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Building *Nunavut* Together
Nunavut liuqatigiingniq
Bâtir le *Nunavut* ensemble

Child and Family Services Act

2019/2020 Annual Report

Nunavut Department of Family Services

February 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Department of Family Services is in its seventh year of operation. However, 2019/2020 marks the first step towards significant reorganization and building the new structure of the division of Family Wellness. This change is due to growth in programming, staffing, and establishing a new vision to work towards, with the wellbeing of children and their families being at the forefront. We continued our work in strengthening services for children, youth, families, and communities.

During the development of Family Wellness, we have expanded our staff to include positions such as Regional Directors, Training Specialist, Quality Assurance Coordinator, Senior Compliance Officer, and Adoptions Coordinator. These positions have enabled the expansion of Family Wellness programs and services and allowed training implementation not only for staff but also for foster families. The implementation of Quality Assurance positions will allow for the continued growth, accountability, and improvement of the Family Wellness Division. We hope to continue to reduce the number of families entering the child welfare system through the development of stronger preventative and support services.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all staff who have demonstrated their unwavering commitment through hard work for a better Nunavut. As well, thank you to our foster and adoptive parents who continuously provide safe and nurturing homes for our children and youth. Without your love, support, and service we would not be able to achieve the success we have this past year.

We continue to strive towards implementing Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles in everything that we do, honoring and respecting the wisdom that is inherent in this land and its people. Our true success can be realized only through Piliqatigiinniq, and Inuuqatigiitsiarniq, working together and promote caring and respect for everyone. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit will continue to be our guiding beacon to ensure the delivery of culturally congruent and safe services that meet the needs of children, youth, their families, and communities.

Quviasugit!

Arijana Haramincic
Executive Director
Department of Family Services

SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Under the *Child and Family Services Act*, the Department is mandated to provide a wide range of child protection services to children, youth, and families, delivered by Community Social Services Workers (CSSWs). The department continues to offer services according to our legislation with the main goal of family reunification. When this is not possible, we ensure extended family is explored first and foremost as a placement to keep the child connected to their family, culture, and community. If extended family is unable to provide a placement for the child or youth, then foster families within the community are explored.

The Departmental services provided to children, youth, and families, fall into two categories: Service Agreements and Court Orders.

Service Agreements are utilized when a youth or family would benefit from receiving supports, but no serious, persistent child protection concerns exist. These include:

- **Voluntary Support Agreements:** an agreement with parents and children under the age of 16 who are not in need of protection but require some form of support;
- **Support Services Agreements:** an agreement with a youth between the ages of 16 and 19 who cannot remain safely in their parents' home and are making efforts to live independently; and,
- **Extended Support Agreements:** an agreement that allows the Department to support young adults between the adults of 19 and 25.

