



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Child and Youth
ADVOCATE

ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025



Our Logo

Symbols matter. The Founding Members of the Child and Youth Advisory Committee of the PEI Office of the Child and Youth Advocate created the vision for the logo of the Office, its shape, elements, and colours:

The Ribbon Human - a ribbon is a symbol known around the world as a sign of advocacy, of support for a cause. It also transforms into a human shape. The Ribbon Human could be anyone - an infant, a child, a youth, an adult ally, an advocate. It is a radiant gold, shining our shared light and passion as it reaches for every opportunity.

The Leaves - trees and leaves are synonymous with growth. Every small seed unlocks the ability to reach the skies, seeks nurturing and an environment that supports its needs. Children and youth can grow in any direction, reach momentous heights, and have great strength.

The Colours - a community is strong when we are all included in it. Diversity matters. Differences are celebrated. There is a place for all of us. Having vibrant and unique colours reflect our respect for all children and youth. Each colour has varying tones within it - a nod to the fact that we all have shades within us as we grow and learn.

The Words - 'Prince Edward Island' in blue represent both the sky and sea. We adore our Island and all that it gives us. It is solid. It stands to show that decisions made here are guided by recognizing where and who we are. 'Child and Youth' is an action-oriented forest green. Growth and development and action are reflected in the text. 'Advocate' is fuchsia, a colour of passion. The text is sound, solid, and rooted. Advocacy takes both a fueled commitment and an underpinned knowledge.



Letter of Transmittal

February 3, 2026

The Honourable Sidney MacEwen
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
197 Richmond Street
P.O. Box 2000
Charlottetown, PE C1A 7K7

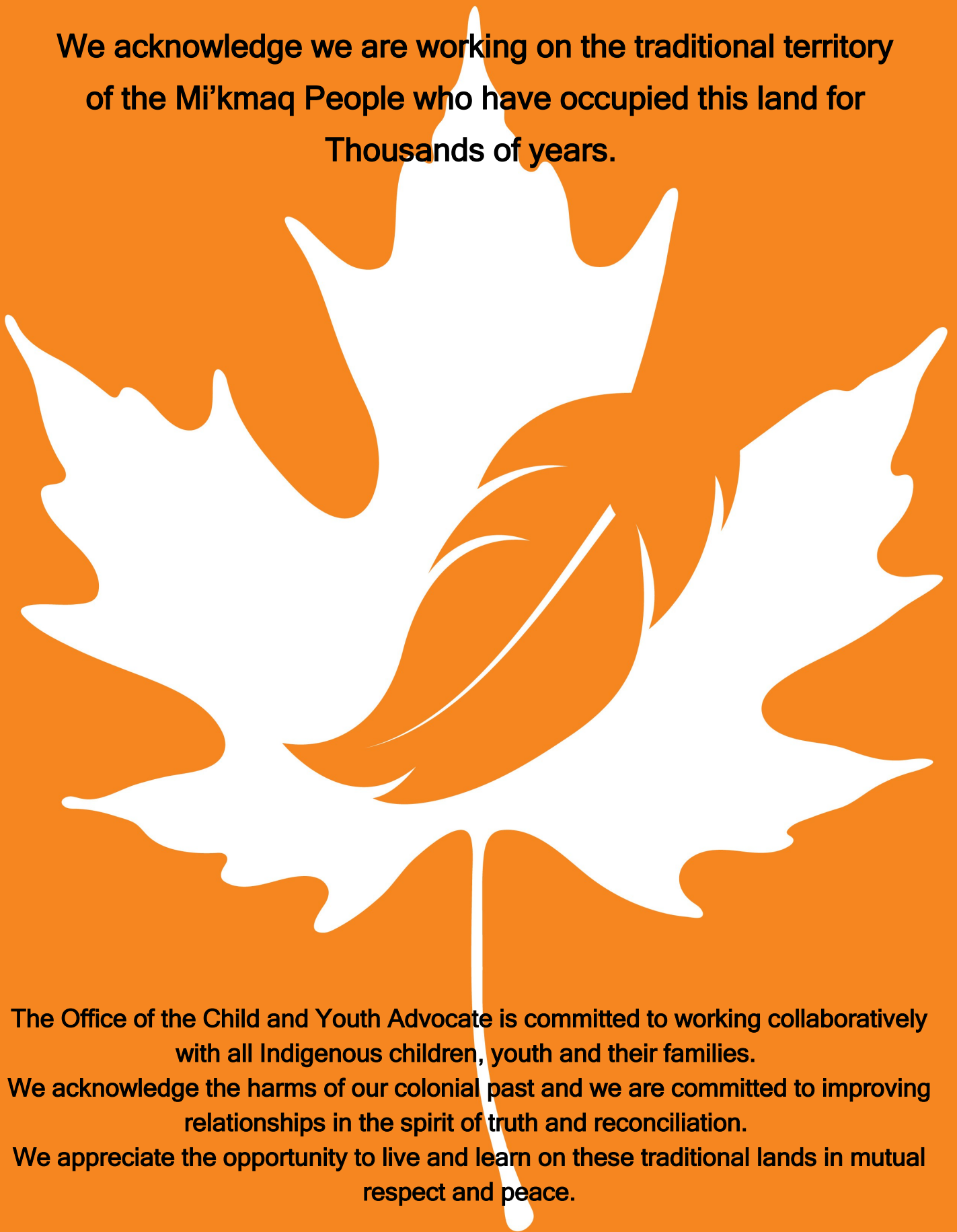
Dear Speaker,

In accordance with Section 30(1) of the PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, it is my privilege and responsibility to submit to you and the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island the Annual Report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Respectfully,

Marvin Bernstein, B.A., J.D., LL.M. (ADR)
Child and Youth Advocate
Province of Prince Edward Island

**We acknowledge we are working on the traditional territory
of the Mi'kmaq People who have occupied this land for
Thousands of years.**



**The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is committed to working collaboratively
with all Indigenous children, youth and their families.
We acknowledge the harms of our colonial past and we are committed to improving
relationships in the spirit of truth and reconciliation.
We appreciate the opportunity to live and learn on these traditional lands in mutual
respect and peace.**



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Message from the Advocate

It is my privilege to present to the Legislative Assembly the fifth Annual Report of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, covering the period from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025.

In preparing this Annual Report, I have reflected on the activities carried out by our committed staff in the delivery of our legislated mandate to advocate for the rights of children and youth in PEI. Our team continues to demonstrate unwavering dedication to raising awareness of the rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We thank children, youth and families who continue to put their trust in our Office and support us to fulfill our mandate to empower and promote the rights of all PEI children and youth.

Our work is enhanced when we understand the experiences of children and youth who are accessing reviewable services. Youth members of our Child and Youth Advisory Committee play an important part in helping us to appreciate youth perspectives and we use this knowledge to inform our systemic advocacy. Over the past year, committee members have engaged in consultations with government services, offering their valuable insights and demonstrating the positive impacts when children and youth are empowered to be active participants in decision making processes. As a group, the committee has grown in strength, demonstrating increased leadership and advocacy skills. It is an honour to work alongside our committee members, and I thank them for the substantial contribution they make to the work of our Office.

Through individual advocacy we have seen an increase in the complexity of cases supported by our Individual Advocacy Representatives. Many of the children and youth we support have complex lives, engaging with multiple services. They bravely share their stories and put faith in our work to amplify their voices, seek clarification about services, ask questions and gather information in the pursuit of advancing their rights. Over the past year we have increased our focus on the development of self-advocacy skills, supporting children and youth to be actively involved in their own advocacy. As Island children and youth develop greater realization of their rights, they demonstrate increased capabilities as active citizens. We have equally observed greater awareness by service providers of the purpose and objectives of individual advocacy and value the collaborative efforts made by frontline workers in making space for children and youth to exercise their participation rights. As a province, we can be proud of the work done to amplify the voices of children and youth.

Trends from individual advocacy continue to identify systemic issues impacting the rights of Island children and youth. This year we have seen a notable shift in the average age of children (birth to 11 years - up 11%) and youth (ages 12-17 years - down 16%) served by our Office and a significant increase (16%) in the number of cases where issues impacting children's rights in education are



reported by children, youth, families and professionals. In addition to pre-existing recommendations made by our Office in August 2024 we advanced 5 new recommendations to the Department of Education and Early Years and Education Authorities regarding the rights of children with exceptionalities in our school system. As stated in our published Advisory Statement, *Ensuring the Right of All Island Children and Youth to an Education that Best Meets their Individual Needs and Abilities*, PEI, as a small jurisdiction, is uniquely positioned to find solutions and become a leader in inclusive education. Island children and youth have the right to the highest possible standard of education. Through the development of our recommendation monitoring scale, we are now able to track, and publicly report on, progress made in implementing recommendations that advance the rights of children and youth.

In September 2024 we saw the enactment of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, following significant consultation with the Department of Social Development and Seniors, including recommendations made by the OCYA for the development of new child protection legislation. The proclaimed Act is historic, ground breaking and aspirational. It makes explicit reference to the UNCRC and codifies children's rights. This sets a high bar for the protection and promotion of children's rights in provincial legislation. We are excited to see how these 'paper rights' translate to 'lived rights' for children, youth and families, and will continue to advocate for the inclusion of children's rights in all child-serving legislation in PEI.

During the next year we look forward to further building our systemic advocacy function. With the successful recruitment of two Systemic Advocacy Representatives, we are well placed to examine systemic issues that arise from individual advocacy and through engagement with our Child and Youth Advisory Committee. Our work will continue to prioritize the rights of children and youth, seeking opportunities to ensure their voices are heard and acted upon.

