

BUSINESS PLAN 2024-2027



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**NUTAQQANUT INULRAMIRNULLU
UQAQTIKHAANIK**

**REPRÉSENTANT DE
L'ENFANCE ET DE LA JEUNESSE**

**REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH**





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This document was written by the Representative for Children and Youth's Office in English.
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of Culture and Heritage.

Representative for Children and Youth Office

BUSINESS PLAN 2024-2027

MISSION

Establish our office as the conscience of child- and youth-serving Government of Nunavut departments.

VISION

A territory in which children and youth are healthy and safe, their interests and opinions are heard, acted upon, and supported through the delivery of ethical, equitable, and consistent government services.

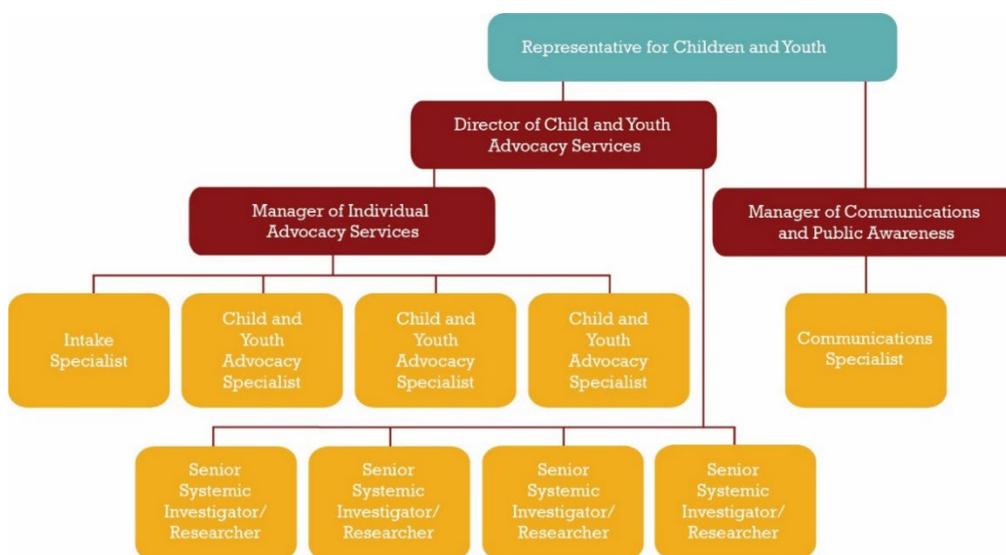
OVERVIEW

The Representative for Children and Youth (Representative) is an Independent Officer who reports to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut (Legislative Assembly) and the public.

The Representative for Children and Youth Office's (RCYO) mandate is to make sure legislation, policies, procedures, programs, and services put in place by Government of Nunavut departments and designated authorities¹ (departments) provide ethical, equitable, and consistent outcomes that meet the needs and support the rights of young Nunavummiut, and their families. If anyone has a complaint about a department's service or cannot access a service for a young person or their family, they can bring it to the attention of our office for review. All information reported to our office is confidential and can be reported anonymously.

For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the RCYO has a budget of \$2.876 million, as outlined in Appendix A. The RCYO includes the Representative and 12 staff, as outlined in Figure 1. The Office's 2024 Nunavut Inuit Employment Plan is provided in Appendix B.

Figure 1: Organizational Chart



¹ Designated authorities are listed under Schedule A of the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*.

MANDATE

Our mandate includes the following specific duties as outlined in the *Representative for Children and Youth Act (RCYA)*:

- Ensure the rights and interests of children and youth, individually and collectively, are protected and advanced;
- Ensure departments hear and consider the opinions of children and youth on matters that affect them;
- Ensure children and youth can access departments' services and that the departments considers their concerns and opinions about those services;
- Help children, youth, and their families communicate with department service providers, to improve understanding between them;
- Inform the public about the rights and interests of children and youth, and the roles and responsibilities of the RCYO; and
- Provide advice and recommendations to departments on how to make laws, policies, programs, and services better for children and youth in Nunavut.