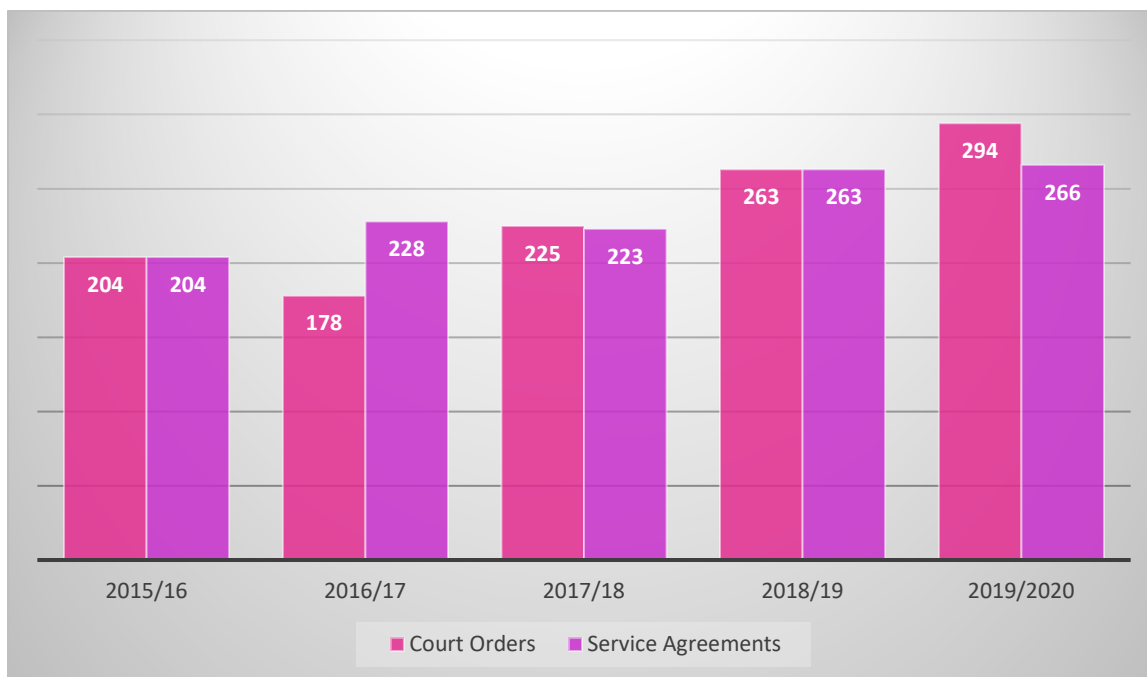


Plans of Care are similar to Service Agreements, in the sense they are a collaborative way to work with families, and an alternative to court. However, a Plan of Care is utilized when there are child protection concerns. A Plan of Care is a written agreement between the parent(s) and the Department that outlines a case plan for the child and family to ensure the child's protection and wellbeing. Plans of Care give a family an opportunity to resolve the issues before court involvement is warranted.

Court Orders are utilized when a child is at significant risk. Court orders are often relied upon if there are persistent and ongoing child protection concerns. There are three types of court orders:

- **Supervision Order:** a court order that directs a CSSW to supervise the home of a child according to the terms and conditions of the order. The order cannot exceed one year;
- **Temporary Custody Order:** a court order which directs that the child be placed in the custody of the Director for a specified period; and,
- **Permanent Custody Order:** a court order that places a child in the permanent custody of the Director to age 16, extendable to 19 if the youth consents or if ordered by the court. The court may specify in the order any terms and conditions that the court deems necessary such as provisions around the child’s access to their parent(s).

Figure 1: Overview of the number of children and youth receiving service, through Service Agreements and Court Orders, from FISCAL YEAR 2015/16 to FISCAL YEAR 2019/20.



Children & Youth Receiving Services

Figure 2 below reflects the number of children and youth receiving services both in-territory and out-of-territory, from fiscal year 2015/16 to fiscal year 2019/2020.

