



Children in Care

Department of Community Services

Standing Committee on Community Services

January 9th, 2018

Outline

Purpose of today's presentation is to provide an overview of:

- The Department
- Child, Youth and Family Supports
- Amendments to the *CFSA*
- Children in Care and the placement continuum
- Placement options and potential improvements
- Staffing



Department of Community Services

The Department

- The Department of Community Services is the largest direct deliverer of human and social services in Nova Scotia.
- With an annual operating budget of approximately \$930M, and more than 1,700 staff, the department provides services to tens of thousands of Nova Scotians each year.
- The mandate of the department is to ensure that the basic needs of individuals and families are met, children at risk are protected, and persons with disabilities have access to a range of housing and residential care programs.

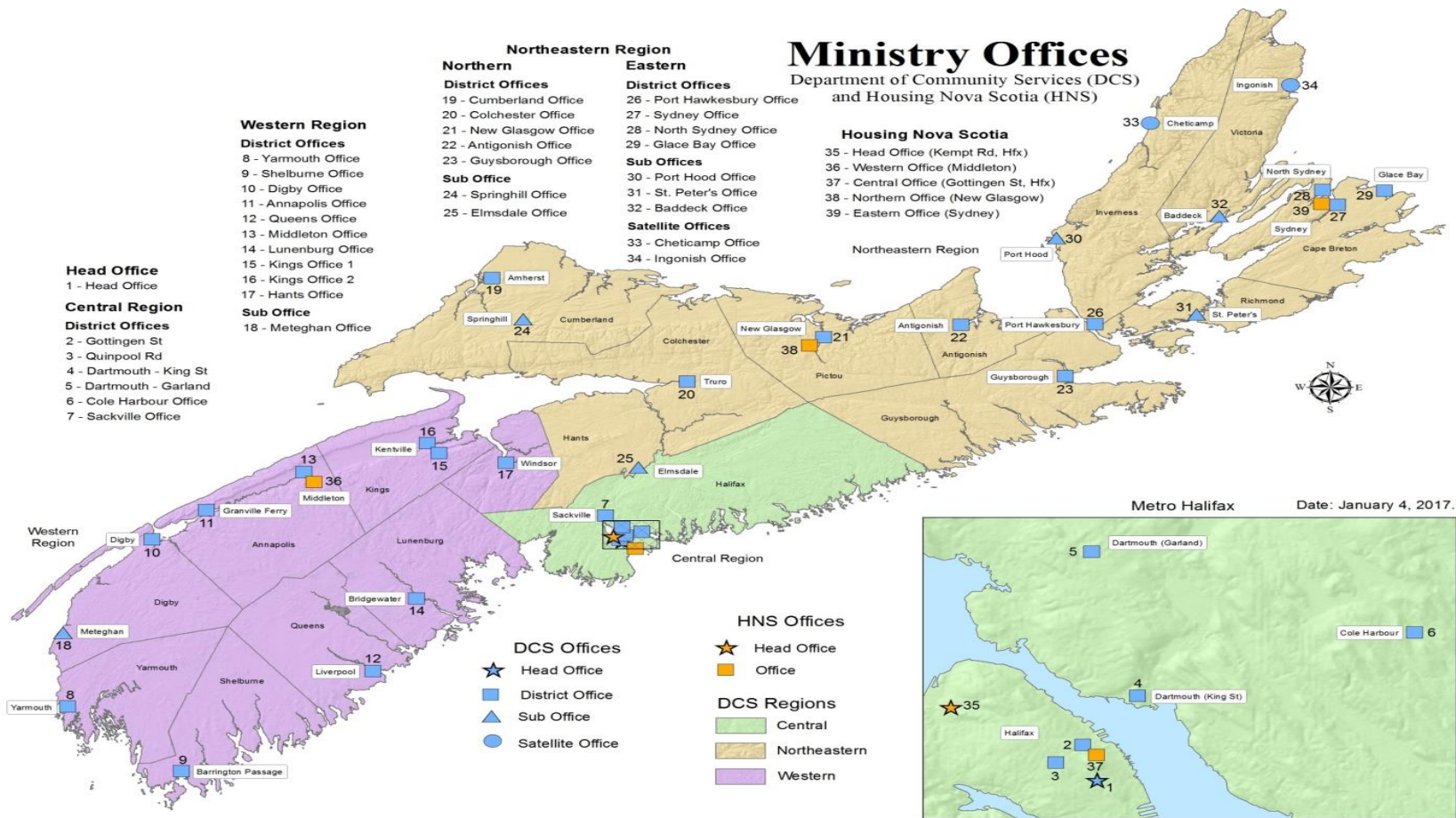
Outcomes for Nova Scotians (Client)