Our mandate allows us to work on behalf of children and youth when all of the following apply:

- The young person involved
 - is under 19 years of age;
 - is 19-25 and is party to an agreement with the Director of Child and Family Services appointed under the *Child and Family Services Act*;
 - is 19-21 and has requested or is receiving services under the *Education Act*;
 - Is 19-21 and has been charged under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* and there has been no final disposition of their charge or they have not completed their sentence or disposition;
 - Is 19-21 and has a long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment that, in interaction with environmental and attitudinal barriers, hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
- A department(s) is involved; and
- A Department is not upholding the rights of the child, as described in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* or other relevant legislation, policies or procedures.

Our mandate does not allow us to:

- Work on problems with personal relationships, such as when a young person is not listening to their parents;
- Conduct investigations of child abuse or neglect; or
- Work on complaints involving businesses or private organizations. For example, if a young person does not receive proper payment from their employer.

In addition to the *RCYA*, our work is also guided by the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Inuit societal values, the voice of the child, the best interests of the child, and National Advocacy Standards established by the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA). The CCCYA is an alliance of child advocates from across Canada that identify areas of mutual concern and work to develop ways to address issues at the national level.

Elders also offer invaluable wisdom and perspective based on lived experiences. We work with Elder Advisors from across the territory to incorporate this knowledge into our advocacy.

PROGRAM AREAS

The RCYO currently works in four different program areas including Individual Advocacy, Systemic Advocacy, Communications and Public Awareness, and Reviews of Critical Injuries and Deaths.

INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY

When departments' services are not ethical, equitable, or consistent, or a child, youth or their family is unable to access a service, a person can bring a complaint to our attention for review. Our office can get involved to figure out what happened or, more often, what did not happen. Our Child and Youth Advocacy Specialists work with those involved, such as the young person, their family, and the GN service providers to find a solution.

Every individual advocacy case is unique, and our Child and Youth Advocacy Specialists (Child Advocates) customize their response to fit each circumstance. Our cases require varying levels of support from our staff, which results in varying lengths of time for problems to be resolved.

SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY

When someone complains to the RCYO about a problem relating to a department policy, procedure, or legislation, it may reflect a systemic issue. If a problem has the potential to occur again and impact other young Nunavummiut if it is not addressed, it flags a systemic concern to our Systemic Investigators, who will assess whether there may be an underlying systemic issue.

Systemic issues are primarily brought to our attention through the young people and families we work with in our Individual Advocacy casework. However, we may also learn about systemic issues from community members, Members of the Legislative Assembly, Youth Parliamentarians, departments, and through the media.

For each systemic issue, RCYO identifies a lead department responsible for addressing the issue. However, addressing some issues may require multiple departments to work collaboratively.

Systemic Advocacy may involve a brief inquiry or formal recommendations to the responsible department(s). Recommendations suggest changes to improve legislation, policies, procedures, programs, and services. The RCYO may make multiple recommendations to address a systemic issue, as there different components often need to work together to improve services.

The RCYO may also make systemic recommendations:

- as the result of a systemic review;
- by making a submission when departments invite us to do so or when there is a public call for submissions;
- based on information gathered through individual advocacy casework suggesting concerns with policies, procedures or legislation.

All recommendations are fact-based, with evidence to support a need for change to ensure departments support the rights and meet the needs of young Nunavummiut and their families.

Departments are not required to accept our recommendations. However, if they agree to the recommendation, we hold them accountable for fulfilling it.

Although the RCYO maintains consistent contact to support progress, we follow up with departments for updates on their progress made on a more formal basis at a minimum annually. This provides adequate time for departments to develop a plan, take action, and provide a substantive update on progress. The RCYO may shorten this timeline based on the urgency of the recommendation or the level of action required. RCYO reports on all of these updates publicly in the recommendations section of our annual report. The information provided includes whether a department agrees or disagrees with a recommendation and a brief assessment regarding the progress made.