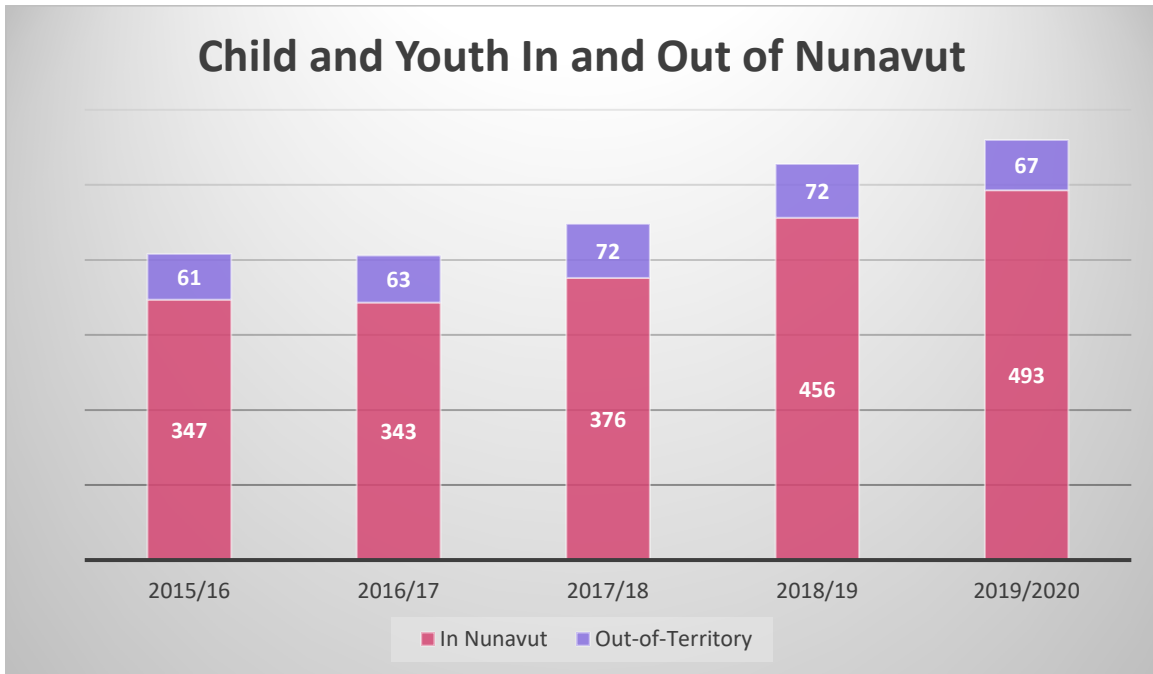
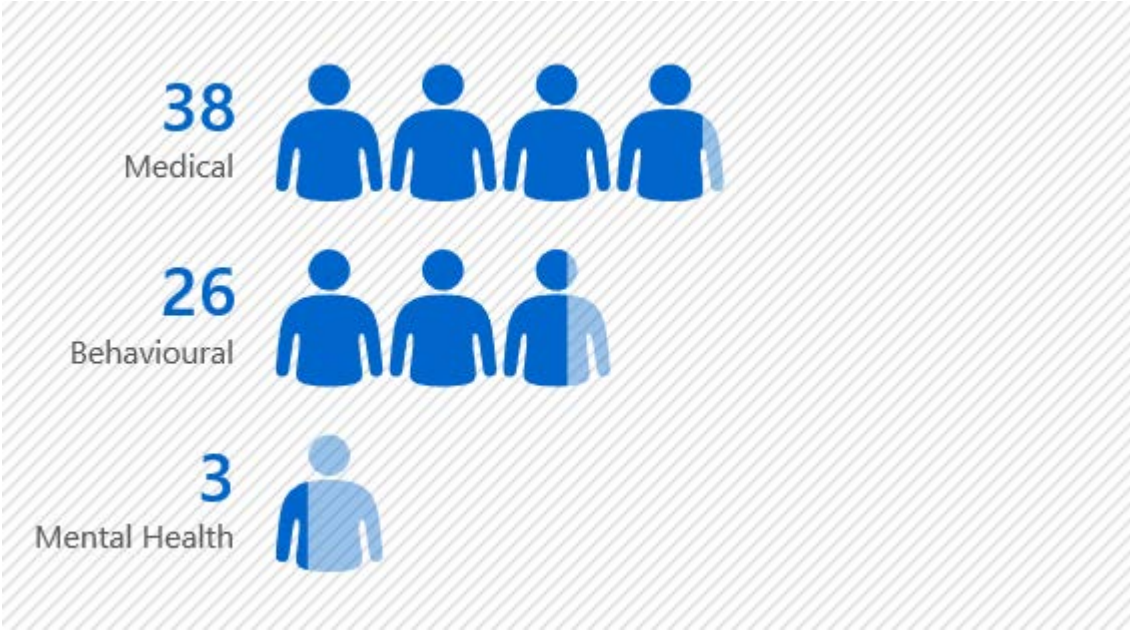


Figure 2 demonstrates a consistent trend that the majority of children and youth receiving services from the Department are in-territory. Additionally, the majority of these children remain within their family or extended family (298 or 53%).