I recognize, and applaud, the significant efforts made by children, youth, families, professionals and concerned citizens who engage in their own advocacy to promote the wellbeing of children and youth in PEI. Prioritizing the rights of children and youth is a collective effort, and one that is most successful when we work together to put the needs and interests of Island children and youth at the forefront of decision making. As Child and Youth Advocate it is my privilege to continue serving children and youth and a responsibility that I treat with the highest regard. I look forward to the year ahead and advocating for further advancements to the rights, interests and well-being of children and youth in PEI.

Respectfully submitted,

Marvin M. Bernstein

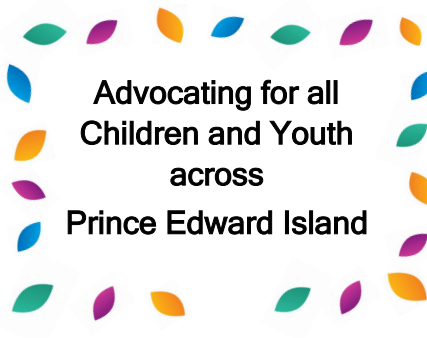
Marvin Bernstein, B.A., J.D., LL.M. (ADR)
Child and Youth Advocate
Province of Prince Edward Island



“The lightbulb went on for me when I realized that although adults have the best of intentions, when we talk to children and youth directly, they draw from their own lived experience and share perspectives we have not thought about.”

**Marvin Bernstein, Child and Youth Advocate
Employment Journey – August 2024**

APPIN ROAD MONT-CARMEL YORK GREENWICH ST PETERS ABRAM-VILLAGE HAMPSHIRE FORT AUGUSTUS MILL RIVER EAST SPRINGFIELD WEST WARREN GROVE BELLEVUE
 SPRINGFIELD BURTON STANCHIEL LOWER MONTAGUE ARLINGTON MOUNT MELICK MOUNT TRYON WELLINGTON CENTRE
 PARK CORNER SOUTH FREETOWN EAST POINT GAIROLOCH HERMITAGE ST PATRICKS PISQUID WEST TENMILE HOUSE
 GEORGETOWN ROYALTY BAIE-EGMONT HEAD OF MONTAGUE TIGNISH SHORE POPLAR GROVE RIVERTON RICE POINT
 BRACKLEY ROXBURY PLEASANT GROVE ST MARYS ROAD MURRAY HARBOUR NORTH GREEN MEADOWS MAYFIELD
 SEACOW POND GLENFANNING WHIM ROAD DEGROS MARSH CARLETON MILO CAP-EGMONT RENNIES ROAD DUNBLANE SPRING VALLEY
 NEWTOWN CROSS DERBY NORTH CARLETON INVERNESS GLENWILLIAM ALLISTON BELMONT LOT 16 VICTORIA CROSS CLEMONT FREELAND
 CRAPAUD MERMAID CHARLOTTETOWN PRIMROSE DUVAR GASPAREAUX BROOKVALE EMYVALE HAMILTON
 WEST COVEHEAD TIGNISH DARLINGTON WEST ST PETERS ALBION MISCOCUCHE MIMINEGASH BRACKLEY BEACH EMERALD COVEHEAD ROAD RICHMOND
 SOUTH GRANVILLE BURTON ST-NICHOLAS GLENMARTIN GUERNSEY COVE BROOKFIELD NORTHAM WEST POINT KINGSBORO GLENGARRY
 FRENCH RIVER IRIS ST MARGARETS BAY FORTUNE CHERRY VALLEY NORBRO ST ROCH TRAVELLERS REST LAKEVILLE AUBURN
 ANGLIO TIGNISH DONALDSTON SELKIRK GREENMOUNT SOUTH FREETOWN VERNON RIVER ST ANN PEMBROKE AVONDALE MILLVIEW ANNANDALE LADY FANE
 LAUNCHING MARIE WATERFORD HAMPTON EAST BIDEFORD WATERSIDE VALLEY VICTORIA BIRCH HILL NORWAY BRUDENELL LORNE VALLEY
 GRANDVIEW NORTHPORT KILDARE CAPES KINKORA BELLE RIVER NAIL POND MURRAY ROAD LAKE VERDE MOUNT HERBERT MAPLE PLAINS BRIDGETOWN
 NINE MILE CREEK BEAR RIVER NORTH NORTH MILTON OYSTER BED BRIDGE ST ANN SOURIS ROCK BARRA HARPER GRAND TRACADIE
 MOUNT PLEASANT OLEARY HUNTER RIVER KELLYS CROSS FRENCHFORT CAPE WOLFE IRISHTOWN WEST DEVON PINETTE POWNAL
 AFTON ROAD ROLLO BAY WEST BROCKTON ELLIOTVALE MOUNT ALBION JOHNSTONS RIVER KENSINGTON
 LONG RIVER ST ANDREWS BROOKLYN HAMPSHIRE WILMOT VALLEY PALMER ROAD SOUTH LAKE ST TERESA PRIEST POND ROLLO BAY
 EBBSFLEET HUNTLEY HOPE RIVER HOPEFIELD MURRAY HARBOUR UNION ROAD ELMSLIE-BIDEFORD
 SCOTCHFORD KELVIN GROVE FAIRVIEW HARMONY SOUTH MELVILLE ALBION CROSS FORESTVIEW ABNEY HOWLAN
 LONG CREEK WESTMORELAND BRISTOL RIVERDALE DEBLOIS ST LOUIS ST-RAPHAEL ST RAPHAEL FIVE HOUSES
 DUNDAS STRATFORD FOREST HILL RUSTICO MIDGELL SOUTH GRANVILLE TORONTO CLYDE RIVER SUFFOLK STURGEON PLEASANT GROVE BEAR RIVER SOUTH LINKLETTER
 CARDIGAN TORONTO CLYDE RIVER SUFFOLK STURGEON PLEASANT GROVE BEAR RIVER SOUTH LINKLETTER
 BEACH POINT HEAD OF MONTAGUE CENTRAL BEDEQUE MARSHFIELD IONA WINSLOE SOUTH FOXLEY RIVER BORDEN-CARLETON
 NORTH LAKE ELMSDALE FORTUNE COVE PORTAGE MARGATE GOWANBRAE ST LAWRENCE SHERBROOKE GLEN VALLEY GOOSE RIVER AUGUSTINE COVE
 ST-TIMOTHEE CAMBRIDGE WEST CAPE VALLEYFIELD MARIE POPLAR POINT ST-PHILIPPE ASCENSION NEW HAVEN PANMURE ISLAND
 BONSHAW CHEPSTOW ALBANY NEWTON MILLBURN HAZEL GROVE GREEN ROAD FORTUNE BRIDGE CONWAY MILTON STATION GLENWOOD
 WATERVALE CENTRAL LOT 16 ROSE VALLEY SOUTH PINETTE NEW GLASGOW MILLTOWN CROSS GRANVILLE TRACADIE CROSS SPRINGVALE
 ARGYLE SHORE ST PETER AND ST PAUL MEADOWBANK ROSEVILLE HOWE BAY BLOOMFIELD CABLE HEAD WEST UNIONVILLE ENMORE
 CHRISTOPHER CROSS PEAKES KINGSTON MELVILLE NEW PERTH FREETOWN BLOOMFIELD FARMINGTON ST EDWARD KNUTSFORD ALEXANDRA
 NORTH TRYON CENTRAL KILDARE ST GEORGES CHERRY HILL ST-HUBERT PLEASANT VIEW GLENFINNAN VERNON BRIDGE MORELL EAST HEAD OF HILLSBOROUGH
 SPRINGBROOK NEW LONDON FANNING BROOK CHERRY HILL ST-HUBERT SOURIS LINE ROAD PISQUID EAST COMMERCIAL CROSS CANAVOY
 ST FELIX BETHEL WHEATLEY RIVER ST-HUBERT EBENEZER SHAMROCK MONTAGUE CAPE TRAVERSE WOODVALE MARTINVALE
 BLOOMFIELD CORNER MONTICELLO CALEDONIA SKINNERS POND SEARLETOWN TRYON MOUNT BUCHANAN ALBERRY PLAINS SOURIS WEST
 MOUNT VERNON LOWER BEDEQUE LENNOX ISLAND SKINNERS POND SEARLETOWN TRYON MOUNT BUCHANAN ALBERRY PLAINS SOURIS WEST



**Advocating for all
 Children and Youth
 across
 Prince Edward Island**

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

On July 15, 2020, following the appointment of an Advocate and the proclamation of the PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, the Office of the Child and Youth Office was officially opened. The Child and Youth Advocate Office is an independent office of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island responsible to promote and protect the rights of children and youth, and to provide oversight of government funded programs and services to Island children and youth.

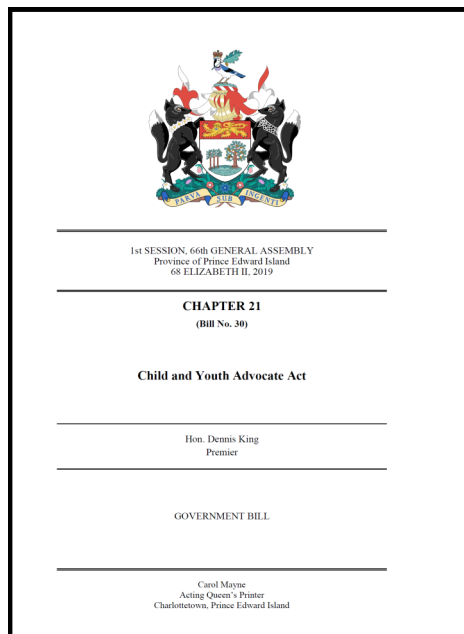
Each member of this Office plays an essential role in the delivery of quality service to the public. The province values strong leadership, teamwork and respect for clients and employees. We are working to become a leader in all aspects, not just for ourselves, but so that we can better serve the children and youth of our province.

The PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act* and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (referred to in the *Act's* Preamble) combine to serve as the guiding legal framework for the work of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to every child in the world from birth to age 18 years. It is the most ratified of all United Nations Human Rights Treaties globally. It has been ratified by 196 nations, with Canada ratifying it on December 13, 1991.

The Convention consists of 54 inter-related and inter-dependent articles on children's human rights. There are three categories of children's rights in the Convention, often referred to as "the 3 Ps":

- **Protection** from all forms of harm and exploitation.
- **Provision** of resources needed for healthy development and survival such as food, health, shelter and education.
- **Participation** by being active participants in their own lives and in society.



Vision ~ Mission ~ Mandate



VISION

A province where every child and youth experiences the realization of all their human rights and have every opportunity to reach their full potential.

MISSION

To raise awareness and uphold the child rights principles expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, while amplifying the voices of children and youth, modelling dignity and respect for children, youth and their families in all aspects of our work.



MANDATE

To empower and promote the human rights of all PEI children and youth through advocacy, reviews, investigations, public education, research and child/youth engagement in accordance with the authority and responsibilities set out in the PEI Child and Youth Advocate Act.





Office of the Child and Youth Advocate



**Child and Youth Advocate
Marvin Bernstein**



**Deputy Child and
Youth Advocate
Rona Smith**



**Office Manager -
Executive Assistant
Penny Woodgate**



**Investigation/Research
Representative
Kathleen MacNabb**



**Advocacy
Representative
Erica Evans**



**Systemic Advocacy
Representative
Shannon Bruyneel**



**Advocacy
Representative
Merissa Mitchell**



**Systemic Advocacy
Representative
Alisha Bowie**





The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates (CCCYA) is an association of Children's Advocates, Representatives and Ombudspersons from across Canada. These members are independent officers of the legislatures in their respective jurisdictions with legislated mandates to promote and protect children's human rights through complaint resolution, advice to government, amplification of child and youth voices, and public education functions.

That the rights, interests and well-being of all children and youth are valued and respected in Canadian communities and in government legislation, policy, programs and practices. Members of the CCCYA work to do this by:

- Encouraging the fullest possible implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Supporting collective advocacy for children's rights.
- Sharing information, approaches and strategies.
- Working with governments, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments, and others with child and youth-serving roles.
- Promoting the development of effective independent offices for children.
- Engaging/cooperating with other child and youth-serving organizations nationally and internationally to contribute to advancing the rights of children world-wide.

During this past reporting period, the OCYA PEI participated in the following CCCYA events:

- Meeting of Advocates, Alberta, June 2024
- Conference on Legal Representation, Alberta, June 2024
- Co-Chair of Child Rights Impact Assessment Community of Practice, virtual meeting December 2024
- Child Death Review Community of Practice, virtual meetings in October 2024 and January 2025
- Chair of Individual Advocacy Community of Practice, virtual meetings in September 2024 and January 2025



CCCYA Bi-annual Conference

In September 2024 the CCCYA conference was hosted by the Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman. Representatives from advocacy offices across Canada met in Halifax for a two-day conference entitled “**Reconnect. Renew. Re-Energize.**” Due to Covid disruptions, this was the first in-person conference attended by staff from the OCYA. The conference commenced with a keynote presentation from Senator Stan Kutcher, with a focus on his work advocating for youth experiencing mental illness. This established a strong theme throughout the conference of advocacy for children, and the role that independent offices have in upholding children’s rights through advocacy, investigations, systemic reviews, education and outreach. As one of the newest members of the CCCYA, PEI greatly values collaborative opportunities to learn from other jurisdictions. Engagement with the conference has resulted in the following outcomes:

- Establishment of the CCCYA Advocacy Community of Practice, chaired by representatives from PEI;
- Shared learning around self-advocacy for children and youth, impacting the delivery of Individual Advocacy;
- Information gathered to inform education and outreach strategies;
- Development of creative approaches for youth engagement and recruitment to Child and Youth Advisory Committee;
- Development of investigative report writing; and
- Increased networking opportunities, to share good practice.



What Does the Child and Youth Advocate Do?



YEAR IN REVIEW

Below is a summary of activities undertaken by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and results achieved during the reporting period April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025. The activities are reported in alignment with the statutory role and responsibilities of the Child and Youth Advocate as mandated by the PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act*.

PROMOTE AND EDUCATE

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate has responsibility to:

- Promote the rights, interests and well-being of children and youth.
- Advocate for children, youth and their families respecting reviewable services.
- Promote and provide education on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as it affects children and youth.
- Promote the rights of children and youth in relation to government legislation, regulations, policies, protocols, procedures, practices and reviewable services to children and youth.
- Receive and review any matter in relation to a reviewable service with respect to a child or youth or a group of children and youth.

Over the past year, staff of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate have:

Received, reviewed, researched and provided child-rights informed analysis to government on proposed new and/or amendments to legislation, regulations, Ministerial Directives and policies and made submissions to government departments and the PEI Legislative Assembly, to include:

- Consultation response to the Department of Social Development and Seniors, *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* draft policies.
- Consultation response to the Department of Education and Early Years draft Minister's Directive on Responsible Use of Communication and Information Technology (MD 2024-06) and draft Public Schools Branch Operational Procedure on Personally-Owned Mobile Devices in Schools.
- Consultation response to the Department of Education and Early Years draft Inclusive Education Action Plan.
- Consultation response to the Department of Social Development and Seniors AccessAbility Supports and Residential Services Program Review.
- Received presentation from Health PEI regarding the development of My Health PEI, highlighting the Child Rights Impact Assessment completed to identify impacts on the rights of children and youth.
- Requested, received, reviewed, researched and consulted with child serving reviewable services to promote and embed appropriate child-rights based complaint mechanisms for programs and services delivered to children, youth and their families, to include:
 - Continued to advocate and recommend that child rights-based complaint resolution processes be embedded in provincial statutes and regulations.
 - Continued to advocate and recommend that child rights-based complaint resolution processes be embedded in child friendly stand-alone policies and procedures.



- Corresponded with the Premier, copied to both the Interim Leader of the Official Opposition and the Interim Leader of the Third Party, to highlight the urgency in introducing a Bill to amend the PEI *Change of Name Act* and the *Vital Statistics Act*, recognizing the delay in government action following recommendations made by the OCYA in 2023, in the submission 'Proposed Amendments to the PEI *Change of Name Act* and the PEI *Vital Statistics Act*.'
- Distributed resources and materials to children and youth promoting their rights through group presentation sessions and individual advocacy interactions.
- Facilitated monthly meetings of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate's Child and Youth Advisory Committee.
- Promoted awareness of the role and function of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and children's rights through presentations, individual and systemic advocacy meetings, community organization meetings and media interviews to include, but not limited to:
 - Posted submissions, correspondence, Op Eds and links to Child and Youth Advocate media interviews on the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate's website.
 - Issued a media Press Release entitled 'Ensuring the Right of All Island Children and Youth to an Education that Best meets their Individual Needs and Abilities'.
 - Issued a media Press Release entitled 'Growing Confidence in the Work and Achievements of the Child and Youth Advocate Office - Child and Youth Advocate Annual Report 2023-24'.
 - Meetings with community organizations and concerned citizens to explore systemic issues impacting the rights of children and youth.
- Participated in National and Provincial Child and Youth Law Sections of the Canadian Bar Association.
- Participated in a meetings with the Deputy Minister of Social Development and Seniors and the Director of Child Protection to review progress in implementing the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*.



- Provided educational sessions on the role and function of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate to include:
 - Public Service Commission government employees
 - Child and Family Services employees
 - Health PEI, Mental Health and Addictions employees
 - Early Childhood Development Association
 - UPEI Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) program
 - Prince Edward Island foster parents
- Forwarded correspondence and/or initiated meetings on behalf of children and youth in receipt of individual advocacy with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, with the:
 - Director of the Public Schools Branch
 - Director of Student Services, Public Schools Branch
 - PSB Board of Trustees
 - Director of Child Protection, Child and Family Services
 - Director of Early Childhood Development
 - Acting Director of Family Law and Court Services
 - Director of Public Health and Children’s Developmental Services
 - Chief Operating Officer, Health PEI
 - Executive Director, Hospital Services and Patient Flow, Health PEI
 - Executive Director of Quality, Patient Safety and Ethics, Health PEI
- Corresponded with the Premier, copied to both the Interim Leader of the Official Opposition and the Interim Leader of the Third Party, sharing the Child and Youth Advisory Committee response to the draft Inclusive Education Action Plan. This correspondence highlighted the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations to Canada, June 2022, recommending that Provinces and Territories should, ***“Ensure that hearing the views of the child are a requirement for all official decision-making processes that relate to children.”***
- Advocated to, and participated in meetings with, Executive Council Office to promote a whole-of-government implementation of Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) pursuant to Motion 70 entitled *Calling on government to use a Childs’ Rights Impact Assessment on all policy and legislative development*, and as amended in November 2, 2021, to “urge government, in consultation with the Child and Youth Advocate, to develop and share a CRIA tool to be used in all policy and legislative development within government; and ‘to publicly share any and all CRIA analysis that are completed’”.
- Participated in meetings with Ministers, Deputy Ministers and senior officials of child serving government departments.
- Co-chaired the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocate’s Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) Community of Practice.
- Initiated and chaired the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocate’s Advocacy Community of Practice.