Our systemic database is a year over year accumulation of all systemic issues identified by or brought to the RCYO's attention. The database also tracks our systemic recommendations and progress made by responsible departments to fulfill them.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

One of our responsibilities is to help educate all Nunavummiut about child rights, as well as the responsibilities that adults and governments have to support the rights of children.

Our communications and public awareness work takes many forms including giving presentations; developing child-rights resources and information materials; hosting a yearly child rights-based contest; and sharing important information about our work through the media, social media, and the Office's website, www.rcynu.ca.

While our office is located in Iqaluit, we work on behalf of all young Nunavummiut making our most comprehensive public awareness initiative our community engagement visits. It is important that we visit communities to hear directly from Nunavummiut, and see first-hand, the current challenges affecting young people and their families in each community.

All of these initiatives share the goal of building and strengthening relationships with our many stakeholders including children, youth, families, community members, departments, the Legislative Assembly, and the media.

Every year we strategically plan public awareness initiatives while continually looking for new opportunities to engage with our stakeholders as they arise and our human resources allow.

REVIEWS OF CRITICAL INJURIES AND DEATHS

On April 1, 2023, section 4(1)(b) of the RCYA came into force. This section of the RCYA gives the Representative the power to review any matter related to the death or critical injury of any child or youth.

The Critical Injuries and Death Review program conducts reviews into the circumstances leading up to a critical injury or death of a young person to determine if they received the services they were entitled to and if these services met their needs.

After completing a review, the Representative may make recommendations to ensure accountability of the responsible department(s) and to make suggested improvements to legislation, policies, procedures, programs, and services to prevent similar injuries or deaths of young people from occurring in the future.

In Nunavut, critical injuries of young people are not independently reviewed. Deaths of young people are only reviewed by the Office of the Chief Coroner when the death has occurred in the territory to determine the identity of the deceased and how, when, where, and by what means they died.

OFFICE OBJECTIVES AND REPORTING ON PRIORITIES FOR 2023 - 2024

1

OBJECTIVE 1:

Establish our office as a trusted ally for young people and their families by building and strengthening our relationship with Nunavummiut.

Priorities that support Objective 1:

Continue to engage with communities, to enhance the office's presence across the territory.

STATUS

- Two RCYO staff visited Chesterfield Inlet from April 18-20 2023.
- While in Chesterfield Inlet, staff engaged with 4 different classes from grades 3-12.
- RCYO staff met with the following Service Providers:
 - Departments of Education, Family Services, and Health
 - RCMP
 - Naja Isabelle Group Home
 - Hamlet Staff Members
- Staff stopped in Rankin Inlet en route to Chesterfield inlet meeting with Family Services and RCMP.
- Staff also conducted 3 workshops at the elementary school in Rankin Inlet.

Iqaluit Activities:

- One RCYO staff member visited the Iqaluit group home to conduct outreach activities.
- RCYO had an information booth at Iqaluit's mass registration.
- Two RCYO staff participated in an information session at the Francophone Centre in Iqaluit for newcomers to Canada.
- RCYO staff met with a team from the Manitoba Inuit Association to provide information about Manitoba's organization and their plan to engage with Nunavut, particularly around the Child First Initiative.
- The Representative and Director gave a presentation to territorial mental health staff who were attending training in Iqaluit.
- In October, the Individual Advocacy team and Director met with Department of Education to discuss the new mental health supports in schools that were established as a result of RCYO's *Our Minds Matter* Report

Continue to develop child rights resources.

STATUS

- RCYO continues to work in collaboration with Inhabit Media and Department of Education to finalize a child rights curriculum and teaching guide.
- The Raise Your Voice 2.0 Self Advocacy Workshop was revised and finalized.

2

OBJECTIVE 2:

Respond to individual complaints regarding services for young people and their families provided by Government of Nunavut departments and hold departments accountable for ensuring services provided are ethical, equitable, consistent, and considerate of the best interests of the young person(s) involved.

