate of children in permanent custody.

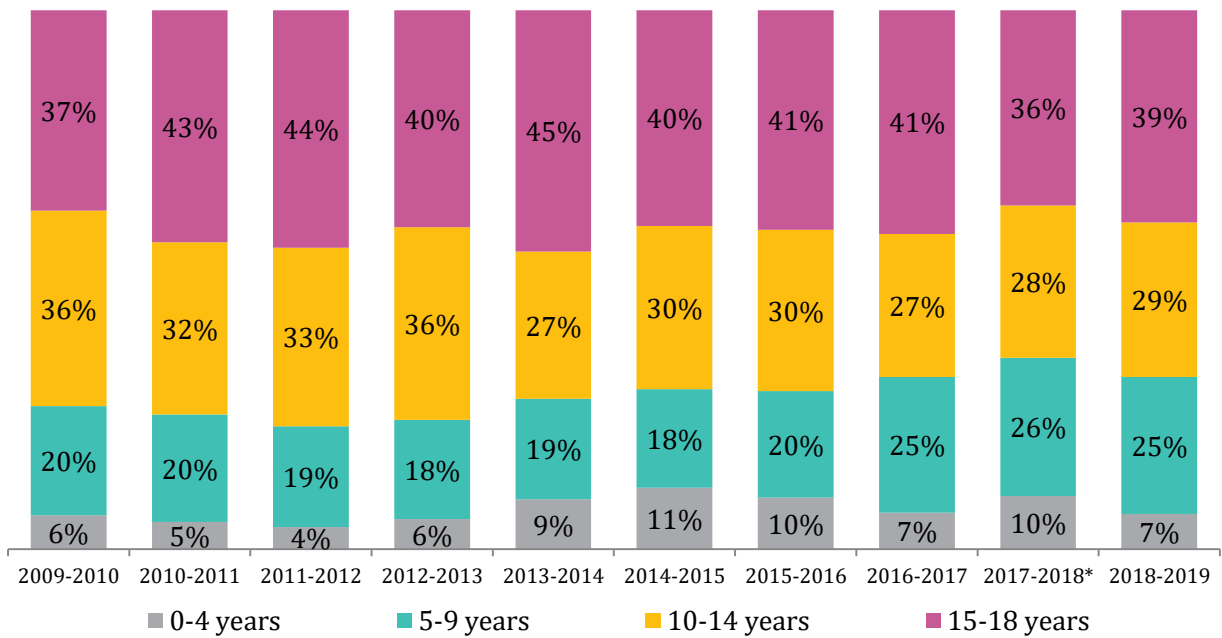
Table 10 shows the age distribution of children with Permanent Custody Orders.

Table 10  
Children in Permanent Custody by Age Group  
April 1, 2009, to March 31, 2019

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
0-4 years	15	11	8	10	16	20	16	10	15	8
5-9 years	48	43	36	33	32	32	33	37	39	31
10-14 years	86	69	64	64	47	53	50	39	43	35
15-18 years	88	93	85	72	77	70	68	61	55	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>122</b>

Figure 14 represents the proportion of children in permanent custody.

Figure 14  
Proportion of Children in Permanent Custody by Age Group  
April 1, 2009, to March 31, 2019



\*2017-2018 data is for a six month period only (April 1, 2017 – September 30, 2017). Comparison to previous years should be done with caution.

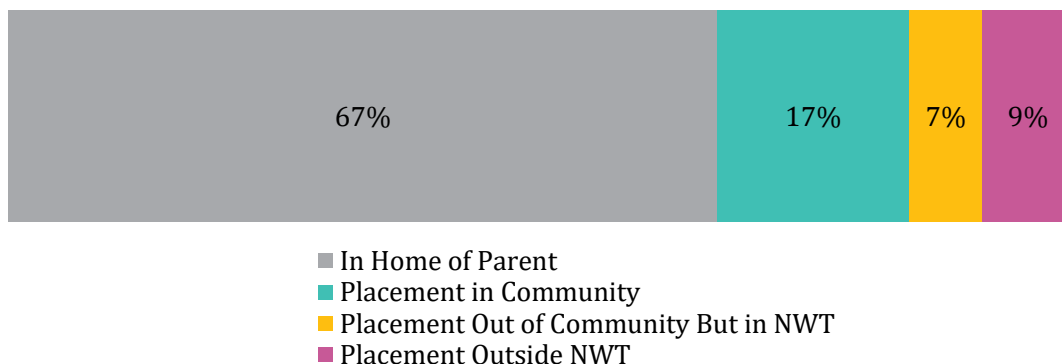
The proportion of children in the 15-18 years age group has increased significantly over the ten-year period. During the same period, the proportion of children in other age groups has not changed significantly. The majority of children and youth in permanent custody are ten years or older, comprising 68% of the children and youth in permanent custody in 2018-2019.