- Clients have control over their own lives
- Clients are able to meet their basic needs
- Clients are safe from abuse and violence
- Clients are included in the community
- Clients are attached to the labour market

Outcomes for the Department (System)

- Supports and services are affordable and sustainable
- Supports and services are delivered efficiently
- System of supports and services is a balanced mix of prevention and intervention
- Supports and services are accessible
- DCS staff and delivery partners are empowered to make a positive difference in people's lives

From Coast to Coast



The Essentials

Overall 17/18 Est. Budget: \$333M
Number of Staff: ~100
Number of Clients: 5,450
Number of Service Providers: 100+

**Employment
Support and
Income Assistance**

**Disability Support
Program**

**Child, Youth and
Family Services**

Overall 17/18 Est. Budget: \$336M
Number of Staff: ~400
**# of Households Receiving Income
Assistance: 26,600**
Total # of Beneficiaries: 40,000
Average Cost: \$750/month

Overall 17/18 Est. Budget: \$92M
Number of Staff: ~800
**Number of Children in
Minister's Care: 1,100**
Number of Service Providers: 75

The Divisions

Employment Support and Income Assistance

- Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) provides financial assistance and supports to people struggling to meet their basic needs.
- There are approximately 26,600 households receiving income assistance. This equates to around 40,000 beneficiaries.

Child Youth and Family Supports

- Child, Youth and Family Supports (CYFS) provides a variety of programs and services to support Nova Scotia's children, youth and families.
 - Prevention and Early Intervention offers a wide range of programs designed to prevent family breakdown and to support healthy development and well-being.
 - Child Protection investigates reports of alleged child abuse and neglect, attempts to reduce the risk of harm and, when necessary, provides out of home support or placement services.

Disability Support Program

- The Disability Support Program (DSP) serves children, youth and adults with intellectual disabilities, long-term mental illness and physical disabilities in a range of community-based, residential and vocational/day programs.
- DSP promotes a participant's independence, self-reliance, security and social inclusion. The goal of the DSP is to support participants at various stages of their development and independence through a range of programs.

Housing Nova Scotia

- Housing Nova Scotia (HNS) offers programs to help lower income Nova Scotians rent and maintain safe and affordable housing.
- HNS' five Housing Authorities provide affordable housing to thousands of low income seniors, families and persons with disabilities in provincially owned rental units around Nova Scotia.

Transformation – some initial highlights

ESIA:

- Increased enrollment in Educate to Work and Career Seek
- More than 100,000 calls answered through new telephone service
- Reduced monthly reporting by clients by 15%
- Streamlined requests for medical information
- Online service launched to help clients understand services and how to navigate programs

DSP:

- Transitioning of more than 40 persons with disabilities into the community.
- Moratorium on permanent participant placements in large facilities effective July 1, 2016
- Increase in the Flex Independent Program

CYFS:

- Amendments to the *Children and Family Services Act*
- 15 culturally-specific prevention programs
- Increased respite rates and automated payment reimbursement for foster parents



Child, Youth and Family Supports



Child, Youth & Family Supports

- The Minister of Community Services has legislative oversight for the *Children and Family Services Act* (CFSA)
- The Child, Youth and Families Supports (CYFS) division has responsibility for the programs and policies required to implement the Act.
- CYFS manages this responsibility under the umbrella of three different program areas; Prevention and Early Intervention; Child Protection; and Placement Services