Priority that supports Objective 2:

Complete reviews of individual complaints and make evidence based recommendations to departments.

STATUS

- In 2023-2024, RCYO made 9 recommendations to Family Services following an in depth review of an individual advocacy file.
- RCYO has identified 3 additional individual advocacy files for possible systemic review including 2 from Department of Health and one from Department of Family Services.

3

OBJECTIVE 3:

Bring awareness of systemic issues that impact young Nunavummiut and their families, to the attention of the responsible Government of Nunavut department(s) and suggest changes to legislation, policies, procedures, programs, and services to prevent issues from arising again.

Priorities that support Objective 3:

Review the Systemic Advocacy Program and make adjustments to improve its efficacy.

STATUS

- In July, 2023, the new Director of Child and Youth Advocacy Services started in the position.
 - In 2023-2024, RCYO decided to implement a proactive model of service. RCYO decided to notify Departments of systemic issues immediately. As staffing permits, we commit to undertaking smaller targeted reviews of systemic issues outside the scheme of comprehensive reviews.
 - RCYO's Management team is finalizing changes to the Policies and Procedures Manual to reflect changes to the systemic program.
 - Prior to the 2023-2024 fiscal year, RCYO logged systemic issues into a database awaiting a comprehensive systemic review.
 - In August 2023, RCYO conducted a complete review of the systemic database that resulted in recategorizing entries and re-evaluating whether issues fit within RCYO's mandate. The result was that RCYO identified 95 systemic issues for follow up.
 - At the conclusion of the database review, RCYO provided Departments of Education, Family Services, Health, and Justice with a complete list of systemic issues relating to their programs.
 - RCYO notified the Departments of Education, Family Services, Health, and Justice of the changes to the systemic program at the fall proactive meetings.
 - In 2023-2024, RCYO advised the Department of Family Services of 3 new systemic concerns relating to a review of an individual advocacy file with an out of territory component, an individual advocacy file that raised concerns about adoptions, and a review of out territory placements
 - The Individual advocacy file review was completed, resulting in 9 recommendations to the Department.
 - The review of the individual advocacy file pertaining to adoptions is at a preliminary stage of review.
 - The review relating to out of territory placements started in August 2023. We have experienced significant delays due to Family Services not providing requested information. In order to carry out our duties, the Representative issued a summons in October 2023 to obtain the information. There is still outstanding information as of January 2024, which continues to impede the completion of this review.
 - RCYO advised the Department of Health of 1 new systemic concern related to out of territory placements and case management.
 - Information was requested from the Department of Health in November 2023, due in December, 2023. The Department responded after the deadline and did not provide the requested information. A subsequent request was made due at the end of January, 2024.
-

Continue to improve and enhance collaboration with Government of Nunavut departments to address systemic issues affecting young Nunavummiut.

STATUS

- The GN-RCYO protocol was signed in July 2023.
 - Fall proactive meetings occurred in November and December with Departments of Education Family Services, Health, and Justice. It is the responsibilities of GN Departments to facilitate the spring proactive meetings.
 - In the spirit of *Piliriqatiginniq/Ikajuqtigiinniq*, RCYO is taking a more active approach to implementing recommendations that includes collaboration with Departments on Standards, Policies, and Procedures.
 - In 2023-2024, RCYO and Family Services established a more collaborative working relationship to address issues identified by the Office of the Auditor General and RCYO reviews.
 - RCYO is providing ongoing support and feedback to Family Services as they develop new standards and procedures.
-

Continue to address systemic issues through child- and youth- centered recommendations.

STATUS

- In 2023-2024, RCYO made 9 recommendations to the Department of Family Services as a result of a comprehensive file review.
- In the spirit of *Piliriqatiginniq/Ikajuqtigiinniq*, RCYO is taking a more active approach to implementing recommendations previously made to the Department of Family Services by working collaboratively on Standards, Policies, and Procedures.