Since fiscal year 2015/16, the number of children and youth residing out-of-territory has ranged from 60 to 70. This number remains consistent, given departmental efforts to keep children and youth in-territory, whenever possible. The Department will only place a child or youth out-of-territory if the child's needs cannot be met in-territory and will collaborate with respective stakeholders to find a suitable placement.

Figure 3 below outlines the specific reasons why children are placed out-of-territory, ranging from mental health or behavioural challenges to medical issues. Where there are mental health and/or medical challenges, the Department will work with the Department of Health to find a suitable placement and supports.

Figure 3: Number of Children and Youth Receiving Services, Out-of-Territory, March 31, 2019



In supporting children and youth out of the territory, the Department increased its out-of-territory service capacity through the hiring of its Client Liaison Officers (CLOs). The CLOs are responsible for monitoring the wellbeing of the clients, and ensuring services delivered to these clients are reflective of Inuit culture. The CLOs will play an important role in supporting children and youth out-of-territory and will work with the respective CSSW’s to ensure all clients receive adequate and appropriate care as per case plans. The CLOs were both hired in the fiscal year 2018/19.

STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE TO CHILD ABUSE

In the *Inuusivut Anninaqtuq Action Plan 2017-2022*, the Department of Family Services committed to leading efforts to strengthen the Government of Nunavut’s response to child sexual abuse. In March 2017, the Department began this work by compiling research related to best practices to address child sexual abuse. The Coordinator, Preventing Violence Against Children & Youth has been leading an interagency working group to collaborate and coordinate resources to respond to and prevent child sexual abuse, as well as leading initiatives to improve the ability of frontline staff, foster parents, and other service providers to identify fiscal year and work with clients who have experienced sexual abuse.

The Umingmak Centre

The Umingmak Centre officially opened in October 2019. It is the only child advocacy centre in Nunavut supporting children and youth who have experienced abuse. Umingmak works with a multidisciplinary team that includes the Departments of Family Services, Justice, Health, Education, the RCMP, and NTI. The Umingmak Centre provides a centralized space for services providers to come together to support any child or youth who has experienced violence. This is a unique feature and is considered best practice in reducing any further trauma that may be incurred by the child or youth in a time of crisis.

To contribute our services to the Centre, the Department of Family Services continues to ensure that Community Social Service Workers receive training to become experts on interviewing techniques for children who have experienced sexual abuse. The Department also provides oversight to the multidisciplinary team on case coordination and review, professional development, and future planning with Umingmak. The Department's collaboration with the Umingmak Centre ensures that children who are victims of abuse will have a coordinated response and services under one roof to minimize system-induced trauma.

Some other notable highlights for the Department in fiscal year 2019/2020 included:

At the end of fiscal year 2019/20 the Department hired the Coordinator, Preventing Violence Against Children & Youth. The Coordinator is responsible for leading an interagency working group to collaborate and coordinate resources to respond to and prevent child sexual abuse, and leading initiatives to improve the ability of frontline staff, foster parents, and other service providers to identify fiscal year and work with clients who have experienced sexual abuse. The Coordinator's first task included coordinating training on child sexual abuse investigations for frontline service providers. The training took place in early April 2019 in Iqaluit and February 2020 in Rankin Inlet through Step Wise, in total thirty-five (35) workers were trained during this fiscal year.

A training program was delivered to CSSWs in Iqaluit, from April 29 to May 3, 2019. Other key stakeholders (Health, Education, Justice, and ORCY) were invited to attend the training. Thirty-three (33) representatives attended the training.

The Department continues to actively participating with the Government of Canada, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories on the Pan-Northern Child Welfare Data Project, as noted previously, to understand child welfare trends across the North.