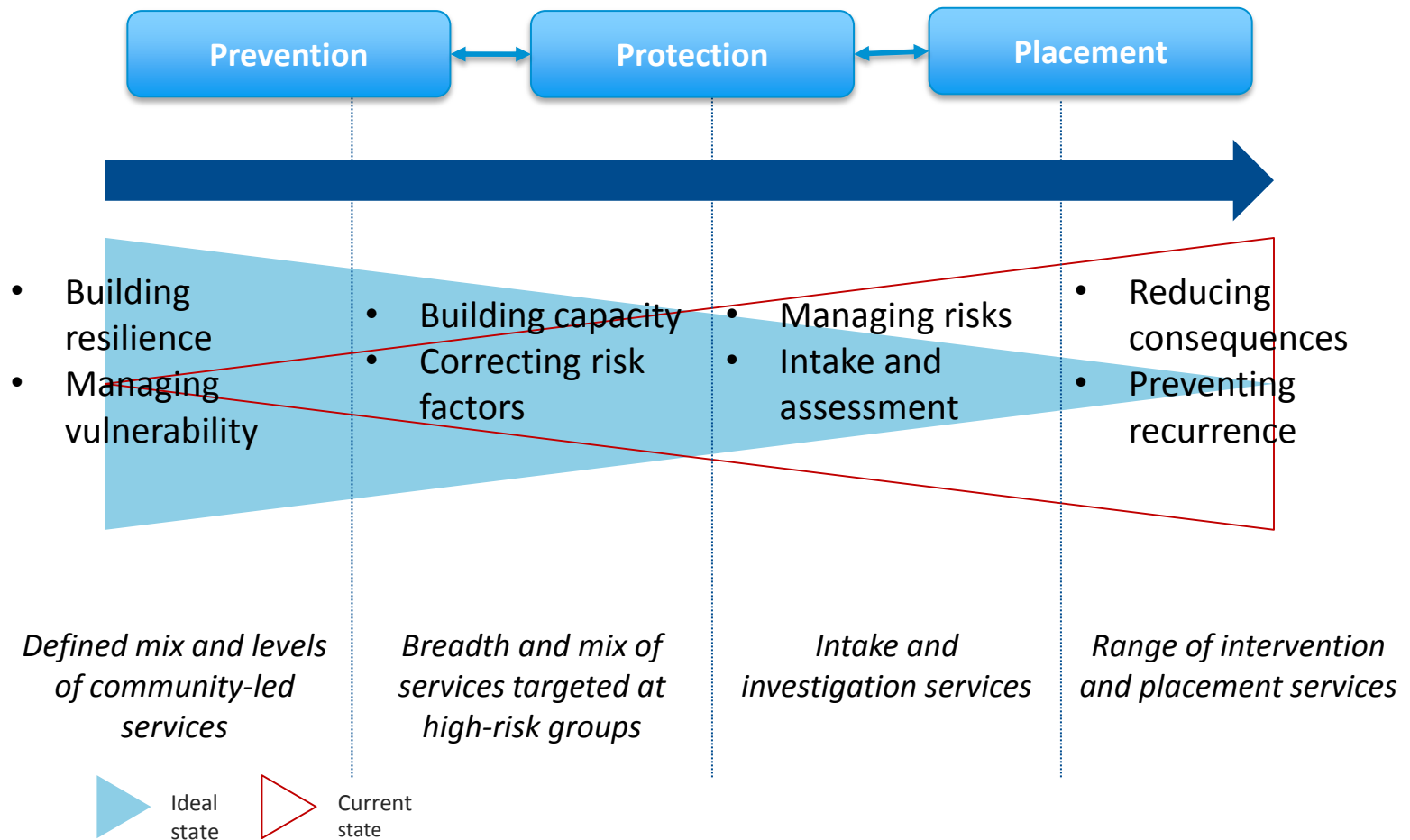
Child, Youth & Family Supports

Prevention and Early Intervention helps address issues early to; ensure healthy development and well-being; stay safe from harm; prevent family breakdown and mitigate child protection involvement

Child protection protects children from harm, abuse or neglect, while making every effort to keep families together. Families often work cooperatively with child protection social workers and may participate in parenting skills, anger management, addictions treatment, or other kinds of counselling programs as needed

Placement Services help to match children with resources when children are unable to remain in their own homes on a temporary or long term basis. This includes Foster Care, Residential, and Adoption

Rebalancing the System





CFSA Amendments to Enhance Child Protection

CFSA Amendments

- Bill 112 passed in December 2015, implemented March 1, 2017
- Included 90 amendments

Improve Child
Safety

Remove Provisions
that Impair
Permanency

Streamline Court
Processes

Improve Secure
Treatment

Address Outdated
Language and
Administrative
Issues

More Culturally
Sensitive

Child Safety - Age of a Child

- The amendments addressed the gap for children by extending protection and services to youth 16 – 18 years inclusive, on a voluntary basis
- Prior to the amendments, these youth may have sought the services of DCS Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) programs in an effort to meet their basic needs or, at times, went without services
- CYFS and ESIA now work together towards the best interests of the youth in question and to help them transition successfully to adulthood

Child Safety - Definition of Child in Need of Protective Services

- Child protection aims to intervene early and work towards the best outcomes for children with the hope of keeping families intact
- The definition of a child in need of protective services has been broadened to enable earlier intervention
- No longer a burden to prove that a child has suffered emotional harm, new definition refers to emotional abuse
- The amendments allow child protection to intervene when a child has been neglected or is at risk of being neglected