## 9. LOCATION OF CHILDREN RECEIVING SERVICES

Whenever possible, services are provided to children and families while the children are still residing in the parental home. However, children may require services outside of their parental home for a variety of reasons, including voluntary placement in care due to a temporary emergency, or non-voluntary placement due to an apprehension. When a child receives services outside of the home, Child Protection Workers work with the family to find an appropriate placement. Wherever possible, the first placement option is with extended family and within the home community. Children who remain in their home community have reduced disruption to their lives as their social activities, friends, extended family, and cultural activities and traditions are more likely to be maintained. Along with keeping their community supports, children can be served by Child Protection Workers who are familiar with the community.

Figure 15 shows the distribution of children receiving services by location.

Figure 15  
Distribution of Locations of Children Receiving Services\*  
April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019



\*With the shift from CFIS to Matrix NT, Matrix associates Voluntary Service Agreements with a household, rather than a child, as they were thought to benefit all children living in the household. Comparison to previous years should not be completed for this reason.

In 2018-2019, 84% of children receiving services were either in their home or placed in a foster home within their community. Of the 16% of children who were placed in a foster home outside of their home community, 9% of foster home placements were made outside of the NWT and 7% of foster home placements occurred outside of the home community, but elsewhere within the NWT. With the shift of information systems from CFIS to Matrix NT, the number of children receiving services in the home of a parent has statistically increased because of the reporting practices for Voluntary Services Agreement (VSA). VSAs are now assigned to the household, and the calculation of the number of VSAs is completed by assigning a VSA to each child in the household.

## Placement Resources

### **Foster Homes**

Foster homes provide care for children who are unable to live in their family home. There are three types of foster homes in the NWT: regular, extended family, and provisional. Regular foster homes can provide care to any child or youth that is placed in foster care. Extended family and provisional foster homes are extended family members or community members who are known to the child or youth and are available to accommodate that specific child until that child no longer needs foster care.

### **Group Homes**

Group homes are sites where multiple children or youth live in a home-like setting, cared for by either house parents, or a staff of trained caregivers. There are three group homes in the NWT: Polar Crescent Group Home in Fort Smith; Inuvik Youth Group Home in Inuvik; and the Rycon Foster Family Shelter Home in Yellowknife. Polar Crescent Group Home and the Rycon Foster Family Shelter Home provide family-modelled care to between four and six children, while the Inuvik Youth Group Home concentrates on life skill development for up to seven youth as they prepare to transition out of care and into the community.

### **Northern Specialized Treatment Resources**

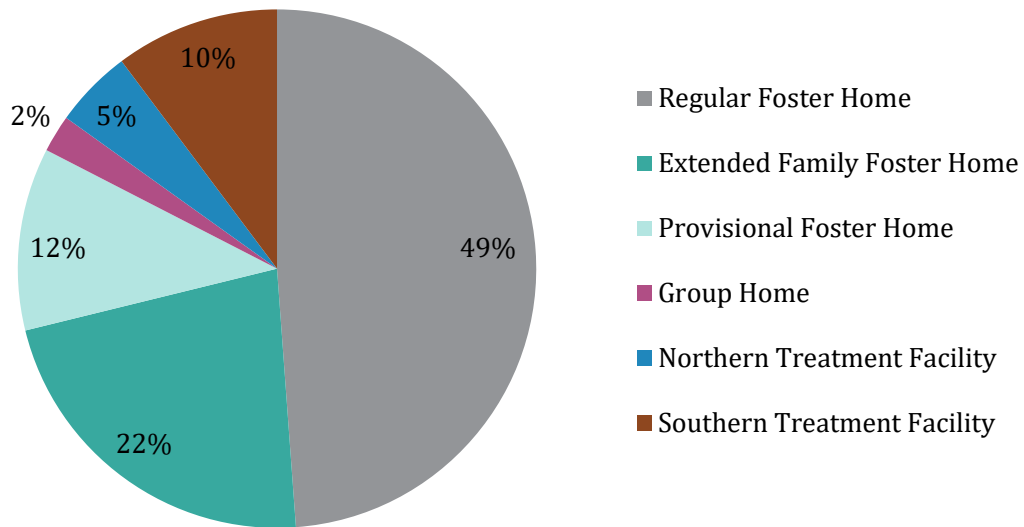
The Territorial Treatment Centre in Yellowknife provides treatment for up to eight children aged eight to 12 years and Trailcross Treatment Centre (Shift) located in Fort Smith provides treatment for up to eight youth aged 12 to 18 years. These two residential treatment resources in the Northwest Territories provide services for children or youth with behavioural, emotional, psychological or psychiatric issues.