4

OBJECTIVE 4:

The best interest of young Nunavummiut, families, and communities are reflected in all aspects of our work.

Priorities that support Objective 4:

Ensure the opinions and lives of young Nunavummiut and their families are reflected in our work.

STATUS

- Engaging children and youth in all aspects of our work is one of our quality assurance measures. We track engagement in our individual advocacy files to ensure the voice of the child remains central.
- RCYO has researched “best interests of the child” and its application to our work and recommendations to departments.

Continue to look for and implement ways to engage our Elder Advisors and establish working relationships with Inuit organizations.

STATUS

- On review, RCYO is not satisfied with our engagement with Elder Advisors to inform our work.
- The team has engaged in discussion as to how to better utilize our Elder Advisors and incorporate their expertise into our work.
- This is an area of focus for the RCYO in the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

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OBJECTIVE 5:

Ensure our staff have the comprehensive knowledge required to provide quality advocacy services that meet the evolving needs of young Nunavummiut and their families.

Priorities that support Objective 5:

Provide individually tailored training and development opportunities for office staff.

STATUS

- *Child and Family Services Act* training was provided to all staff in May 2023.
- *Representative for Child and Youth Act* training was provided to the Representative and Director in July, 2023
- RCYO overhauled our Orientation Binder with input from all staff. The new binder was shared with other independent offices and departments.
 - Extensive work was done to include profiles of all government departments and their programs.

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OBJECTIVE 6: Operationalize the Critical Injury and Death Review Program.

Priorities that support Objective 6:

Finalize the Policies and Procedures Manual

STATUS

- The enabling legislation for reviews of critical injuries and deaths came into force on April 1, 2023.
- In July, 2023, the new Director of Child and Youth Advocacy Services started in the position.
- RCYO's Management team is finalizing the Critical Injury and Death section of the Policies and Procedures Manual to incorporate new duties related to conducting reviews.
- Our goal is to initiate our first review in spring of 2024.
- The Representative and Director are participating in a National Community of Practice group relating to Critical Injury and Death Reviews.
- The Representative and Director met with our counterpart in PEI to discuss their program and first death review.

Hire an additional Systemic Investigator to monitor critical injuries and death and conduct reviews

STATUS

- Two Systemic Researchers have been hired and are expected to start in February 2024.

Work with Family Services to streamline submission of reports of critical injury and death to the RCYO.

STATUS

- RCYO provided Family Services with draft Standards for Critical Injury and Death Reporting with accompanying forms and tracking tools in December, 2023.
 - The Department of Family Services committed to reviewing the draft standards, making required changes and implementing the standards.
 - As of January, 2024, no feedback has been received.

Monitor compliance with reporting as per the RCYA

STATUS

- Family Services has been required to report Critical Injuries and Deaths since 2015 under the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*. They have not done so consistently. After providing no reports from April 1, 2023 through October 2023, and after several requests, Family Services sent RCYO just under 400 backdated injury and death reports at the end of October.
 - Reporting has significantly improved since October.
- In 2024-2025, a key objective will be to follow up with the Coroner's office about the Pediatric Death Committee.

PRIORITIES FOR 2024-2027

PRIORITIES 2024-2025

- Continue to engage with communities, enhancing the office's presence across the territory.
- Continue to develop child rights resources.
- Continue to improve and enhance collaboration with Government of Nunavut departments to address systemic issues affecting young Nunavummiut.
- Continue to address systemic issues through evidence-based recommendations.
- Review and monitor the strategic plan of Family Wellness in response to the 2023 OAG report.
- Advance the Reviews of Critical Injuries and Deaths program.
 - Follow up with Coroner's Office about the Pediatric Death Review Committee
 - Complete the first review of a critical injury or death
- Ensure children and youth are actively directing advocacy work where possible.
- Develop and implement a plan to actively involve Elder Advisors in RCYO's work.
- Establish working relationships with Inuit organizations.
- Provide individually tailored training and development opportunities for office staff.