Child Safety - Definition of Child in Need of Protective Services

- The Act now defines emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect
- Enable short term placement with relatives as opposed to formalized care

Child Safety - Investigative Powers of an Agency

- The amendment to section 12A allows interviews with the child without the presence of a parent
- This helps ensure the child is not coerced into denying abuse or placed at higher risk

Child Safety - Exposure to Family Violence

- Repeated ongoing exposure is emotionally damaging to children and can place them at risk of physical harm
- When violence occurs in the home, child protection will be able to investigate. The violence will no longer have to be repeated before child protection can intervene
- By offering services early to remedy the issues that led to the violence, there is a better chance that the child can remain safely in the home

Child Safety - Duty to Report

- Professionals are required to report when they suspect that a child has or may have suffered abuse, is or may be suffering abuse or may be about to suffer abuse in the imminent future
- The duty to report abuse by a person other than a parent or guardian only applies to children under the age of 16 years
- As well, any person who receives notice from an agency that there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is in need of protective services and who has information about the location of a child, must report that information to the agency

Streamline Court Processes

- Courts able to approve services and treatments early in the court process
- Court conferencing has been formalized within the *Act* as a collaborative approach
- Duration of timeframes for court proceedings has decreased and been simplified
- Maximum cumulative time in care have been added

Improvements towards Permanency

- Remove court ordered access for children under permanent care and custody
- Reduce adoption delays by extending the time before which a parent can return to court with an application to terminate permanent care and custody
- Ensure courts hear applications to terminate permanent care and custody within 90 days
- Inclusion of cultural connection plans
- Permit the adoption of children from other jurisdictions who have been placed with families in NS to proceed without undue delay
- Allow adoption subsidies to be transferable if an adoptive parent dies or is unable to care for a child

Secure Treatment

- Remove “refusal of services” as criteria for admission
- Allow Secure Treatment staff to detain and return a child to the facility
- Extend the maximum length of a Secure treatment Order from 30 to 45 days

Modernized Language

- Removal of outdated and harmful language, such as “legitimate” and “in wedlock”
- Changes to the definition of a “parent” to be as inclusive to fathers as it was to mothers
- Replace the term “agent” with “representative”

Administrative

- Ensure couples in common-law relationships are treated equally to couples in marriage
- Provide for the release of birth family information to adults who were formerly in permanent care and custody and not adopted
- Inclusion of an indemnity clause
- Mandatory review of the legislation every 4 years

Respect for Cultural Sensitivity

- Inclusion of the definition for a cultural connection plan
- Inclusion of the requirement to complete cultural connection plans
- Replace the term “agent” with “representative
- Ensure that the legislation acknowledges the importance of a child’s culture
- Inclusion of the definition of customary care
- Recognition of the family group conferencing model



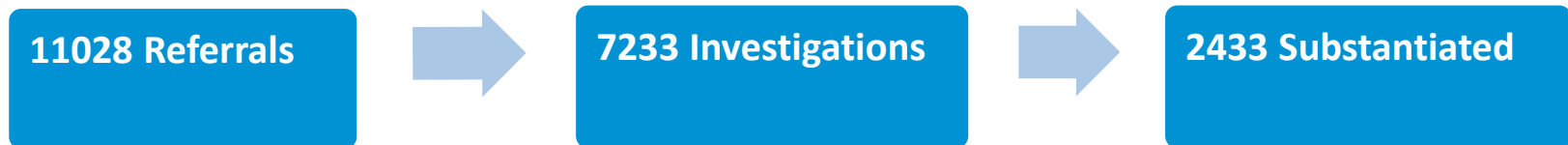
Children in Care and placement continuum

Purpose of Child Protection

- The child protection program provides services to protect children under age 19 from abuse and/or neglect while making every effort to keep families together.
- Under the *CFSA*, designated social workers are required to: assess reports of alleged child abuse and neglect; where determined, investigate reports of alleged child abuse and neglect; and provide for intervention services to families and children.

Overview of the Child Protection Referral Process

- The intake process involves gathering information in response to a report of alleged abuse or neglect.
- All referrals received are assessed for decision making related to risk within a structured Risk Management Framework
- During 2016 – 2017 we received 11,028 referrals related to 5,664 different families.