### **Southern Specialized Treatment Resources**

Southern treatment resources are used to provide children and youth with specialized residential treatment or placement services that are not available in the NWT. In some cases, youth are in specialized treatment with their parents and families. The length of time that children or youth are placed in southern placements depends on the individual needs of the child or youth, and whether their needs may be met within the home community after their stay in a southern placement.

Figure 16 illustrates the proportion of usage of the different placement resources from April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019.

Figure 16  
Use of Placement Resources\*  
April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019



\*The numbers presented include all placements throughout the fiscal year, rather than just the last placement of the child. The percentage of individual children placed in each resource is represented in Figure 19. This figure does not account for children receiving services within the family home, which is the most common situation.

As shown, 49% of out of home placements were in regular foster homes, 22% were in extended family foster homes, and 12% were in provisional foster homes. Group home placements were 2% of all placements. Northern Treatment Facilities were used for 5% of placements, and 10% of placements were in Southern Treatment Facilities.

## 10. ADOPTION

As part of the Child and Family Services System, the adoption program, which is regulated under the NWT *Adoptions Act*, coordinates and manages registries of children available for adoption, approved adoptive families, completed adoptions, and responds to information requests regarding adoptions records.

In the Northwest Territories, there are four different types of adoptions: departmental, private, step-parent, and *Aboriginal* custom adoption. The first three types of adoptions are governed by the *Adoption Act*, while the *Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act* supports a simple administrative process to recognize a custom adoption. The *Adoption Act* allows for children to be adopted out-of-country through departmental or private adoptions.

Figure 17 identifies the annual distribution of adoptions over the past ten years. The average number of adoptions per year was 50, with 23 adoptions taking place during the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

Figure 17  
Total Adoption Orders Granted  
April 1, 2009, to March 31, 2019

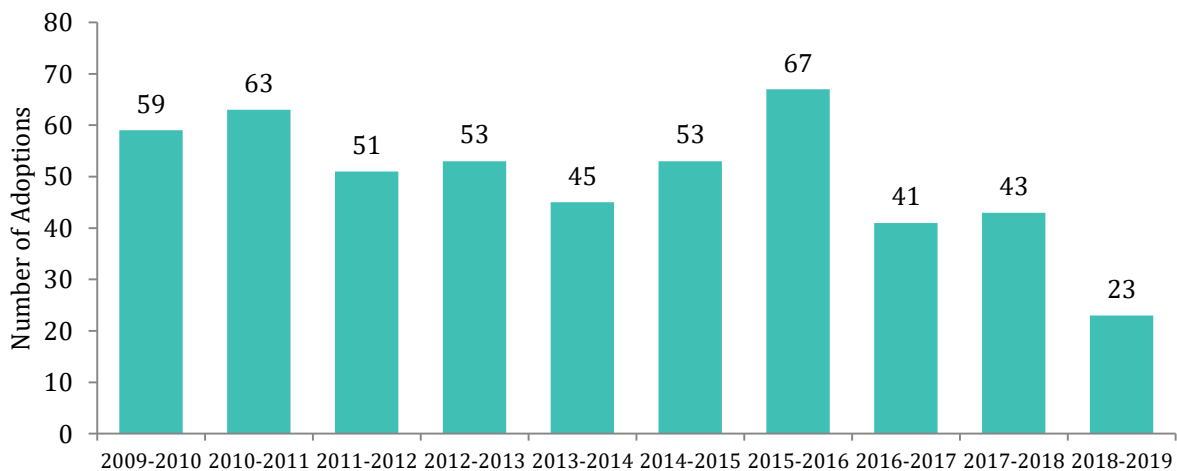
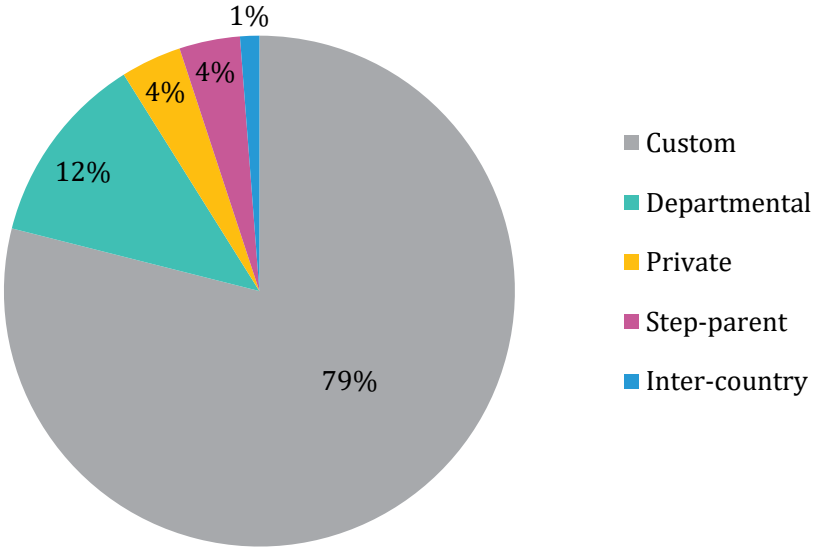


Figure 18 shows the percentage of adoptions between 2008-2009 and 2018-2019, by type of adoption.

