

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025

Children, Seniors and
Social Development



MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

On May 9, 2025, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development was restructured to become the Department of Families and Affordability. As Minister of Families and Affordability, I am pleased to present the 2024-25 Annual Report for the former Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, which was prepared in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. This report covers the period of April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025.

Over the past year, in collaboration with community partners and other government departments and agencies, and Indigenous Governments and Organizations, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development worked to create an inclusive, accessible, and socially progressive province that provided support to children, youth, families, seniors, people with disabilities, and those living in or vulnerable to poverty. The department continues its commitment to the creation and implementation of policies and programs designed to improve overall social and economic well-being for all individuals across the life span. This includes reducing poverty; advancing accessibility within communities; promoting healthy aging; ensuring child and adult protection; and collaborating with Indigenous Governments and Organizations to deliver services to Indigenous children, youth and families as well as support their journey to assert jurisdiction over child and family services. The department's policies, practices and services honour diversity, increase equity and reduce barriers to self-determination to ensure that all individuals in the province are supported to reach their full potential.

The Annual Report for 2024-25 demonstrates the department's progress on objectives set out in year two of the 2023-26 Strategic Plan to achieve these goals. I am proud of what we have accomplished together and look forward to continuing this important work in the years ahead. I particularly want to thank our community partners and people with lived experience who inform our work and have helped us meet our objectives this year.

As Minister, my signature below demonstrates my accountability for the results reported within this report.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'BD' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Hon. Bernard Davis
Minister of Families and Affordability

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Departmental Overview

Organizational Structure

In 2024-25, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development (CSSD) was a category 1 Provincial Government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, focused on improving the well-being, inclusion and social development of individuals, families and communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

During 2024-25, CSSD's programs and services were provided through the following four branches:

1. **Child and Youth Services:** responsible for front-line service delivery of child protection, kinship, in-care, youth services, adoptions and youth corrections programs at the regional level. This branch ensures that a wide array of responsive services are available to meet the needs of children, youth and their families in three regions (Metro, Central West and Labrador).
2. **Corporate Services and Performance Improvement:** responsible for ensuring fiscal, human and information resources are available to provide client services within a quality framework. The four key corporate areas are: Finance and General Operations; Information Management; Policy and Planning; and Quality and Performance Improvement.
3. **Policy and Programs:** responsible for policy, program and legislative development in the following areas: Child Protection and Support Services; Children In-Care; Adoptions; Youth Corrections; Youth Services; Disability Policy; Aging and Seniors; and Adult Protection.
4. **Prevention and Early Intervention:** focused on improving well-being and supporting individuals, families, and communities to realize their full potential. The branch administers and delivers the Income Support Program, as well as other social supports, and leads policy development related to income and social

supports, poverty reduction, the community sector, and prevention and early intervention to foster the best long-term outcomes for the people of the province.

Staff and Budget

Division	# of Employees	Budget
Minister's Office and Executive Support	16	\$1,434,400
Corporate Services and Performance Improvement	112	\$7,605,600
Child and Youth Services	667	\$141,038,300
Policy and Programs	39	\$11,764,800
Prevention and Early Intervention	229	\$238,983,900

As of March 31, 2025, CSSD had 1063 positions - 919 permanent, 124 temporary and 20 contractual. The Provincial Office, located in St. John's, had 193 positions which carried out work in all the identified lines of business. Below is a breakdown of the number of employees per region for Child and Youth Services and Income Support.

The Child and Youth Services Branch was structured into Central-West Region, Labrador Region, and Metro Region, as follows:

- Central-West: 250 positions, with offices located in Baie Verte, Bonavista, Botwood, Channel-Port-aux-Basques, Clarenville, Conne River, Corner Brook, Deer Lake, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Harbour Breton, Holyrood, Lewisporte, Marystown, Musgrave Harbour, Placentia, Roddickton, Springdale, St. Alban's, St. Anthony, Stephenville, Summerford and Whitbourne;

- Labrador: 125 positions, with offices located in Cartwright, Forteau, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Hopedale, Labrador City, Makkovik, Nain, Natuashish, Rigolet and Sheshatshiu; and
- Metro: 287 positions, with offices located in Bay Roberts, Bell Island, Conception Bay South, Ferryland, Harbour Grace, and St. John's.