- Provided media interviews, as requested :
 - Interview with the PEI Child and Youth Advocate: *The Employment Journal*, 'An inside look at the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate for PEI'.
 - Interview with CBC, 'P.E.I. parents, advocacy groups say some children being denied right to an education'.



Marvin Bernstein, PEI's Child and Youth Advocate, worries some children are having their rights to an education and to non-discrimination violated.



ADVOCATE

The Child and Youth Advocate has responsibility to advocate and promote the rights of children, youth and their families receiving or eligible to receive reviewable services. This includes direct engagement, with and on behalf of, children, youth and their families to include providing information and advice; representing the rights, interests and viewpoints of children and youth; and assisting children and youth to initiate and participate in processes in which reviewable service decisions are made about them.

The PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act* provides a roadmap for the different types of advocacy designed to promote and protect the human rights of all PEI children and youth, to include individual advocacy and systemic advocacy.

The four pillars of individual advocacy are:

1. Individual Advocacy is **voluntary**.
2. Individual Advocacy in **confidential**.
3. Individual Advocacy is **child/youth led**.
4. Individual Advocacy is **rooted in children's rights**, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Over the past year, staff of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate received and assessed **236** individual advocacy requests involving **264** children and youth.

"We are just kids. Some adults don't listen to us. Thank you for helping us."

Child accessing individual advocacy



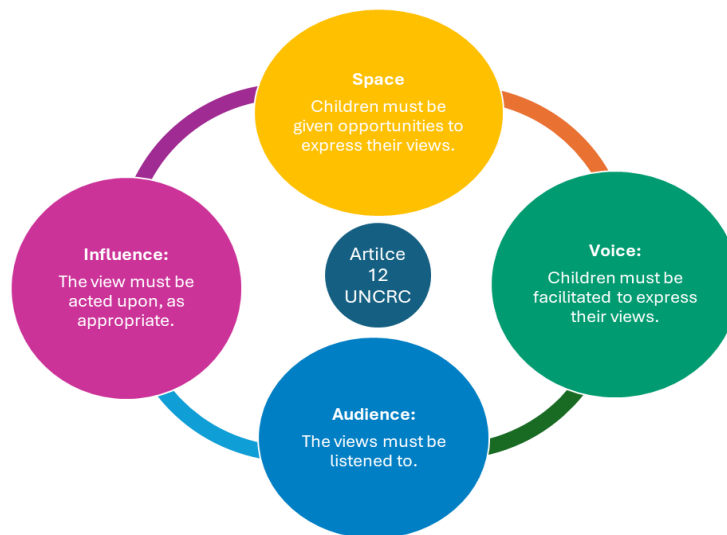
"Confidentiality has been such an issue for us. Thank you for making him feel safe to talk to you."

Parent of child accessing individual advocacy

The four elements of **systemic advocacy** are:

1. Systemic Advocacy involves a group of children/youth receiving or eligible to receive a reviewable service.
2. Systemic Advocacy involves reviewing and/or investigating laws, regulations, policies, protocols, procedures and/or practices inherent to reviewable programs and services delivered to children, youth and their families.
3. Systemic Advocacy recommendations are informed by research, evidence and a child rights analysis.
4. Systemic Advocacy recommendations are intended to make improvements to reviewable services to advance the human rights of children/youth consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Individual and systemic advocacy activities of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate are in compliance with the PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act* and consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The provision of individual advocacy support directly with children and youth is further fostered by research, to include Laura Lundy's model (2007, *British Educational Research Journal*), as a way to conceptualize the participation rights of children and youth, in particular, Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:



Through individual advocacy, emerging systemic trends impacting the rights of children and youth are identified. During this reporting period there was a significant increase in calls where issues in education were the primary focus for individual advocacy requests, from 17% of calls in 2023-24, to 33% of calls in 2024-25. Additionally, the office saw a 10% reduction in requests for individual advocacy where the primary reason for outreach was child protection services, from 38% of calls in 2023-2024, to 28% of calls in 2024-2025.

In August 2024 the OCYA published an Advisory Statement: *Ensuring the Right of All Island Children and Youth to an Education that best Meets their Individual Needs and Abilities*, including the release of five new recommendations for the Department of Education and Early Years and the Education Authorities. These recommendations were intended to address a number of growing concerns: the short- and long-term effects of irregular school attendance and prolonged school absenteeism on the success and well-being of Island children, youth and their families; the lack of clarity surrounding the legal authority of removing neurodivergent children from school for whole or partial days; the lack of transparent and family friendly processes for voicing complaints and initiating appeals to school removal decisions; the lack of an independent student right to

appeal; the lack of guidance and support resources provided to students, parents and guardians experiencing educational service gaps; and the lack of transparent, student- and family-friendly information about alternative education programming.

Ongoing monitoring of recommendations has taken place, including communication with government representatives from education through the administrative fairness process. The final recommendation implementation assessment report has been published on the OCYA website.

"The rights of every child to access an education, which considers and supports their individual needs and abilities, are enshrined in a number of provincial and federal pieces of legislation, and binding international conventions, and chiefly PEI's Education Act and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This Advisory Statement addresses the importance of upholding these embedded rights, while recognizing the complexities created by the need to balance the rights of all students."

Marv Bernstein, Child and Youth Advocate, PEI

REVIEW AND INVESTIGATE

The Child and Youth Advocate has mandatory and discretionary authority for individual, systemic and child and youth serious injury and death reviews and investigations.

The mandatory role and responsibility of the Child and Youth Advocate is defined in the PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, s. 12 (1), to include, but not limited to:

- Advocating for children, youth and their families respecting reviewable services.
- Receiving and reviewing any matter in relation to a reviewable service.
- Promoting and providing public education and advocacy on child rights.
- Monitoring implementation of recommendations made by the Child and Youth Advocate.
- Promoting children's rights in relation to government legislation, policies, protocols, practices and reviewable services.
- Working with others to support child well-being.
- Initiating or collaborating in research to improve reviewable services.

The discretionary authority of the Child and Youth Advocate is additionally defined in the PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, s. 12 (2), to include, but not limited to:

- Receiving and investigating any matter that comes to the Advocate's attention from any source concerning:
 - a child or youth who receives or is eligible to receive a reviewable service.
 - a group of children or youth who receive or are eligible to receive a reviewable service.
 - a reviewable service for children and youth.
- On the Child and Youth Advocate's own initiative, or at the request of a child or youth, assist in appealing or reviewing a decision relating to a reviewable service.
- Review, investigate and report on the serious injury or death of a child or youth.
- Interviews with children, youth, groups of children and youth, family members, representatives of reviewable services and any other person or group of persons deemed appropriate, to gather additional context for information obtained from the record review, noting names of persons interviewed are kept confidential.



Pursuant to the PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, s. 15, the Child and Youth Advocate may require a reviewable service to provide any information considered necessary by the Child and Youth Advocate to carry out both mandatory and discretionary functions of the *Act*.

Individual advocacy, systemic advocacy, and child and youth serious injury and death reviews and investigations by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate are confidential processes that involve:

- Review of reviewable service records, policies and procedures.
- Research on evidence-based/best-promising practices.
- Application of a child rights focus consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Consultation with subject-matter experts to inform recommendations.
- Public report of investigation results.

Over the past year, staff of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate:

Received, reviewed and documented reports identifying individual advocacy trends and systemic issues impacting the rights of PEI children and youth for review and investigation consideration by the Child and Youth Advocate.

CHILD AND YOUTH SERIOUS INJURY AND DEATH

There is a specific duty for all reviewable services and every government program or community organization that provides a reviewable service to a child or youth, or their families, to report the serious injury or death if the child, youth or their family, was receiving a reviewable service at the time, or within two years prior to the serious injury or death.

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate has authority to review child and youth serious injuries and deaths. There are specific criteria the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate must consider when determining whether to move from a review to an investigation of a child or youth serious injury or death.

Child and youth serious injury and death reviews and investigations, when conducted:

- Identify systemic issues that may arise from a review of the child or youth's serious injury or death circumstances;
- Identify potential enhancements to legislation, regulations, policies, programs or services that could benefit children or youth who receive reviewable services in the future;
- Make recommendations for systemic improvements to reviewable programs or services provided to children, youth and their families; and
- Where possible, make recommendations about how similar child or youth serious injuries or deaths may be prevented in the future.

Over the past year, staff of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate:

- Continued to receive reports of child and youth serious injuries and deaths.
- Participated in the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocate's Community of Practice for Child and Youth Serious Injury and Death Investigators.
- Continued consultation with child and youth advocate offices across Canada to determine policies, protocols and practices implemented by various offices for the conduct of child and youth serious injury and death reviews and investigations, development of recommendations for prevention, and reporting of findings.