RESOURCES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY SERVICES

The Department of Family Services has been working for the past three years on the implementation of an electronic database system with a view of strengthening consistency, reliability, and validity of data, ensure better privacy/ confidentiality, increase accountability,

improve evidence-based decision making and lessen the administrative burden for front line staff.

The Department has expanded during this fiscal year with continued plans to grow to best serve all children, youth, and families in Nunavut.

The Department added the following positions:

Funded Positions:

- Case aides - assist with the movement of children between visits and appointments, supervising family visits and assisting CSSW's with case management tasks.
- Family Resources workers - assist with the planning and prevention of cases and as well assist the CSSW's with active involvement in
- Foster Care Coordinators – there are 3 positions in each region that take care of the maintenance and updating of all foster files in Nunavut.
- Four Regional Directors

Unfunded Positions:

- Adoptions Coordinator – assists the adoption specialist in completion of private, departmental, and intercountry adoptions. As well supports the custom adoption program, inquires, filing of documents, communication with other provinces and territories as well as completions of assessments.
- Quality Assurance Coordinator – assist with the compliance of department standards and identifies areas for improvement.
- Senior Compliance Analyst – responsible for performing audits and investigations in relation to programs within the department.

The creation of these positions was in response to the need for more efficient and specialized service delivery to meet the needs of Nunavut and gaps in-services identified. The Department is accountable to the public, Office of the Representative for Children, and Youth (RCY), and the Minister's office. These added resources will create more capacity to deliver services at a more comprehensive level.

FOSTER CARE

Foster care plays an important role in providing children with a safe, stable, and supportive environment until the child or youth's home is safe, or the Department locates a permanent home. Extended family members or community members can provide short-term foster care for children and youth during emergencies, or long-term foster care until a more permanent plan is developed.

In 2019/20, the Department was successful in obtaining funding for three (3) Foster Parent Program Coordinators, currently two (2) of the three (3) positions are filled. The coordinators are responsible for recruiting foster parents and supporting foster families through resource support.

The Department continues to place focus on strengthening the foster care program, with the hiring of additional staff responsible for providing services. The departments attention is on the recruitment and retention of foster families within Nunavut. This means stronger training programs, communication, and inclusion of extended family placements. The Department identifies extended family members as the first choice for children requiring foster care services and provides supports to families to ensure children remain in their home communities. Of the 560 children receiving services in Nunavut, 182 (33%) were in foster homes.

The Departmental Training Specialist continues to seek out the best platform and partnership to develop a foster parent training program, which will be initiated in the fall of 2020. The training program will be designed to strengthen the quality of family and foster care by providing a standardized, structured framework for continued recruiting, preparing, and selecting of foster parents.

The Department was successful in increasing foster care per diem rates on April 1, 2020. . Basic per diem rates will now range from \$58-\$65 per day depending on the community. This reflects an increase from the previous per diem rates which ranged from \$43-\$50 per day. The Department increased the per diem rates and changed the community zones to reflect the cost of living more adequately in Nunavut.

Table 1: Child & Family Services New Foster Rate Per Diems

New Per Diem Rates	
Communities	Per Diem Rate
Zone 1: Arviat, Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet	\$58
Zone 2: Arctic Bay, Baker Lake, Cambridge Bay, Chesterfield Inlet, Gjoa Haven, Hall Beach, Igloolik, Kugluktuk, Nauyasat, Whale Cove	\$60
Zone 3: Cape Dorset, Kimmirut, Pangnirtung, Sanikiluaq, Taloyoak	\$62
Zone 4: Clyde River, Coral Harbour, Grise Fiord, Kugaaruk, Pond Inlet, Qikiqtarjuaq, Resolute Bay	\$65