The Income Support Service Delivery Division, within the Prevention and Early Intervention Branch, had 208 positions with offices located in: St. John's, Carbonear, Marystown, Clarenville, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Stephenville, Corner Brook, Channel-Port-aux-Basques and Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

As of March 31, 2025, CSSD had total expenditures of \$395,837,751 for the 2024-25 fiscal year. Additional information is included in the Financial Information section.

Vision

A socially advanced province, where all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians live fulfilling lives of purpose, balance and meaning for them.

The department collaborates with a broad array of partners, including community organizations, and provides leadership in government to ensure that policies, practices, and services respect diversity, increase equity and well-being, as well as reduce barriers and poverty, while emphasizing prevention, early intervention, protection, self-determination, and self-reliance.

Mandate

The department supports individuals, families and communities in Newfoundland and Labrador in achieving improved social well-being and reduced poverty, and delivers programs and services to support children, youth and adults who have experienced abuse or neglect. The department collaborates with the community sector to foster their

role in social and economic development. Further, it promotes the values of inclusion and diversity and leads the development of policies, programs and partnerships to improve services and overall social development across the lifespan of residents within the province.

The mandate for the department is primarily established under the following legislation:

- **Accessibility Act;**
- **Adoption Act, 2013;**
- **Adult Protection Act, 2021;**
- **Children, Youth and Families Act;**
- **Income and Employment Support Act;** and
- **Young Persons Offences Act.**

Lines of Business

The department fulfils this mandate through the following lines of business:

- **Adoptions** - finds permanent homes for children available for adoption.
- **Adult Protection** - protects adults who do not understand or appreciate the risk of abuse and neglect.
- **Child Protection and In-Care** - helps ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth in need of protective intervention.
- **Community Sector** - collaborates with the community sector to foster their role in the social development in the province.
- **Community Youth Corrections** - provides services to youth who come into conflict with the law between their 12th and 18th birthdays.
- **Disability Policy** - removes barriers, increases accessibility, and enhances the inclusion of persons with disabilities through government policies and programs.
- **Income Support Benefits** - provides financial support to qualifying people primarily aged 18 to 64 to assist with basic needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter, as well as other supplementary benefits based on a person's needs.

- Increasing Income Security - prevents, reduces, and alleviates poverty, and fosters opportunities through leading government-wide policy development for all individuals and families to share fully in our society and economy.
- Seniors and Aging - promotes healthy aging across the lifespan and fosters a healthy society that honours, listens to and includes seniors in building stronger, more dynamic communities.
- Youth Services - assists youth in need of protective intervention during their transition to early adulthood.

Additional information about the department can be found at: www.gov.nl.ca/cssd.

Highlights and Partnerships

Highlights

Throughout 2024-25, CSSD continued to deliver on its commitment to enhance the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians by strengthening the social advancement of this province. Much of the work CSSD completes is in conjunction with internal and external partners, giving rise to significant achievements that are beyond the scope of the established goals and objectives for the department, as outlined in CSSD's Strategic Plan 2023-26. Toward this end, CSSD has many initiatives and partnerships to highlight this year, which include:

- **Newfoundland and Labrador Disability Benefit:** The Provincial Government announced the Newfoundland and Labrador Disability Benefit in June 2024. Starting in July 2025, the benefit will provide monthly payments of up to \$400 for eligible individuals with disabilities. It will also include a \$1,200 contribution to a Registered Disability Savings Program (RDSP) for qualified individuals. The new benefit complements other provincial and federal supports. The RDSP offers long-term financial security for persons with disabilities and their families.

- **Intergenerational Program Guide:** In December 2024, the Provincial Government launched Bridging Generations: A Guide to Intergenerational Programs in Newfoundland and Labrador. The guide offers clear, practical information to help communities, groups, and organizations build and support programs that connect people across different age groups. These programs create opportunities for learning and sharing between generations. A total of \$200,000 has been budgeted to continue the Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative. The funding is available to eligible clubs and organizations that support seniors. It supports programs that build intergenerational engagement and encourage healthy aging and mental wellness.
- **The Enhanced Funeral Assistance Benefit:** In July 2024, the Provincial Government announced an increase in the rates paid to funeral homes for providing services to individuals who were receiving Income Support or were experiencing low income at the time of their death. The program offers up to \$5,000 for funeral costs, up to \$1,500 for additional expenses, and \$1.25 per kilometer for transportation costs beyond eight kilometers. The enhanced benefit also covers accommodation for oversized caskets and air transportation for repatriation or travel to and from remote coastal communities, along with other exceptional circumstances.