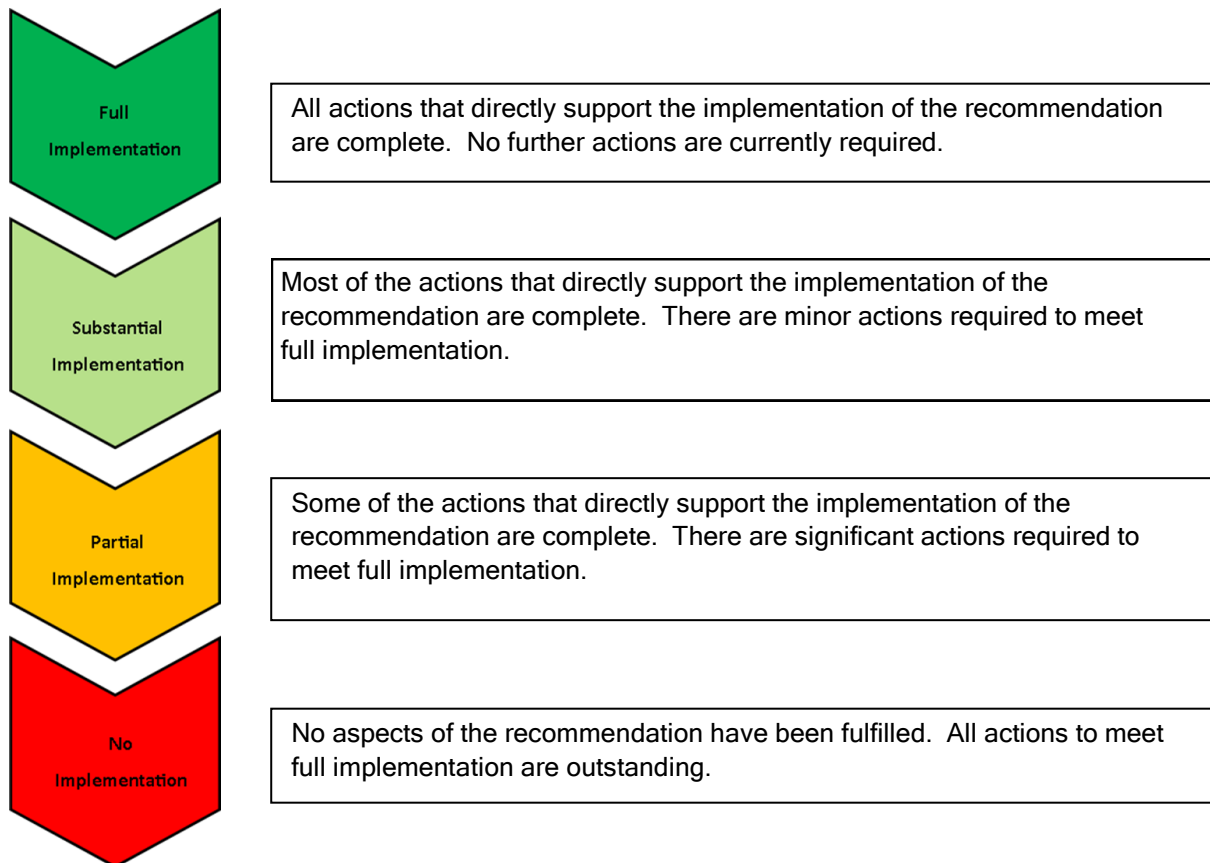
Under the provincial legislation establishing the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, as well as speaking up for the rights of children and reviewing legislation that might affect them, the Advocate can take part in reviewing, investigating and reporting on the serious injury or death of a child or youth.

MONITOR

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is responsible to monitor implementation of and compliance with recommendations included in reports made by the Child and Youth Advocate.

Over the past year, staff of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate have:

Developed the OCYA recommendation and monitoring scale to assess implementation of recommendations made to reviewable services, following analysis of international, national, and provincial monitoring schemes:



- Developed communication template letters for reviewable services, to provide notification for the monitoring of recommendations.
- Issued correspondence to the Department of Education and Early Years, Public Schools Branch and French Language School Board to monitor implementation of recommendations by the Child and Youth Advocate as submitted to the PEI Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Education and Economic Growth (2022), and through the Advisory Statement, *Ensuring the Right of All Island Children and Youth to an Education that Best meets their Individual Needs and Abilities* (2024).
- Reviewed the PEI Legislature Standing Committee on Education and Economic Growth's report endorsing the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate's recommendations that Government consult with the Child and Youth Advocate on proposed amendments to the PEI *Education Act*, to include a comprehensive child rights section for students; the development and implementation of an operational student complaint/reporting policy; and the review of school dress codes.
- Continued to document and monitor systemic trends identified through individual advocacy to inform prioritization of systemic advocacy workplans.

RESEARCH

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is responsible to undertake or collaborate in research related to improving reviewable services. The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate may conduct or contract for research for the purpose of making recommendations to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of a reviewable service.

Over the past year, staff of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate:

- Conducted ongoing jurisprudence reviews and analysis along with literature reviews to inform individual and systemic advocacy issues impacting the rights of PEI children and youth.
- Conducted reviews of academic and grey literature to identify risk factors for child death as well as review of best/promising practices to identify potential opportunities for improvements in reviewable services to prevent child and youth serious injuries and deaths in the future.
- Monitored provincial and national jurisprudence on court decisions involving children and youth.
- Conducted ongoing literature reviews to inform individual and systemic advocacy issues impacting the rights of children and youth, to include but not limited to:
 - Children's rights education to include UNCRC General Comment No.1.
 - Children's participation rights to include UNCRC General Comment No. 12.
 - Children's rights in early childhood to include UNCRC General Comment No. 7.
 - Digital environments to include UNCRC General Comment No. 25.
 - The rights of children with disabilities to include UNCRC General Comment No. 9.
 - Neurodiversity and inclusive education.
 - The rights of children to the highest standard of health to include General Comment No.15.
 - Child and youth gender diversity.
 - Conducted jurisdictional scans to inform advice and recommendations to include:
 - Supports for families of children with disabilities.
 - Education policy regarding the use of mobile devices in schools.
 - Education legislation relating to inclusive education.

REPORTS

The Child and Youth Advocate is required to report the results of an investigation to the reviewable service subject to the investigation and any other person the Advocate considers appropriate.

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate may compile and analyze information received for reviews of child and youth serious injury or death and from investigations conducted to produce a report of the compiled and analyzed information that does not contain information in individually identifiable form.

In order to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of reviewable services, the Child and Youth Advocate may make a special report that includes recommendations respecting reviewable services.

The Child and Youth Advocate shall prepare an annual report that may contain information the Child and Youth Advocate considers appropriate but shall contain, at a minimum, a report on the activities of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, the outcomes expected in the fiscal year in which the report is made, and the results achieved in the previous fiscal year.

Over the past year, the Child and Youth Advocate has:

- Submitted an Annual Report for the 2023-2024 fiscal year to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly dated November 20, 2024, in fulfillment of the legislative requirement of the PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act*.

ADMINISTRATION

The role and function of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is to employ persons necessary to assist the Child and Youth Advocate in carrying out the statutory functions of the PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act*.

Over the past year, the following administrative activities of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate were actioned:

- Completed a successful staffing recruitment process for two Systemic Advocacy Representatives.
- Participated in the Candle Lighting Ceremony at the Montreal Massacre Memorial Service hosted by the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
- Finalized the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate Strategic Plan 2024-2025 and posted to the office's website.
- Continued administration of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate's website.
- Supported staff of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate to participate in professional development, to include:
 - Understanding and Guiding Youth in Online Gaming
 - CPS and Neurodivergent Students
 - Knowledge Translation Children with Brain-based Disabilities
 - Mixed Methods Research Designs
 - Child Rights Impact Assessment
 - Reconciliation Training
 - Children's Mental Health Advocacy
 - Seclusion and Restraint in Schools
 - Enabling Children's Rights to be Heard
 - Partial Day Attendance in Canadian Schools
 - When Schools Decide Who Belongs
 - Understanding Coercive Control in the Context of Intimate Partner Violence
 - Understanding Childhood Trauma
 - Early Childhood as Democratic Education
 - Meet them where they are at. Reimagining the Child Welfare System
 - Reap the Rewards of a Respectful Workplace
 - Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children - Child Rights Symposium
 - Gender-based Analysis Plus
 - Supervisory Safety



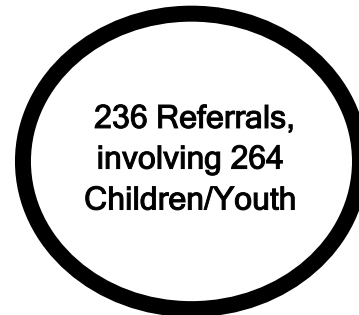


Children and Youth Served through Advocacy Services

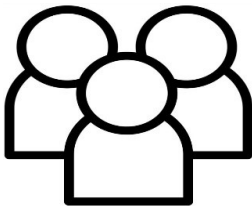
Over the past year, PEI children and youth have continued to bravely share their lived experiences with staff of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate with the hope of having their voices heard and their views considered when reviewable service providers are making decisions that impact their lives.

Actively listening to the lived experiences of children and youth is often very challenging for most adults. Over the past year, Advocacy Representatives have been privileged to be physically and emotionally present with children and youth as they identify their priorities for reviewable service providers in helping them address significant complexities in their young lives. We remain grateful and privileged to serve PEI children and youth and to bear witness to their pursuit in having their human rights actualized.

Individual Advocacy Referrals



Callers



Parents	50%	Extended Family	8%
Professionals	24%	Friend/Public	5%
Child/Youth	13%		

Primary Reason for Call



Education	33%
Child Protection Services	28%
Custody/Access	16%
Health/Mental Health	13%
Justice /Legal	10%

Ages of Children and Youth



57% Birth - 11 yrs
34% 12 yrs - 17 yrs
* 9% age unknown



INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY

THE FOUR PILLARS OF INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY



Voluntary



Confidential



Child/Youth Led



Rooted in
Children's Rights

Voluntary - Individual Advocacy supports for children and youth are voluntary. Often adults initiate contact with the OCYA, but it is always the child's decision to engage with advocacy supports. If the child is very young and/or has additional needs, an Individual Advocacy Representative will assess how best to support the child.