ADOPTIONS

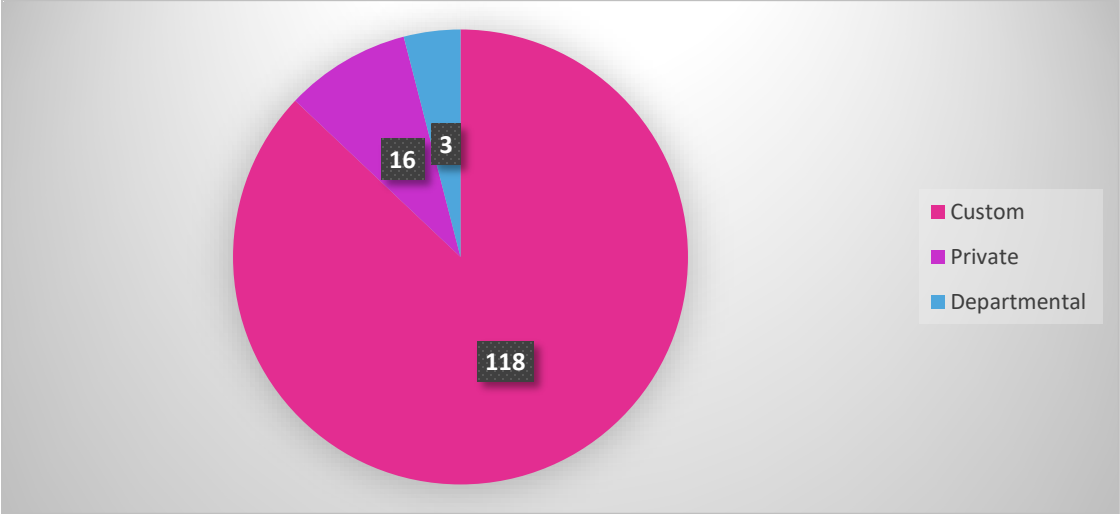
Under the *Adoption Act*, the Department is responsible for processing adoptions, including departmental and private adoptions. Departmental adoptions involve a child being adopted who is in the permanent care and custody of the Director of Child & Family Services by court order. Private adoptions are arranged independently between the birth parent(s) and adoptive parent(s) and must meet the requirements of the *Adoption Act*. As the populations of Nunavut

becomes more diverse, the department is starting to see more interest in intercountry adoptions. For the Department this has meant more families inquiring and applying to adopt children from countries outside of Canada.

The Department also provides support to Custom Adoption Commissioners under the *Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act (ACARA)*. Although the Department has no direct involvement in the custom adoption process, it is responsible for ACARA, including the appointment, training, and payment of Adoption Commissioners. Under this legislation, custom adoptions are legally registered outside the courtroom and without legal proceedings, with the assistance of an appointed Custom Adoption Commissioner. *Figure 4* below shows us the fiscal year statistics for adoptions processed.

The Department has added an adoption coordinator to support the critical work in adoptions. 3 departmental adoptions were completed and 16 children receive adoption subsidies. Adoption subsidies are available for a variety of different circumstances depending on the child’s needs and family’s financial situation. The department will be focusing on permanency planning for all children presently with permanent status to ensure stable and safe homes.

Figure 4: Number of Adoptions in Nunavut, March 31, 2020



In fiscal year 2019/2020, there were 118 custom adoptions registered in Nunavut, a decrease of 77 custom adoptions from fiscal year 2018/2019. Private and Departmental did not have significant changes from past years. These adoption statistics have remained the same over the past several years and we have not noted any drastic trends.