Partnerships

- **Bus Pass Pilot Programs:** In January 2025, the Provincial Government announced funding for transportation initiatives in the St. Anthony area and Corner Brook. The pilot programs are available to individuals receiving Income Support, youth receiving Youth Services, and seniors receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). The first program, with \$45,000 in funding, will support St. Anthony Basin Resources Inc. (SABRI) Transit on the Northern Peninsula, offering free bus passes to individuals in St. Anthony and surrounding areas. The second program, with \$120,000 in funding, will provide free bus passes to residents of Corner Brook.

- **Collaboration with Provincial Government Departments:** In 2024-25, CSSD collaborated with the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills to develop programming to help Income Support and other non-Employment Insurance (EI) eligible individuals secure meaningful and stable employment through the Working Opportunities Program. This was funded through a \$3.5 million provincial investment in Budget 2024. This program enables those who are not eligible for federally funded Skills Development Programs to avail of similar financial supports for training.
- **Federal/Provincial/Territorial Collaboration:** During 2024-25, CSSD continued to work with federal and provincial counterparts through forums established to promote interjurisdictional discussion, to discuss new and emerging issues and work collaboratively on key issues, including those related to child welfare; disability supports; income support; Indigenous children and youth in care; youth corrections; poverty; and seniors.

Report on Performance

Issue 1: Improved Delivery of Services to Children and Youth

Throughout 2024-25, CSSD remained actively engaged in advancing initiatives aimed at strengthening the recruitment and retention of social workers, who play such a critical role in protecting and supporting the health and well-being of children and youth in the province. In addition, the department continued to implement recommendations from the Child Welfare Service Delivery Model and Workload Review, and the Continuum of Care Review.

Goal

By March 31, 2026, CSSD will have improved delivery of services to children and youth.

2024-25 Objective

By March 31, 2025, CSSD will have implemented additional initiatives to improve the delivery of services for children and youth.

Indicator	Report on Performance
Implemented additional initiatives to support the recruitment and retention of social workers.	<p>In 2024-25, CSSD implemented a number of initiatives to support the recruitment and retention of social workers, which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Province-wide financial incentives for Social Workers and select Clinical Program Supervisors, including an enhanced benefits package in Labrador with housing allowance, travel bonus and clothing allowance.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded support for social work services by adding Social Work Assistant positions and reviewing their role to enhance service delivery. • Launched a pilot Clinical Practice Mentor role to leverage senior social workers' expertise to support junior social workers. • Initiated recruitment of a temporary travel team to address rural staffing shortages and a provincial foster home intake and assessment team to streamline recruitment and approvals. • Supported employee safety and well-being through a new Client and Site Assessment tool, and a CSSD Wellness Series delivered in partnership with the Public Service Commission. • Promoted opportunities through virtual career fairs, national outreach to Bachelor of Social Work students, targeted advertising with the Canadian Association of Social Workers, and ongoing collaboration with Memorial University to provide approximately 50 annual student placements.
Continued implementation of the priority recommendations of the Child Welfare Service Delivery Model and Workload Review.	During 2024-25, CSSD continued implementation of priority recommendations of the Child Welfare Service Delivery Model and Workload Review. Initiatives included:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and implementing a Provincial Intake and After-Hours Service Delivery Model. • Expanding the Social Work Assistant role through policy development, supporting the delegation of non-clinical tasks and allowing social workers to focus on core clinical responsibilities. • Completing a review to inform implementation of the recommendation to introduce virtual case management options for staff. Work is underway to develop policy guidance for staff. • Providing smart phones to all social work staff allowing increased opportunities for client connection and creating case management efficiency through the ability for voice to text dictation.
Continued implementation of priority recommendations of the Continuum of Care review.	<p>In 2024-25, CSSD continued implementation of priority recommendations of the Continuum of Care review. Work included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking a review of supportive services available to families to identify opportunities to improve the quality and availability of supports. Coming out of a recommendation from this review, work is underway to implement policy guidance for staff on the use of in-home supports for families. • Introducing the Interdependent Living Model (ILM) for youth in care in