Figure 18  
Percentage of Adoptions by Adoption Type  
April 1, 2009, to March 31, 2019



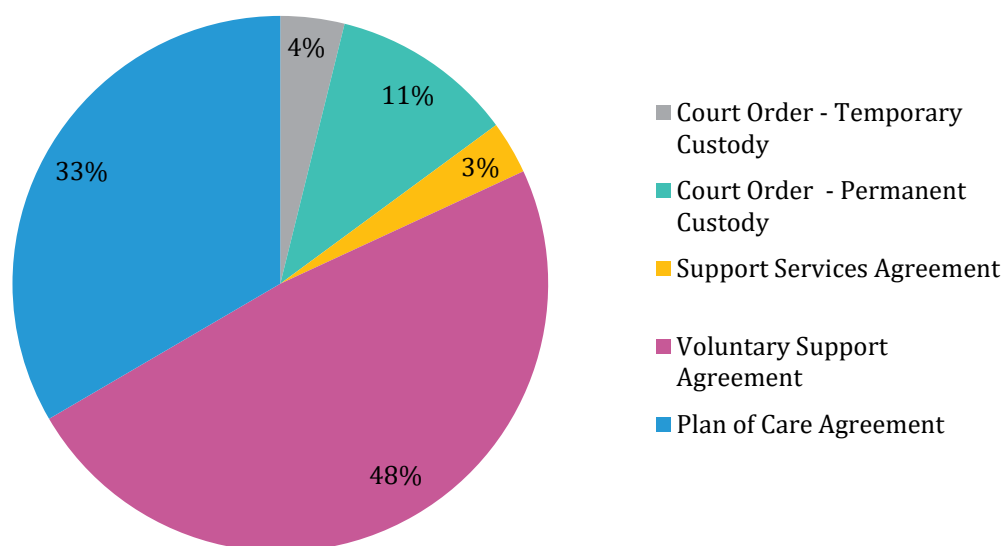
Between April 1, 2009, and March 31, 2019, 494 children were adopted in the NWT. The majority of adoptions were custom adoptions at 79%, while 12% were departmental adoptions, 4% were step-parent adoptions, 4% were private adoptions, and 1% was inter-country adoptions.

## 11. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

There has been no significant change in the proportion of children receiving services in any of the age groups, except for those in the 5-9 years age category. There has been a statistically significant change in the proportion of children with a Child and Family Services status who are First Nations, Inuit, and Non-Indigenous, while the proportion of children receiving services who are Metis has remained stable.

In 2018-2019, approximately 15% of children receiving services had court-ordered statuses, and the remaining 85% of children receiving services did so through an agreement with the parent and/or child (Figure 7). Of the children receiving services by agreement, 51% received voluntary support services (48% with a Voluntary Services Agreement and 3% with a Support Services Agreement), and 34% received services through a Plan of Care Agreement. The majority of children with a Plan of Care Agreement were residing in the home (80%) compared to 20% of children who were in a placement resource. Of the children who were receiving services through a court-ordered status, 4% received services through a Temporary Custody Order and 11% through a Permanent Custody Order.

Figure 7  
Percentage of Status (Court-Ordered\* and by Agreement\*\*) by Type  
April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019



Approximately 84% of children receiving services remain in the home of their parent(s) or remain in their home community. The percentage of children who receive services in NWT communities other than their home community is 7%. The number of children in permanent care and custody has also significantly decreased over the past ten years.



## 12. LIMITATIONS

As with the implementation of any new information system, the limitations of Matrix NT system in October, 2017 resulted in temporary challenges with data quality, data entry, and data extraction. These kinds of challenges are often associated with the steep learning curve for a system, and its staff, in adopting a new technology platform. These limitations can contribute to potential inaccuracies when reporting information.

One of the greatest limitations with Matrix NT is its association of certain legal statuses such as Voluntary Service Agreements and Plan of Care Agreements with a household, rather than a child. In order to obtain a more accurate understanding of the data and trends in population, both household and individual child status counts are required. In order to facilitate accurate reporting on both household as well as individual child statuses, the Department is working with the vendor on technology solutions, which will be implemented in the future.