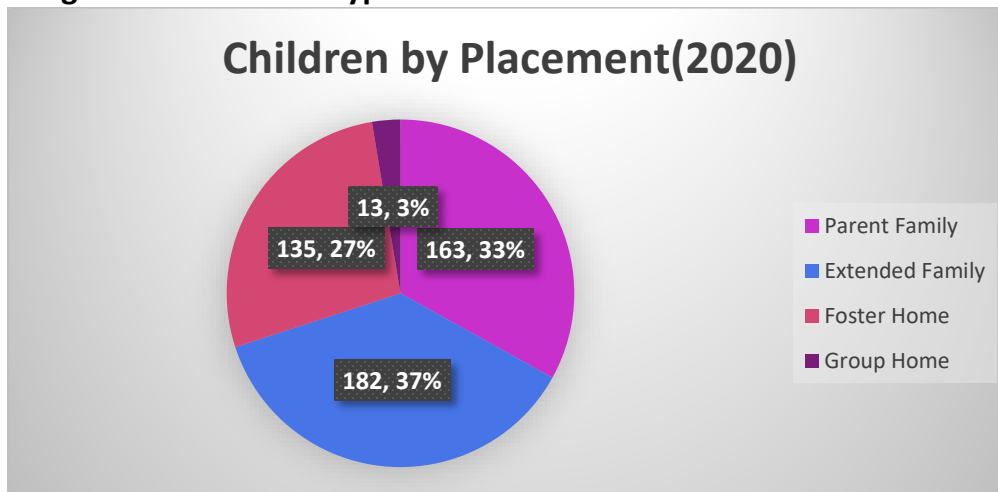
ANALYSIS, TRENDS AND COMPARISONS

Table 2 below presents an overview of the services delivered to Nunavummiut through the Family Wellness Division. Unless otherwise noted, the data presented is from March 31, 2020, and represents a snapshot in time.

Table 2: Statistical Summary of Child & Family Services

Select Indicators	Total	Percentage
Number of Children and Youth Receiving Services	560	100
Male	283	51%
Female	277	49%
Children and Youth Receiving Services by Court or Agreement		
Under Court Order	294	53%
By Service Agreement	266	47%
Children and Youth Receiving Services In or Out-of-Territory		
In Nunavut	493	88%
Out-of-Territory	67	12%
Children and Youth Receiving Services In Nunavut, by Placement Type		
In family / extended family	298	53%
Foster homes	182	33%
Group homes	13	2%

Figure 5: Placement Type



As of March 31, 2020, the Department was providing supports to 560 children, youth and families, an increase of 34 from fiscal year 2018/19. Figure 5 above shows the breakdown of children by placement. A large proportion of children and youth (88%) were receiving care and services in Nunavut and more than half of those children (53%) were receiving services within

their immediate or extended family. Figure 1 above gives an overview of the number of children and youth receiving services from the Department from fiscal year 2015/16 to fiscal year 2019/20. There has been an ongoing increase in the number of children receiving services which could be contributed to a variety of factors: population growth, increased staff capacity, increased awareness of the Department's services and the more timely and aligned access to services. With increased awareness around the Department's capacity to assist families in prevention-based work, families may be more willing to reach out to the Department for support.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The Department hopes to continue to improve and increase prevention and supportive services to families. The Department will continue efforts to recruit and retain foster families, as well as, adoptive families, in hopes of continuing proper pathways to permanent family relationships. As the number of children and youth grow, we want to assure that proper transition to adulthood is implemented prior to reaching the age of majority, by guiding them to supports and educating them on the resources within their communities.

We hope to continue a strong retention and recruitment for staffing and will continue to develop training and supports. This fiscal year we have trained twenty-three (23) staff across Nunavut with Core Training. As well as twelve (12) staff with Community/Parent engagement Training.

The department continues to partner with Nunavut Arctic College to take on practicum students from the Social Service Worker Program across Nunavut, in hopes of increasing Inuit staffing.

The Department will continue to promote awareness of the services provided by the Department, as well as, continuing to embed Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) throughout practice. Lastly, the Department will continue improving and standardizing training for CSSW's to promote continued services to Nunavummiut.

Note on Data Collection

The data in this report has been collected through regional and community manual monthly summaries provided by frontline staff. All efforts are made to provide accurate information until the electronic database is fully operational.