Confidential - Anyone, including children, can contact our office by telephone, email or walk-in. Private and safe spaces are made available for children and youth when they talk with an Individual Advocacy Representative. All information shared by a child or youth is confidential. The only exception is when/if a child or youth discloses information that would be considered a legislated duty to report.

Child/Youth Led - Advocacy supports are provided directly to children and youth, and, where possible, advocacy is child/youth-led. Individual Advocacy Representatives listen to concerns, explore identified priorities and review options for the child or youth's consideration. The child or youth determines next steps and provides direction. The Individual Advocacy Representative does not tell the child or youth what to say or what to do. Individual Advocacy Representatives are not decision-makers and do not contradict or undermine the views and preferences of the child or youth.

Rights Based - Individual advocacy is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ensuring that reviewable services uphold the rights of children and youth. The guiding principles of the UNCRC are: The right to non-discrimination (article 2); the right to have the best interests of the child treated as a primary consideration (article 3); the right to life, survival and maximum possible development (article 6); and the right to express views freely and have those views respected (article 12). Individual Advocacy Representatives develop trusting relationships with children and youth, actively listening to their views and supporting them to ask questions, share views and be informed about decisions by reviewable services.

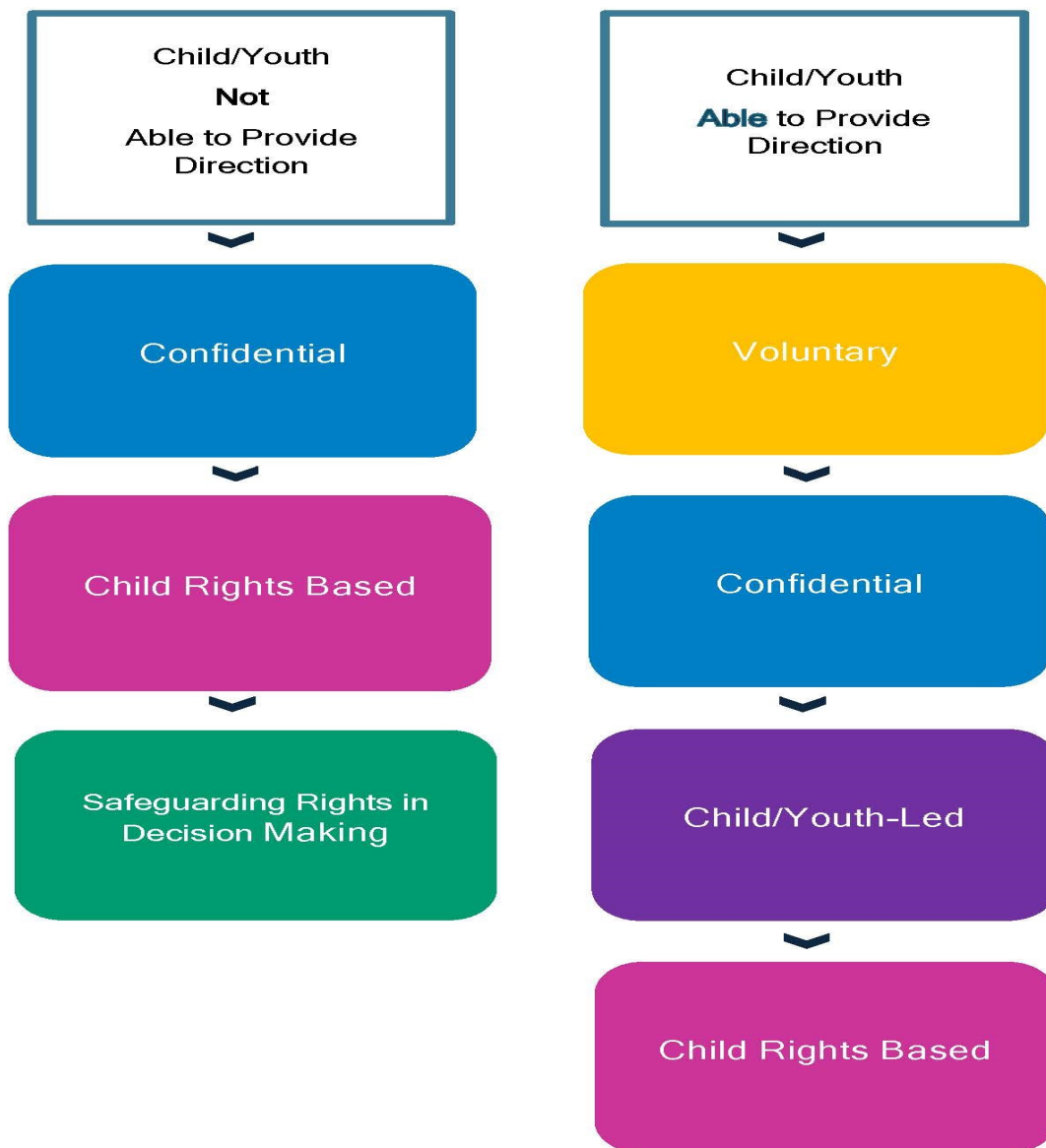
Individual Advocacy is provided when children or youth are in receipt of a reviewable service, as defined in the *Child and Youth Advocate* Act. Services include, but are not limited to, education, early childhood development and child care, health, child protection, social assistance, AccessAbility, justice services. Outside of Individual Advocacy case work, Individual Advocacy Representatives provide navigational support for inquiries assessed to be outside the scope and mandate of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, by providing contact information for programs and services available across the province to include government departments and community-based organizations. Most calls assessed to be outside the mandate of the Office are related to legal issues, noting the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate does not provide legal advice to any person.

INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY: PROCESSES

Individual Advocacy Representatives work with children and youth aged 0-18y (25y if the youth is in receipt of extended services through the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*), and the approach taken depends on the ability of the child or youth to give direction to the Individual Advocacy Representative.

Where possible, Individual Advocacy is directed by the child or youth. Children and youth engage with Individual Advocacy Representatives voluntarily and provide instruction that informs actions taken through the advocacy process.

Some children may be too young to provide verbal instruction, or they may have exceptionalities that make it difficult for them to give direction to the Individual Advocacy Representative. In such cases, the role of the Individual Advocacy Representative is to safeguard the rights of the child when reviewable services are making decisions that impact the child.



INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY; ISSUES, ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES

Individual Advocacy Representatives support children and youth through a range of **issues** impacting their rights. There is no template for advocacy support, and the **actions** taken by an Individual Advocacy Representative are informed by the individual circumstances of the child or youth. Individual advocacy **outcomes** illustrate the positive impacts for the protection, provision and participation rights of children and youth in PEI.

Issues

Child and youth participation in decision making by reviewable services.
Supports for children with exceptionalities in schools and early learning and childcare centres.
Access to health services, including home care.
Access to mental health assessments and supports.
Access to social supports and respite.
Placement concerns for children and youth in care.
Supports for children accessing Child Protection Services.
Concerns around child safety.
Bullying in schools.
School absenteeism.
Access to appeal process for students.
Complaints processes.

Actions

Listen to children and youth.
Present options to children and youth, and take direction about next steps.
Gather information from reviewable services to ensure children and youth are well informed.
Facilitate opportunities for the child's perspective to be heard by reviewable service providers.
Initiate and/or attend meetings/case conferences with or on behalf of children and youth.
Bring together professions from across a range of reviewable services to problem solve ways forward.
Educate adults and children about rights.

Outcomes

Children and youth empowered to express their views.
Reviewable Services able to make informed decisions that consider the child's perspective.
Children and youth fully informed about decisions that impact their lives.
Greater understanding about the rights of children and youth, as established in the UNCRC.
Increased understanding about the role of advocacy for children and youth.
Systemic issues identified for examination, review and/or investigation.

INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY CASE STUDY: TYLER



Advocacy is **child-led** – children and youth provide instruction to their IAR.



Advocacy is **confidential** – privacy is paramount.

Tyler (16y) made contact with the office, seeking advocacy supports. He was connected with an Individual Advocacy Representative (IAR) who initially met with him to provide education about his rights, as set out in the UNCRC. Tyler shared that he felt unsafe at home and wanted help in connecting with child protection services. The IAR explained her own duty to report, explored advocacy options with Tyler and took direction from him to set up a meeting with a social worker. As instructed by Tyler, the IAR provided support before, during and after the meeting, to make space for Tyler's voice to be heard and his questions answered.

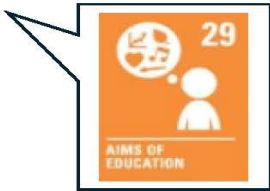
Tyler continued to request individual advocacy, moving his focus to school. He shared with his IAR that life at home was not restful, and this impacted on his sleep and ability to transition easily to class each morning. Together Tyler and his IAR made a plan to meet with the school counsellor to help problem solve solutions. This resulted in accommodations for Tyler, to aid a smooth transition each morning.

At each stage of the advocacy process, the IAR checked in with Tyler to gain consent about what information to share with service providers.

Through individual advocacy, Tyler learned about his rights, the importance of his own voice, and how to reach out to service providers to access supports. The IAR supported Tyler to develop self-advocacy skills, acknowledging his own competencies in sharing his perspectives, asking questions and seeking help.

Advocacy is **voluntary** – children do not need consent from parents or guardians.

Advocacy is **rights-based** – children and youth are educated about their rights.



INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY CASE STUDY: LILLY

Advocacy is **confidential** – communication with the OCYA is confidential.



A call was received at the OCYA about Lilly (9y), a child in hospital who could benefit from individual advocacy supports. Due to her complex needs, Lilly was unable to voluntarily request individual advocacy or provide verbal instruction. The Individual Advocacy Representative (IAR) made a visit to the hospital to meet Lilly and learn more about her circumstances, abilities and needs.