PRIORITIES 2025-2026

- Continue to engage with communities, enhancing the office's presence across the territory.
- Continue to develop child rights resources.
- Continue to improve and enhance collaboration with Government of Nunavut departments to address systemic issues affecting young Nunavummiut.
- Continue to address systemic issues through evidence-based recommendations.
- Review and monitor the strategic plan of Family Wellness in response to the 2023 OAG report.
- Advance the Reviews of Critical Injuries and Deaths program.
 - Follow up with Coroner's Office about the Pediatric Death Review Committee
- Ensure children and youth are actively directing advocacy work where possible.
- Ensure Elder Advisors are actively involved in RCYO's work.
- Establish working relationships with Inuit organizations.
- Provide individually tailored training and development opportunities for office staff.

PRIORITIES 2026-2027

- Continue to engage with communities, enhancing the office's presence across the territory.
- Continue to develop child rights resources.
- Continue to improve and enhance collaboration with Government of Nunavut departments to address systemic issues affecting young Nunavummiut.
- Continue to address systemic issues through evidence-based recommendations.
- Review and monitor the strategic plan of Family Wellness in response to the 2023 OAG report.
- Advance the Reviews of Critical Injuries and Deaths program.
 - Follow up with Coroner's Office about the Pediatric Death Review Committee
- Ensure children and youth are actively directing advocacy work where possible.
- Ensure Elder Advisors are actively involved in RCYO's work.
- Establish working relationships with Inuit organizations.
- Provide individually tailored training and development opportunities for office staff.

Appendix A: Financial Summary

	2023-2024 Main Estimates		2024-2025 Planned		2025-2026 Planned		2026-2027 Planned	
	\$000	PYs	\$000	PYs	\$000	PYs	\$000	PYs
Salary	2,131	12	2,142	12	2,142	12	2,142	12
Grants & Contributions	-		-		-		-	
Other O&M								
Travel & Transportation	155		155		155		155	
Materials & Supplies	60		60		60		60	
Purchased Services	100		100		100		100	
Contract Services	445		434		434		434	
Fees & Payments	10		10		10		10	
Tangible Assets	10		10		10		10	
Computer Hardware & Software	15		15		15		15	
Other O&M Subtotal	745		734		734		734	
TOTAL	2,876	12	2,876	12	2,876	12	2,876	12

Appendix B: 2023 Nunavut Inuit Employment Plan

The Representative for Children and Youth's Office (RCYO) is committed to working towards a workforce that is representative of the population of Nunavut as stipulated in Article 23 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.

1. RECRUITMENT

- The RCYO is committed to working with the Department of Human Resources to explore alternative ways to prepare job advertisements to attract a larger number of Nunavut Inuit candidates to apply for RCYO positions, such as competitions restricted to Nunavut Inuit only.
- The RCYO is committed to working with the Department of Human Resources to explore innovative and viable Nunavut Inuit recruitment initiatives for RCYO employment positions.
- The RCYO is committed to working with the Department of Human Resources to ensure fair equivalencies are reflected in screening criteria for RCYO positions.
- The RCYO will offer term positions when there is no successful Nunavut Inuit candidate.

2. STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

- The RCYO is committed to working with Nunavut Inuit staff to identify short, medium, and long-term career goals.
- The RCYO is committed to providing learning and training opportunities that support Nunavut Inuit staff in successfully fulfilling the responsibilities and duties of their employment positions.
- The RCYO is committed to looking for opportunities to develop Nunavut Inuit staff members' skills, knowledge, and experience to enhance career mobility within the organization.
- The RCYO is committed to pursuing Sivuliqtiksat Internship opportunities to support Nunavut Inuit development when staffing competitions result in hiring on a term basis.
- The RCYO is committed to providing summer student work opportunities for Nunavut Inuit.

3. EMPLOYEE RETENTION

- The RCYO is committed to researching and implementing suitable programs that support on the job training or internship opportunities that support the career development of Nunavut Inuit employees.