Additionally, while we have historically been able to report data on apprehensions and supervision orders, we are unable to this fiscal year due to data constraints and the need to standardize processes within Matrix NT. Therefore, the data in Matrix NT currently does not paint an accurate representation of the number and trend for apprehensions and supervision orders in the NWT and thus is not reportable.

Over time, as we continue to familiarize ourselves with Matrix NT and continue training child protection workers, supervisors, and analysts with data entry and data extraction, the quality of the data that Matrix NT will be able to report will improve. The Department and Authorities will conduct quality assurance checks to improve the accuracy and reliability of Matrix NT data. Furthermore, as the Matrix NT information system continues to mature, and further queries are developed, new indicators may be added to subsequent annual reports.

### 13. MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The [Report of the Office of the Auditor General \(OAG\) of Canada on Child and Family Services](#) was released in October 2018, which highlighted several concerns with the Northwest Territories Child and Family Services System. This report, along with internal reviews, stakeholder feedback and staff engagement, is helping shape the future direction of Child and Family Services. As a result, the Department and Authorities have worked together to develop a comprehensive Quality Improvement Plan.

#### Quality Assurance

During the 2018-2019 fiscal year, the Department of Health and Social Services (Department), the NTHSSA, Hay River HSSA, and the TCSA worked together to create a more robust quality review and auditing process to ensure that the Department and the Health and Social Services Authorities (HSSAs) are fulfilling the requirements of the *NWT Child and Family Services Act (CFS Act)* and the Child and Family Services Standards and Procedure Manual.

As part of this new process, the Department will be conducting system-wide audits every two years with the upcoming audit to be completed during the 2019-2020 fiscal year. The system-wide audits measure compliance with the *Child and Family Services Act*, Foster Care related Standards, and other areas requiring further analysis as directed by the Statutory Director of Child and Family Services.

To enhance the auditing process, the Authorities have designed a quality review process that provides real-time information to frontline staff and management about the performance of regions on key indicators and develops region-specific strategies to improve compliance. The focus of the quality reviews takes into consideration the results of previous system-wide audits and the Office of the Auditor General Report. These quality reviews are designed to complement the current system-wide audit by aligning the auditing approaches; for example, ensuring similar data is being collected and ensuring that questions being asked are taking complementary approaches.

Over the past year, the Authorities have fully implemented quality reviews in two practice areas:

- *Investigations*: The first quality review was launched in May 2018, which focuses on measuring compliance with key investigation requirements. This quality review is conducted monthly on all investigations that closed within the previous month.
- *Foster Care*: In September 2018, the NTHSSA launched a quality review focused on measuring compliance with key foster care requirements. This quality review is conducted quarterly on all active foster homes during that specific period.

In January 2019, the Department implemented a revised accountability framework to reflect the new authority structure and feedback from Child Welfare Practitioners to support better outcomes for children and families. This framework serves as a roadmap to underscore accountability, and clarify roles and responsibilities between the HSSAs and the Department.

The Department has also made significant improvements to the Out of Territory (OOT) Specialized Services Program over the past year, such as realigning roles and responsibilities, enhancing the OOT database, and creating a monitoring plan to improve the coordination of Out of Territory Specialized Services together with a revision of service standard. This also provides more effective oversight of the children leaving, returning and entering the NWT.

During the 2018-2019 fiscal year, the Department enhanced the permanency planning standard, which included adding a cultural support plan to support the importance of children and youth maintaining a connection to their family, culture and community. The Department also established a new standard to clarify the practice of guardianship. The standard clarifies the requirements for Child and Family Services staff to ensure that guardians have been appropriately assessed before Child and Family Services supports the guardianship agreement or order, and, that guardians are properly supported in order to care for children.

### **Training**

Previously, there was only one position to support the professional development of Child and Family Services employees. Staffing has been increased to provide five dedicated roles to enhance training capacity and ongoing support across the Child and Family Services System. This has enabled the system to create a more robust training critical in meeting the quality improvement strategy.

In January 2019, the Department and NTHSSA held the annual manager and supervisor training event, which included cultural competency training, as well as training on the revised Accountability Framework, Matrix NT, Clinical Supervision Model, and Quality Reviews. The Department and NTHSSA also continued to provide regular core statutory training for new Child Protection Workers. Additionally, incoming and current Assistant Directors also received specialized training on their delegated responsibilities. Assistant Directors were also invited to participate in the Child Protection Worker Statutory Core Training for them to better support Child and Family Services Managers, Supervisors and frontline staff. As part of our commitment to making quality improvements to Child and Family Services, these training events were refined and enhanced based on past feedback to better meet staff training needs. Managers, Supervisors, Training Leads and some frontline staff also received refresher training on the Structured Decision Making® Assessment Tools.