Types of Intervention

If at the conclusion of the investigation, the allegations are substantiated, services (such as life skills development, advocacy, parenting skills , counselling, and other services may be provided through a number of avenues:

- Voluntary Services – the child remains in the home while receiving services
- Supervision Order – the child remains in the home under the supervision of the agency, while receiving court ordered services
- Non party Supervision Order – the child is at risk in the home so lives with a third party under the supervision of the agency, while receiving court ordered services

Children in Care

Most children in care have been exposed to, or have directly experienced;

- physical abuse,
- sexual abuse,
- emotional abuse,
- neglect,
- abandonment and/or
- violence.

Many children in care may be struggling with their own emotional, behavioural and mental health issues because of their experiences.

Voluntary Care

A **Voluntary Care Agreement** may be entered into when;

- circumstances temporarily prevent the parent from caring for the child,
- the parent recognizes the need for services and is engaged in the provision of services,
- a placement option is available for the child, and
- termination of the agreement will not place the child in need of protection.

Agreements may be signed for up to one year in duration

Agreements may be terminated by either party, with notice

Temporary Care and Custody

A child is taken into the Temporary Care and Custody of the department when it is believed

- a child is at imminent risk of harm and the child's safety and well being cannot be assured by any other means
- the identified risk may be mitigated with;
 - the engagement of the parent, and
 - service provision and support by the agency
- mandatory obligation to bring the matter before a judge within 5 business days.

The overall objective is the return of the child to the parent.

Permanent Care and Custody

When a child is placed in the permanent care of the Minister this;

- terminates the rights of the parent permanently
- often follows unsuccessful periods of supervision or temporary care and custody are fully utilized, however this is not required
- there may be times when an immediate application for permanent care and custody is warranted

Post Care and Custody Agreements

When appropriate, a child transitioning from the permanent care and custody of the Minister, may be eligible for supportive and financial services to support their post-secondary education.

Preparation for post-secondary education begins several years in advance of the child's anticipated graduation from high school and includes;

- advising the child about the Educational Bursary Program as part of the *Child's Plan of Care*
- assessing the suitability, eligibility, and costs associated with the chosen program

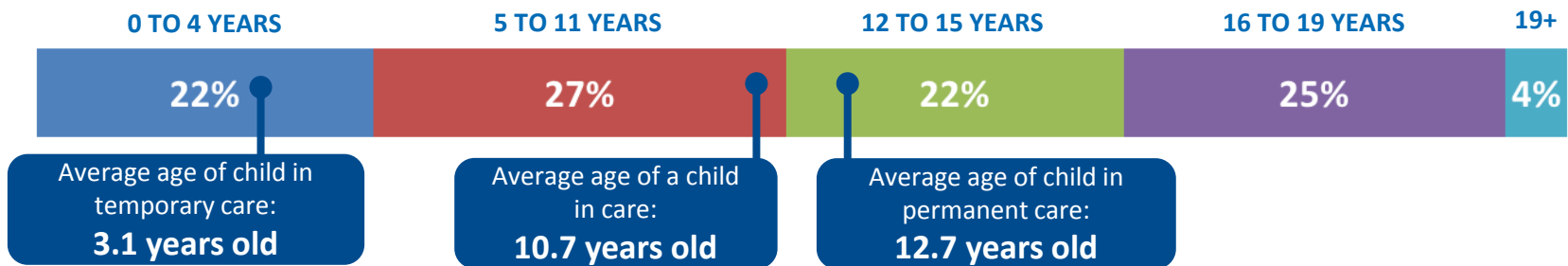
These educational goals are supported through a Post Care and Custody agreement, after the age of 19 years

Children in Care

- As of April 1, 2017 there were 1, 048 children in care
 - 650 were in permanent care and custody,
 - 343 were in temporary care and custody
 - 26 were placed under voluntary care agreement
- Currently, there are 40 former children in care receiving post-secondary educational support through Post Care and Custody Agreements (PCCA).
- Apart from children in care receiving services under a PCCA, there were an additional 527 children receiving services under a Supervision Order

Children in Care

As of April 1, 2017, 1,048 children in care relied on CYFS, its caregivers and placement settings to keep them safe and provide them with a range of supports to meet their basic needs. Current placement options include: Foster Care, Residential Care, Adoption, and Transition Support to Independent Living.



Children in care may remain so for multiple years, and require placement options that are stable as they age and meet their changing needs.