	<p>Individualized Living Arrangements to support and prepare youth for the transition to adulthood through the option of reduced staffing models and individualized programming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing policy revision to strengthen support for foster parents, enhance care for children and youth, and streamline the foster home approval process. • Updating the youth services policy to reflect the department's ongoing commitment to improving outcomes for youth by providing adequate supports as they transition into adulthood.
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Summary

During the 2024-25 reporting period, CSSD continued to prioritize the recruitment and retention of child welfare social workers. Financial incentives, operational efficiencies, enhancements to the work environment, and targeted recruitment initiatives were implemented to support this ongoing initiative.

2025-26 Objective

By March 31, 2026, CSSD will have continued implementation of initiatives to improve the delivery of services for children and youth.

2025-26 Indicators

- Continued to implement initiatives to support the recruitment and retention of social workers.

- Implemented additional recommendations from the Child Welfare Service Delivery Model and Workload Review.
- Implemented changes to the Foster Care Program.

Issue 2: Social Well-Being

During 2024-25, CSSD continued its efforts to enhance social well-being in the province through collaborative work with various departments, agencies, and the broader community to design and implement Government's Poverty Reduction Plan. Key initiatives included changes to the Income Support benefits structure, an increase to the NL Child Benefit and an expansion of the former Prenatal-Infant Nutrition Supplement to support children up to the age of five. Additionally, CSSD worked collaboratively with the Department of Health and Community Services and Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services (NLHS) to implement a targeted basic income pilot for individuals aged 60 to 64 who are in receipt of both Income Support and Supportive Services from the NLHS' Community Supports Program. Collectively, these and other initiatives were previously referred to as the Social Well-Being Plan and form part of the Provincial Government's overall approach to social well-being. The Poverty Reduction Plan and other work completed in the 2024-25 reporting period will reduce poverty in line with the vision of Health Accord NL and help improve the well-being of people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Goal

By March 31, 2026, CSSD will have led the development and implementation of a four-year Government-wide Social Well-Being Plan.

2024-25 Objective

By March 31, 2025, CSSD will have implemented approved Year 1 CSSD actions and supported other departments with approved Year 1 actions.

Indicator	Report on Performance
Implemented changes to the Income Support benefits structure.	<p>In 2024-25, CSSD implemented changes to the Income Support benefit structure. These enhancements streamline the benefit structure, simplify the program, increase the lowest rates, remove requirements for medical notes, and improve incentives for people to share accommodations. Overall, the changes implemented reduced the total number of basic monthly benefits from 30 to 17. Changes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidating two separate board and lodging rates, per household type, into one rate. The higher benefit amount is now the same for people who are boarding with either relatives or non-relatives. • Providing all single people in receipt of Income Support under age 30 the same higher basic benefit rates as recipients in other age groups. • Implementing a \$105 per month Seniors Supplement that replaces and expands the Income Support program's previous supplement to support people over age 65 who are not eligible for Federal Seniors Benefits, mainly new Canadians.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing a person in receipt of Income Support to keep their full benefits if they have a boarder living with them, which expands housing options. • Streamlining and enhancing Income Support funeral and burial rates and rate structure by consolidating 19 rates into four and significantly improving benefits amounts.
Expanded the former Prenatal-Infant Nutrition Supplement up to age five and renamed it Prenatal-Early Childhood Nutrition Supplement.	During 2024-25, CSSD implemented changes to the former Prenatal-Infant Nutrition Supplement. The program was renamed as the Prenatal-Early Childhood Nutrition Supplement (PECNS) and children up to the age of five are now eligible to receive the benefit. This resulted in an additional 3,400 families with 4,000 children receiving an average annual increased income of \$2,250 per household.
Increased NL Child Benefit.	In 2024-25, CSSD increased the NL Child Benefit by 300 per cent. Since the increase, approximately 9,200 low-income families with children have received an average of \$157 per child every month with payments ranging between \$152 and \$186 per child. For example, combined with PECNS, a family with two children under five now receives \$7,362 annually in addition to federal child benefits and any other benefits to which they are entitled.
Implemented a targeted basic income for people aged 60 to 64 who currently receive Income	In 2024-25, CSSD implemented a targeted basic income for people aged 60 to 64 who are in receipt of Income Support and Supportive