### **Human Resources**

Over the past year, the Department and Authorities gained a greater understanding of the caseload and workload issues in each region through the completion of an initial caseload analysis that considered key factors identified by experts in the field, such as the Child Welfare League of Canada. The result of this work has informed business planning processes. The NTHSSA have also initiated

a territorial wide recruitment for Community Social Services Workers to help reduce the number of vacancies within the system. The Foster Family Coalition of the NWT and the Department co-launched a foster care recruitment campaign with a video, posters, and an all NWT mail out. The purpose of this campaign is to increase the number of foster homes across the NWT to help in placing children as close to home as possible.

### **Engagement**

Throughout the year, the Department and Authorities have worked together to increase engagement with all levels of the Child and Family Services System, Indigenous Government Leaders, the Foster Family Coalition of the NWT as well as other partners. The Managers and Supervisors Forum, and the Assistant Directors' Forum both continue to meet regularly to strengthen the accountability and program administration of Child and Family Services at the regional and territorial level. The Department has also launched an all Child and Family Services Staff Teleconference, and Quality Working Groups to increase information sharing with frontline staff as well as to hear from staff about local and regional accomplishments, concerns and feedback. In March 2019, the Department held a teleconference with Indigenous Governments and Organization Leaders to discuss the future direction of Child and Family Services.

### **Service Delivery and Child Protection and Prevention Practice**

Structured Decision Making® (SDM®) has continued to be implemented and integrated within child and family services practice to support case management in child and family services interventions. It is anticipated that through the use of these tools, continued enhancements will be made in evidence-based practice, including increased objectivity and consistency, as well as supporting the work of Child Protection Workers to focus on collaboration with children and their families. There are six assessment tools in the (SDM®) system:

1. *Screening and Response Priority Assessment:* Assists the Child Protection Worker in determining whether a report of concern for a child should be investigated as a child protection matter, and if so, how urgently the report requires follow-up.
2. *Safety Assessment:* Assesses the nature and extent of a child's immediate safety needs, and assists the Child Protection Worker to determine whether a safety plan or apprehension is necessary to ensure the protection of the child or youth.
3. *Risk of Future Harm Assessment:* Assesses the nature and magnitude of a child's risk of abuse or neglect in the short to medium term, and assists the Child Protection Worker in determining if the family requires services.
4. *Household Strengths and Needs Assessment:* Assists the Child Protection Worker in developing a strength-based case plan, in collaboration with a child's caregivers, to alleviate any safety threats and to reduce any risks of future harm.

5. *Reunification Assessment*: Used in situations where a child has been taken into protective custody, this assessment helps the Child Protection Worker make decisions about when and how a child can be safely reunited with his or her primary caregivers.
6. *Risk Reassessment*: Re-assesses the nature and magnitude of a child's risk of abuse or neglect in short to medium term, and assists the Child Protection Worker in determining when child protection services are no longer required.

Between January 2015 and April 2017, the Screening and Response Priority Assessment (SRPA), the Safety Assessment, the Risk of Future Harm Assessment, and the Household Strengths and Needs Guide (HSNG) were adapted and deployed in the NWT. These four tools are now included as a key component of the Child Protection Worker Statutory Core Training.

### **Moving Forward in 2019-2020**

Over the next year, the Department and Authorities will be concentrating their efforts on better resourcing, managing, structuring and sustaining the changes completed under the *Building Stronger Families Action Plan*. The ultimate focus of the Child and Family Services system continues to be the safety and wellbeing of children and youth. As such, the Department and Authorities will release the Child and Family Services Quality Improvement Plan during the summer of 2019. The Quality Improvement Plan focuses efforts on ten priority areas for making the required changes in the Child and Family Services system. This Plan takes action on issues identified through internal audits, the 2018 Auditor General Report, Standing Committee on Government Operations and feedback from staff, Indigenous Governments, Foster Family Coalition of the NWT, and other stakeholders.

The Department, NTHSSA, TCSA and Hay River HSSA will continue to build upon their quality assurance mechanisms, such as developing a quarterly quality review of protection files to ensure child and youth are having meaningful contact with their worker, and that case and permanency planning is occurring with youth, caregivers, and placement providers, where appropriate. The Department will also be completing a system-wide audit within the 2019-2020 fiscal year. The Department will also be developing a set of key indicators to collect and track data that will help determine whether the Child and Family Services System is meeting its goals and better supporting children and families.

The Authorities will be developing and implementing a human resources recruitment and retention plan. These efforts will be coupled with ongoing assessments of the required human resources to deliver Child and Family Services to inform future business planning cycles.