The IAR took time to connect with the multiple professionals associated with Lilly and gather information to help identify barriers she was facing in realizing her rights. When service providers connect with IARs, all communication is confidential.

The focus for the IAR was to safeguard Lilly's rights. This was done by asking questions, raising concerns on Lilly's behalf and ensuring decisions were being made in Lilly's best interests through a collaborative approach among the many professionals involved in her care. The ultimate aim of individual advocacy was to ensure Lilly had access to services that would enable her to reach her full potential.

To promote clear communication across services, the IAR held a case conference at the OCYA on Lilly's behalf, to include staff from Health Services, AccessAbility Supports Program, Child and Family Services and Education. The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate creative problem solving across services. The IAR highlighted priorities for Lilly, asked questions on her behalf, sought clarification about available supports and secured agreements on next steps.

Due to the complexity of Lilly's case, she was supported through individual advocacy in various circumstances as the need arose over the course of 24 months.

Complex cases such as Lilly's expose systemic issues that are then shared with the systemic team at the OCYA for further examination.

Advocacy is **rights-based** – the child's rights are safeguarded in decision making by reviewable services.



Connecting with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

contact

voiceforchildren@ocyapei.ca
www.childandyouthadvocatepei.ca
1-833-368-5630; 1-902-368-5630
119 Kent Street, BDC Place - Suite 500
Charlottetown PE C1A 1N3

Information provided is confidential

inform

- Representative will connect
- Explain OCYA services
- Learn about the reason for your call
- Voluntary; child/youth led; confidential; rights based
- **Determine how we can help**

advocacy

- Representative will meet the child or youth
- Educate about rights
- Talk about options
- Create an advocacy action plan
- **Amplify voice and uphold rights**



CHILD AND YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE PEI OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE

Who are we?

We are a youth led committee that aims to amplify youth perspectives and promote the rights of children and youth in PEI. We bring our diverse lived experiences to share insights about the issues facing children and youth to inform the work of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

What do we do?

- Advance the rights, interests and well-being of children and youth in PEI.
- Identify committee priorities and work on projects that explore issues impacting on children's rights.
- Respond to consultations requested by reviewable services, identifying and advising on areas of concern for children and youth in PEI.
- Represent our peers through a constituency approach, bringing forward a range of perspectives from our communities;
- Promote child and youth participation in decision making.
- Promote community-based peer-to-peer education and learning about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as it affects children and youth.

Membership



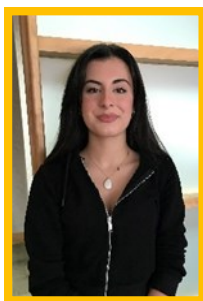
Top left to right: Lyneah Savard, Daniel Hallett; Bottom Left to right: Chikondi Tamula, Roslyn Tamula, Taite Woodridge, Emmalee Drew, Ashlyn Gaudet, Asher Metro

Farewell and Thank You!

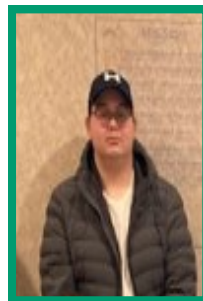
We would like to extend a special mention to three of our long-standing members, Daniel Hallett, Kenneth Liang and Iley Darian, who completed their terms on the committee during 2024-25, after three years of membership. We thank Dan for his openness in raising important issues, sharing his perspective confidently and supporting all members to feel welcome and included. We thank Iley for the leadership she demonstrated, as a member who was confident in speaking her mind, kind to peers and inclusive in her approach. We thank Kenneth for his enduring commitment to the committee and appreciate the high levels of motivation and well-rounded abilities he demonstrated during his tenure. As valued members of the group we will miss their insightful contributions and wish them well in their future endeavours.



Kenneth (Tinghao) Liang



Iley Darian



Daniel Hallett



Child and Youth Identified Priority Issues

Members of the Child and Youth Advisory Committee work on a constituency model, representing the perspectives of their peers. This year's priority issues of the members and children and youth from their communities are highlighted below:

Article 19: Protection from Violence

- Safety on school buses
- Safety in school washrooms
- Sexual violence awareness



Article 20: Children without Families

- Supports for children and youth in care



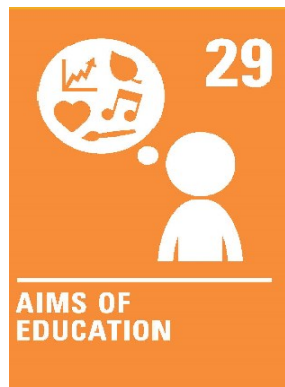
Article 24: The Right to the Highest Standard of Health

- Access to mental health services



Article 29: The Aims of Education

- Racism in schools
- Bullying/cyberbullying
- Vaping on/near school property

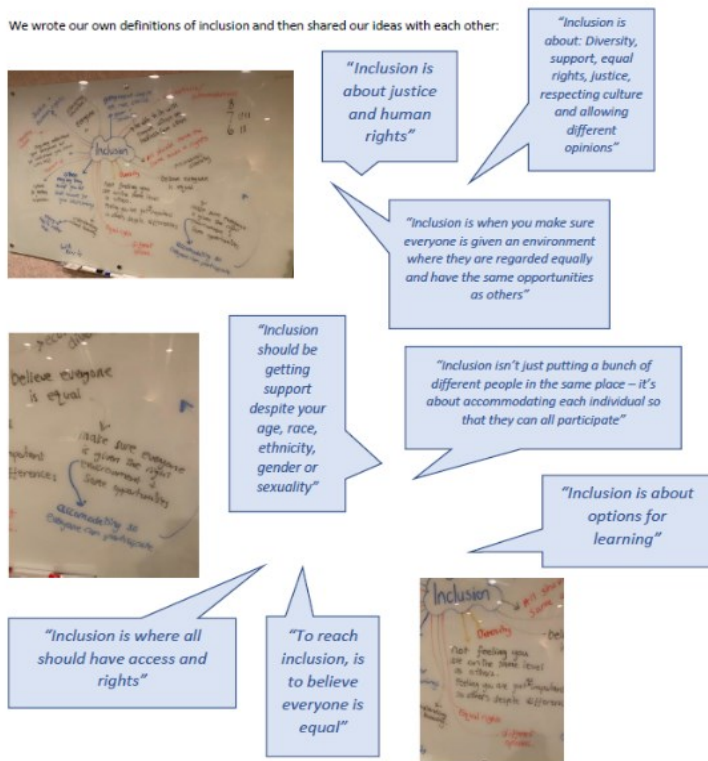


Overview of our Year

During the reporting year, the Child and Youth Advisory Committee met with representatives from the Department of Education and Early Years, the Department of Justice and Public Safety and Health PEI. We have undertaken a range of activities to amplify the rights of children and youth in PEI:

- Meeting with senior leaders at Health PEI to discuss access to health services for children and youth.
- Committee feedback on the Department of Education and Early Years draft Inclusive Education Action Plan.
- Committee feedback on the Public Schools Branch draft Operational Procedure “Personally-Owned Mobile Devices in Schools”.
- Committee consultation on School Bus Cameras with representative from the Department of Education and Early Years.
- Presentation from researchers at UPEI working on a national project on the development of mental health services for young people.
- Committee consultation on the Cyberviolence Prevention Strategy with representatives from the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

We wrote our own definitions of inclusion and then shared our ideas with each other:



Committee members engaged in a review of the Department of Education and Early Years draft Inclusive Education Action Plan. They worked together to agree on definitions of ‘inclusion’ and applied a child-rights lens to the review, drawing on understanding of Articles 2, 23 and 29 of the UNCRC.

LOOKING FORWARD

EXPECTED OUTCOMES for FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026

Promote and Educate

- Respond to media inquiries and requests for interviews.
- Present to Standing Committees of the PEI Legislature as requested.
- Participate in meetings with the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of Executive Council.
- Participate in meetings with Ministers and Deputy Ministers of the primary child-serving government departments.
- Participate in meetings with Opposition Party Critics.
- Correspond with leaders of the three political parties on matters impacting children's rights on PEI.
- Participate, as a member in good standing, on the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates representing PEI.
- Promote that government embed children's rights in provincial legislation, in consultation with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.
- Promote that government action child-friendly complaint mechanisms in all reviewable programs and services, in consultation with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.
- Promote that government provide identified reviewable program and service data to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.
- Receive, review, research and provide written child rights analysis on government proposed new or revised legislation, regulations, Ministerial Directives and policies.
- Promote government, community organization and public knowledge of the two streams of consultation with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate: staff of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and membership of the Child and Youth Advisory Committee to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.
- Distribute resources on children's rights and the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.
- Promote awareness of the role and function of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and children's rights.
- Provide educational sessions on the role and function of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.
- Promote information sharing and engagement opportunities with community organizations serving children, youth and families to include PEERS Alliance, BIPOC-USHR and Pride PEI.
- Participate in meetings of the National and Provincial Child and Youth Law Sections of the Canadian Bar Association, representing the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.
- Provide information on the role and function of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate with elected members of the PEI Legislature.
- Facilitate monthly meetings of the Child and Youth Advisory Committee of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

Advocate

- Receive and assess individual advocacy requests involving children and youth.
- Provide direct one-on-one individual advocacy support to children and youth.
- Provide individual navigational and informational advocacy to adult family members, professionals and members of the public concerned about the rights, interests and viewpoints of children and youth engaged with reviewable services.
- Initiate and/or participate in case conferences with reviewable service providers with and/or on behalf of children and youth.
- Assist children and youth to initiate and participate in service review decisions.
- Support children and youth to develop self-advocacy skills.
- Support professionals, family members and concerned citizens with information to assist navigation and promotion of the rights of children and youth in matters that affect them.
- Identify emerging systemic trends impacting the rights of children and youth.
- Work with individuals, families, communities, public bodies and community organizations to support and create opportunities for the well-being of children and youth.
- Lead and coordinate the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocate's Community of Practice on Child Advocacy.