Support and the Community Supports Program through the Department of Health and Community Services.	Services from NLHS' Community Supports Program. A total of 160 individuals enrolled through the continuous enrollment process and received more adequate financial supports through an increase in monthly benefit payments, which are similar to federal seniors benefits available to people at age 65 years. Monthly incomes increased on average by \$350 a month.
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Summary

In year two of its 2023-26 Strategic Plan, CSSD worked with stakeholders and other government departments to implement initiatives from the Poverty Reduction Plan aimed at improving the well-being of people in this province.

2025-26 Objective

By March 31, 2026, CSSD will have implemented approved Year 2 CSSD actions and supported other departments with approved Year 2 actions.

2025-26 Indicators

- Further reduced the number of separate basic monthly benefits.
- Improved supplementary benefits for Vision Care.
- Introduced a Back to School benefit for families with school-aged children to help with the cost of school supplies in September.

Opportunities and Challenges

In its 2023-26 Strategic Plan, CSSD committed to strengthening the social advancement of the province to support the health and well-being of children and youth in the province, and lead initiatives to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion. Actions to meet these commitments in 2024-25 presented the following opportunities and challenges:

Opportunities

- Continue support for the Accessibility Standards Advisory Board to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- Foster strong relationships and shared objectives with community partners to inform and strengthen the ongoing implementation of the Poverty Reduction Plan.
- Advance recommendations from the Child Welfare Service Delivery Model and Workload Review, including the introduction of a Provincial Intake and After-Hours Service Delivery Model and the expansion of the Social Work Assistant role.
- Continue the implementation of recommendations from the Continuum of Care review.
- Strengthen collaborative relationships with community-based organizations and community partners to best meet the needs of people in the province, particularly those who experience social exclusion and poverty.
- Continue engagement with Indigenous Governments and Organizations to identify opportunities to improve outcomes for Indigenous children, youth and families.
- Improve service delivery for Income Support recipients as a result of recent Income Support program changes.

- Strengthen financial supports for Persons with Disabilities living with low incomes through the implementation of the Newfoundland and Labrador Disability Benefit (NLDB).

Challenges

- The department continues to take steps toward improving the recruitment and retention of frontline Child and Youth Services social workers. Efforts are underway to manage workload pressures and find effective ways to deliver services in areas of the province where staffing is a challenge, especially in rural and remote areas.
- The rising costs of living are making it more difficult for seniors and low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs.
- The province is experiencing a shortage of affordable housing, leading to more low-income individuals and families relying on shelters or experiencing homelessness.
- The province is experiencing a shortage in foster care homes for children and youth, leading to increased reliance on staffed living arrangements, which are more costly and generally less desirable for the well-being and outcomes of the children and youth.
- Changing social and economic pressures have created an additional strain on non-profit and charitable organizations, leading to decreased stability and increased uncertainty in the community sector.

Financial Information

Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are based on public information provided in the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for Fiscal Year Ending 31 March 2025.

	Actual (\$)	Estimates- Amended (\$)	Estimates – Original (\$)
Minister's Office	243,622	245,700	261,300
Executive Support	1,168,881	1,172,800	1,173,100
Corporate Services and Performance Improvement	6,280,055	6,163,300	7,605,600
Child and Youth Services	151,136,954	150,905,600	141,038,300
Seniors and Aging	1,500,169	1,506,100	1,843,700
Disability Policy	1,373,146	1,406,400	1,322,700
Child Welfare Program and Policy	1,768,619	1,785,000	8,598,400
Income Support Regional Client Policy	11,391,339	11,376,900	12,259,000
Income Support Program and Policy	217,025,876	216,525,400	222,514,200
Poverty Reduction and Community Sector	3,949,090	4,019,800	4,210,700
Total (Department)	395,837,751	395,107,000	400,827,000