In collaboration with the NTHSSA, the TCSA, and the Hay River HSSA, the Department will continue to build the Child and Family Services training framework. The training team will be delivering an enhanced Child Protection Worker Statutory Core Training and will be offering this training to new workers hired for Child Protection Work in the NWT on an ongoing basis. Additionally, the training team will be piloting advanced interviewing skills training and will be providing regional support and refresher sessions on Matrix NT. The Department is working with the NCCD Children's

Research Centre to enhance SDM® trainers within the NWT Child and Family Services System. The Department and Authorities will also begin implementing the remaining two SDM® assessment tools during the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

The Department and Authorities will continue to meet with Indigenous Governments and Organizations to strengthen working relationships towards improving child and family services. With respect to federal Bill C-92 *An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis Children, Youth and Families*, the Department is committed to working with the federal government, Indigenous governments, front line workers, child and youth advocates, and other key stakeholders on the critical discussions regarding the development of clear processes, regulations, and the successful implementation of this *Act*.

The Department and Authorities will also maintain and establish new partnerships to support improvements to the Child and Family Services system. Working collaboratively with our partners and receiving ongoing feedback will be crucial in ensuring that we are moving in the right direction in strengthening and transforming the Child and Family Services System.

## APPENDIX A: CHILD PROTECTION

Conditions under which a child is considered to need protection, as specified in the *Child and Family Services Act*.

Section 7(3): A child needs protection where:

- (a) the child has suffered physical harm inflicted by the child's parent or caused by the parent's inability to care and provide for or supervise and protect the child adequately;
- (b) there is a substantial risk that the child will suffer physical harm inflicted by the child's parent or caused by the parent's inability to care and provide for or supervise and protect the child adequately;
- (c) the child has been sexually molested or sexually exploited by the child's parent or by another person in circumstances where the child's parent knew or should have known of the possibility of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and was unwilling or unable to protect the child;
- (d) there is a substantial risk that the child will be sexually molested or sexually exploited by the child's parent or by another person in circumstances where the child's parent knows or should know of the possibility of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and is unwilling or unable to protect the child;
- (e) the child has demonstrated severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, self-destructive behaviour, or aggressive behaviour towards others, or any other severe behaviour that is consistent with the child having suffered emotional harm and the child's parent does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the provision of, services, treatment or healing processes to remedy or alleviate the harm;
- (f) there is a substantial risk that the child will suffer emotional harm of the kind described in paragraph;(e) and the child's parent does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the provision of, services, treatment or healing processes to prevent the harm;
- (g) the child suffers from a mental, emotional or developmental condition that, if not remedied, could seriously impair the child's development, and the child's parent does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the provision of, services, treatment or healing processes to remedy or alleviate the condition;
- (h) the child has been subject to a pattern of neglect that has resulted in physical or emotional harm to the child;
- (i) the child has been subject to a pattern of neglect and there is a substantial risk the pattern of neglect will result in physical or emotional harm to the child;
- (j) the child has been exposed to domestic violence by or towards a parent of the child, the child has suffered physical or emotional harm from that exposure and the child's parent fails or refuses to obtain services, treatment or healing processes to remedy or alleviate the harm;

- (k) the child has been exposed to domestic violence by or towards a parent of the child and there is a substantial risk that the exposure will result in physical or emotional harm to the child and the child's parent fails or refuses to obtain services, treatment or healing processes to prevent the harm;
- (l) the child's health or emotional or mental well-being has been harmed by the child's use of alcohol, drugs, solvents or similar substances, and the child's parent does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the provision of, services, treatment or healing processes to remedy or alleviate the harm;
- (m) there is a substantial risk that the child's health or emotional or mental well-being will be harmed by the child's use of alcohol, drugs, solvents or similar substances, and the child's parent does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the provision of, services, treatment or healing processes to prevent the harm;
- (n) the child requires medical treatment to cure, prevent or alleviate serious physical harm or serious physical suffering, and the child's parent does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the provision of the treatment;
- (o) the child suffers from malnutrition of a degree that, if not immediately remedied, could seriously impair the child's growth or development or result in permanent injury or death;
- (p) the child has been abandoned by the child's parent without the child's parent having made adequate provision for the child's care or custody and the child's extended family has not made adequate provision for the child's care or custody;
- (q) the child's parents have died without making adequate provision for the child's care or custody and the child's extended family has not made adequate provision;
- (r) the child's parent is unavailable or unable or unwilling to properly care for the child and the child's extended family has not made adequate provision for the child's care or custody; or
- (s) the child is less than 12 years of age and has killed or seriously injured another person or has persisted in injuring others or causing damage to the property of others, and services, treatment or healing processes are necessary to prevent a recurrence, and the child's parent does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to the provision of, the services, treatment or healing processes.
- (t) the child is engaging in or attempting to engage in prostitution or prostitution-related activities.