Review and Investigate

- Receive, review and document reports identifying individual advocacy trends and systemic issues impacting the rights of PEI children and youth for review and investigation consideration by the Child and Youth Advocate.
- Conduct a jurisdictional scan of systemic reviews and investigations by child and youth advocacy offices across the country.
- Review and update policies and procedures for systemic reviews and investigations.
- Review individual advocacy and/or systemic advocacy priorities for review and/or investigation.
- Provide reviewable service notification for systemic reviews and investigations.
- Provide public notification for systemic reviews and investigations.
- Complete investigation involving a Supreme Court of Canada decision of a child removed from the care of his grandmother by PEI Child Protection Services.

Serious Injury and Death

- Complete investigation of one reported child death.
- Continue to receive reports of child and youth serious injury and deaths for review to:
 - determine whether or not to review or investigate, and
 - identify and analyze recurring circumstances or trends to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of a reviewable service.

- Complete a detailed analytical review of records received for one child death and draft a Comprehensive Review Report for the Child and Youth Advocate’s consideration of whether or not to investigate.
- Continue to update a comprehensive cross-jurisdictional scan of legislation, policies, protocols and practices for child and youth serious injury and death reviews and investigations.
- Participate in the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocate’s Community of Practice on Child and Youth Serious Injury and Death reviews and investigations.

Monitor

- Utilize the newly developed recommendation monitoring scale and process to track and publicly report on progress made by reviewable services in implementing recommendations made by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.
- Engage in administrative fairness processes with child-serving departments to clarify progress made in implementing recommendations.
- Continue to monitor implementation of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* by the Department of Social Development and Seniors to ensure child rights are actualized from “paper rights to lived rights” for children and youth in receipt of service and children and youth in care.
- Monitor status of recommendations of the Child and Youth Advocate specific to the Department of Education and educational authorities to include proposed amendments to the PEI *Education Act* and implementation of a child rights model for inclusion of children and youth as active participants in education-related matters.
- Monitor status of recommendations to the Department of Education and Early Years and educational authorities regarding the Advisory Statement on ensuring the right for Island children to an education that best meets individual needs and abilities.
- Document and monitor systemic advocacy trends identified through individual advocacy.
- Monitor provincial, national and international jurisprudence reviews.
- Monitor provincial, national and international media issues impacting rights of children and youth.
- Monitor status of proposed amendments to the PEI *Vital Statistics Act* and the PEI *Change of Name Act*.

Research

- Conduct reviews of academic and grey literature to identify risk factors for child death as well as review of best/promising practices to identify potential opportunities for improvements in reviewable services to prevent child and youth serious injuries and deaths in future.
- Conduct ongoing literature reviews and jurisprudence reviews to inform individual advocacy issues impacting the rights of children and youth.
- Conduct ongoing literature reviews and jurisprudence reviews to inform systemic advocacy issues impacting the rights of children and youth.
- Conduct jurisdictional scans to inform advice and recommendations.

Reports

- Prepare Annual Report for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.
- Prepare special reports as required.
- Complete the report of an investigation of a child death and bring the report to the attention of the public.
- Complete the report of an investigation involving a Supreme Court of Canada decision of a child removed from the care of his grandmother by PEI Child Protection Services and bring the report to the attention of the public.

Administration

- Review document management system used for individual advocacy.
- Review data collection processes.
- Promote staff professional development.
- Participate in training opportunities on children's rights.
- Participate in training opportunities on child well-being.
- Participate in ongoing educational awareness of issues/trends impacting children, youth and their families.
- Continue to develop policies and procedures.
- Attend community events in support of children's rights.
- Provide support to the Child and Youth Advocate to assist the Advocate in carrying out various statutory functions.



RESOURCES

The following resources are available through the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate:

Child and Youth Friendly Rack Card

This colourful resource is designed to directly inform children and youth about advocacy services available to them through the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

Adult Brochure

This resource provides a brief overview of the roles and functions of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and it provides information on what happens when someone contacts the Office.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Poster

This resource is a child-friendly presentation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in image and graphic form designed to increase awareness and understanding of all articles of the Convention.

Know Your Rights Booklet

This resource provides a child-friendly detailed understanding of each article of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. While designed for children and youth, this resource is useful for everyone.



* Our materials are available in English, French, Korean, Mandarin and Mongolian

Presentations

To learn more about the PEI *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, the role and functions of the Office, and an overview of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, please contact the Office.

Website

Please visit our website to learn more about the work of the office at: www.childandyouthadvocatepei.ca

With Appreciation













































We thank the children and youth of Prince Edward Island for sharing with us the privilege to serve them and trusting us to bear witness to their lived experiences.

We thank the citizens of Prince Edward Island for their continued advocacy on behalf of PEI children and youth. Advocacy requires, at its very nature, everyone working together in the spirit of collaboration.

Over the course of this past year, we wish to express our sincere appreciation to the following who assisted in advancing our work on behalf of all PEI children and youth:

- The many brave and courageous children and youth who reached out to our Office and took the risk to engage with us as strangers with the hope of having their voices heard - we thank each and every one of you - your bravery, courage and willingness to trust us by sharing your pain and your expertise has been a shining light as we move forward to advance your rights and the rights of other children and youth - **THANK YOU!**
- Members of the Child and Youth Advocate Advisory Committee for sharing their wisdom and concern for other children and youth and informing the work of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.
- Elected Members of the Legislative Assembly, Independent Officers of the Legislative Assembly and staff of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island for their ongoing support, engagement and commitment to advancing the rights of all PEI children and youth.
- Clerk and Deputy Clerk of Executive Council, Ministers and Deputy Ministers of child-serving government departments who continue to meet with the Child and Youth Advocate with a willingness to work collaboratively with a shared vision to advance the rights of children and youth across government reviewable programs and services.
- Employees of provincial Government and community organizations providing programs and services to children, youth and their families each and every day across the province.
- Ongoing guidance, resources, mentorship, consultation and information sharing provided by Offices of Child and Youth Advocates/Representatives/Ombudspersons across the country.
- Ongoing support provided by the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates.
- Ongoing support provided by UNICEF Canada in sharing expertise and promoting Child Rights Impact Assessments.



<p>1</p>  <p>DEFINITION OF A CHILD</p>	<p>2</p>  <p>NO DISCRIMINATION</p>	<p>3</p>  <p>BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD</p>	<p>4</p>  <p>MAKING RIGHTS REAL</p>	<p>5</p>  <p>FAMILY GUIDANCE AS CHILDREN DEVELOP</p>	<p>6</p>  <p>LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT</p>	<p>7</p>  <p>NAME AND NATIONALITY</p>
<p>8</p>  <p>IDENTITY</p>	<p>9</p>  <p>KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER</p>	<p>10</p>  <p>CONTACT WITH PARENTS ACROSS COUNTRIES</p>	<p>11</p>  <p>PROTECTION FROM KIDNAPPING</p>	<p>12</p>  <p>RESPECT FOR CHILDREN'S VIEWS</p>	<p>13</p>  <p>SHARING THOUGHTS FREELY</p>	<p>14</p>  <p>FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND RELIGION</p>
<p>15</p>  <p>SETTING UP OR JOINING GROUPS</p>	<p>16</p>  <p>PROTECTION OF PRIVACY</p>	<p>17</p>  <p>ACCESS TO INFORMATION</p>	<p>18</p>  <p>RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS</p>	<p>19</p>  <p>PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE</p>	<p>20</p>  <p>CHILDREN WITHOUT FAMILIES</p>	<p>21</p>  <p>CHILDREN WHO ARE ADOPTED</p>
<p>22</p>  <p>REFUGEE CHILDREN</p>	<p>23</p>  <p>CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES</p>	<p>24</p>  <p>HEALTH, WATER, FOOD, ENVIRONMENT</p>	<p>25</p>  <p>REVIEW OF A CHILD'S PLACEMENT</p>	<p>26</p>  <p>SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HELP</p>	<p>27</p>  <p>FOOD, CLOTHING, A SAFE HOME</p>	<p>28</p>  <p>ACCESS TO EDUCATION</p>
<p>29</p>  <p>AIMS OF EDUCATION</p>	<p>30</p>  <p>MINORITY CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION</p>	<p>31</p>  <p>REST, PLAY, CULTURE, ARTS</p>	<p>32</p>  <p>PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL WORK</p>	<p>33</p>  <p>PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL DRUGS</p>	<p>34</p>  <p>PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL ABUSE</p>	<p>35</p>  <p>PREVENTION OF SALE AND TRAFFICKING</p>
<p>36</p>  <p>PROTECTION FROM EXPLOITATION</p>	<p>37</p>  <p>CHILDREN IN DETENTION</p>	<p>38</p>  <p>PROTECTION IN WAR</p>	<p>39</p>  <p>RECOVERY AND REINTEGRATION</p>	<p>40</p>  <p>CHILDREN WHO BREAK THE LAW</p>	<p>41</p>  <p>BEST LAW FOR CHILDREN APPLIES</p>	<p>42</p>  <p>EVERYONE MUST KNOW CHILDREN'S RIGHTS</p>

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HOW THE CONVENTION WORKS

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD



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