## GLOSSARY

### 1 Voluntary Support Services and Agreements

Voluntary Services Agreement: under Section 5(1) of the *Child and Family Services Act*, "the Director may enter into a written agreement with a person who has lawful custody of a child to provide services or to assist others in providing services, or to assist that person's family in obtaining services, to support and assist that person's family to care for the child." The children may reside in their own home or elsewhere. The initial term of a Voluntary Services Agreement is for six months, with provision for additional six-month renewals until the child reaches the age of 18.

Support Services Agreement: under Section 6(1) of the *Child and Family Services Act*, "the Director may enter into a written agreement with a person who has attained the age of 16 years but has not attained the age of majority and cannot reside with his or her parents to provide services or to assist others in providing services, to support and assist that person to care for himself or herself." Support Services Agreements can be made for six months and can be renewed up until the age of majority.

Extended Support Services Agreement: under Section 6.2 of the *Child and Family Services Act*, "the Director may, in respect of a youth who was in the permanent custody of the Director immediately before attaining the age of majority, continue to provide services or to assist others in providing services, or to assist that person in obtaining services, after that person attains the age of majority until he or she attains 23 years of age".

### 2 Plan of Care Agreement

A Plan of Care Agreement is a written agreement made between the person(s) with lawful custody of the child and the Plan of Care Committee where child protection concerns exist. The Agreement outlines a case plan for the child and the family. The children may reside in their own home or elsewhere. The maximum term of a Plan of Care Agreement (including extensions) is two years. The Plan of Care Agreement is for children considered to need protection as defined in the *Child and Family Services Act* and cannot be used beyond a child's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### 3 Apprehension

Apprehension occurs when a child is removed from the care of the person with lawful custody or from the person having care of the child at the time of the apprehension. A community Child Protection Worker, a peace officer or a person authorized by the Director under Section 55(1) of the *Child and Family Services Act* can apprehend a child when he or she believes the child to be "in need of protection." Apprehended children are placed in the care and custody of the Director of Child and Family Services.

#### **4 Apprehension less than 72 hours**

After an apprehension, a child can be returned to parental care without the matter going to court when the protection issue is resolved in less than 72 hours.

#### **5 Supervision Order**

A Supervision Order is a court order under Section 28(1)(b) of the *Child and Family Services Act*, which directs a Child Protection Worker to supervise the home of a child according to the terms and conditions of the Order. The Order may be for a period of up to one year.

#### **6 Temporary Custody Order**

Custody of a child is temporarily transferred by court order under Section 28(1)(c) of the *Child and Family Services Act*, to the Director of Child and Family Services. Temporary Custody Orders are age specific. A Child Protection Worker may not make an application for an order for temporary custody of a child that results in a continuous period during which the child is in temporary custody exceeding:

- (a) 12 months, in the case of a child under 5 (five) years of age;
- (b) 18 months, in the case of a child 5 (five) years of age or over but under 12 years of age;
- or
- (c) 24 months, in the case of a child 12 years of age or over.

Also, a court may not make or extend an order that would result in a child being in the temporary custody of the Director for a continuous period exceeding:

- (a) 15 months, in the case of a child under five years of age when the order was made;
- (b) 24 months, in the case of a child five years of age or over but under 12 years of age when the order was made; or
- (c) 36 months, in the case of a child 12 years of age or over when the order was made.

#### **7 Permanent Custody Order**

A Permanent Custody Order under Section 28(1)(d) of the *Child and Family Services Act*, permanently transfers the custody of a child to the Director of Child and Family Services until the child attains the age of 16. The Director has all the rights and responsibilities of a parent under Section 48 of the *Child and Family Services Act*. The Permanent Custody Order may be extended to the age of majority if the youth is in agreement.

#### **8 Youth Protection Order (16-18yrs)**

A Youth Protection Order under Section 29.2(a)(b) & 29.6(1) of the *Child and Family Services Act*, ensures the protection, health and safety of a youth by providing care for the youth while the youth and his or her parent(s) and/or guardian(s) are unable or unavailable to care for the youth. The child protection worker can apply to the courts for a Temporary Custody Order or Permanent

Custody Order; no apprehension is required. Circumstances, where a Youth Protection Order may be appropriate, are as follows:

- The youth cannot reside with his or her parents;
- The youth is unable to care for and protect himself or herself;
- The youth is unable or unwilling to enter into a Support Services Agreement due to developmental, behavioral, emotional, mental or physical incapacity or disorder, or the effects of the use of alcohol, drugs, solvents or other similar substances; or
- The youth is living in circumstances of a child who needs protections under subsection 7(3) of the *Child and Family Services Act*.