Length of time for children and youth in care in Temporary Care:
44% between **3 months to 1 year**
44% in care between **1 to 2 years**

Length of time for children and youth in care in Permanent Care:
21% less than **1 year**
40% between **1 to 5 years**
25% between **5 to 10 years**
14% over **10 years**

A **5 year old** has been in care for an average of **2 years**

A **9 year old** has been in care for an average of **3 years**

A **15 year old** has been in care for an average of **6 years**

Supports and Services to Children in Care

- Case planning is ongoing to ensure the needs of a child are met while in care
- As part of the child's plan, education goals must be developed and any additional supports identified (e.g Policy 75; Tuition Support program)
- Preparation for post-secondary education begins several years in advance of the child's anticipated graduation from high school. For children in Permanent Care and Custody, supports may include:
 - Education Bursary Program for children in Permanent Care & Custody
 - Extension to the Educational Bursary Program (PCCA)
 - Secondary Educational Foundation Program (PCCA)



Placement options

Placement Services

All children placed in the care of the Minister or agency must be in approved placements

The best alternative for a child who cannot safely remain with their parent is placement with another member of their family or another individual who is known to the child.

When placement outside of family is required for a child, the department assesses the needs of the child and matches the child with the best available option on a temporary or permanent basis, such as:

- Foster Care (Level 1)
- Residential Care (Level 2-4)
- Adoption Services
- Youth transitioning to independent living

Placement Services

The placement system for children and youth in Nova Scotia has grown organically. It is a large, diverse, complex collection of foster parents, service providers, and department staff.

65% of children in care reside in foster homes.

The remaining 35% are in placements such as child caring facilities, living independently (i.e. in residence at university) or in other arrangements.

Most facilities serve youth 12 and over.

19 Child Welfare Child Caring Facilities

17 Community Based

1 Wood Street Residential Treatment

1 Wood Street Secure Treatment

6 Government
12 Non-Profit
1 For Profit



144 beds = 106 beds + 18 beds + 20 beds

Foster Care – Level 1-2

- Foster families provide temporary, stable, nurturing family care to children who are unable to remain with their birth families,
- Foster families provide day to day care for the large majority of children in care (65%).
- Family care is known to be the most therapeutic placement resource for most children in care.
- Foster families are key to helping children make positive transitions in their life by speaking positively about their birth and adoptive parents, preparing them for pre-placement visits, and assuring them of their affection.

Kinship Foster Care – Level 1

Kinship foster families provide the full-time, temporary care of children in the Minister's care and custody and who;

- are related to the child; or
- have had an established relationship with the child before they entered care.

Foster Care as an Option

- Between 2010 and 2016, the number of approved foster homes in Nova Scotia dropped from 815 to 578. This represented a 29% decrease.
- In addition to declining numbers, the Foster Parents who provide this service are aging. From 2010 – 2016, the proportion of Foster Parents who are over 55 has gone from 31% to 38% and the proportion of Foster Parents who are over 60 has gone from 16% to 25%.
- As of April 1, 2017 there were approximately 582 foster homes providing placements for 674 children in care.

Levels of Care

Level 1 Care

This may include placements for children supported through

- Foster Care,
- Kinship Foster Care, and
- Independent Living

Levels of Care

Level 2 Care

This may also include;

Community Based Child-Caring Facilities for children with moderate emotional and behavioral issues who;

- require a higher level of supervision and structure than available in foster care,
- require 24-hour care,
- are able to manage some unsupervised activities in the community,
- may require flexible programming to allow both extended trials of independence and periods of corrective and protective structure during relapse.

Levels of Care

Level 3 Care

This may include;

Contracted Family Care - Foster Care, where the intensity of the child's unique and specialized needs require daily intensive 24-hour supervision and care.

Levels of Care

Level 3 Care

This may also include;

Residential Treatment - Structured, supportive program with onsite therapeutic counselling for children who require;

- stabilization,
- a high degree of supervision and intensive supports to address substantial behaviour, social and emotional difficulties.

These children may present with frequent or severe episodes of aggressive or other antisocial behavior.

These children may require psychological or psychiatric services which are integrated into the program, to assess and monitor *Treatment Plans*.

Levels of Care

Level 4 Care - Secure Treatment

This is an involuntary treatment program for children who require;

- crisis stabilization in a secure environment;
- a high degree of supervision and intensive services to address behavioral, social and emotional difficulties.

These children may present with frequent or severe episodes of aggressive or other antisocial behavior and may require psychological or psychiatric services, which are integrated into the program, to assess and monitor the *Treatment Plans*.

Woodstreet Treatment Centre is the only facility in Nova Scotia that provides this specialized service

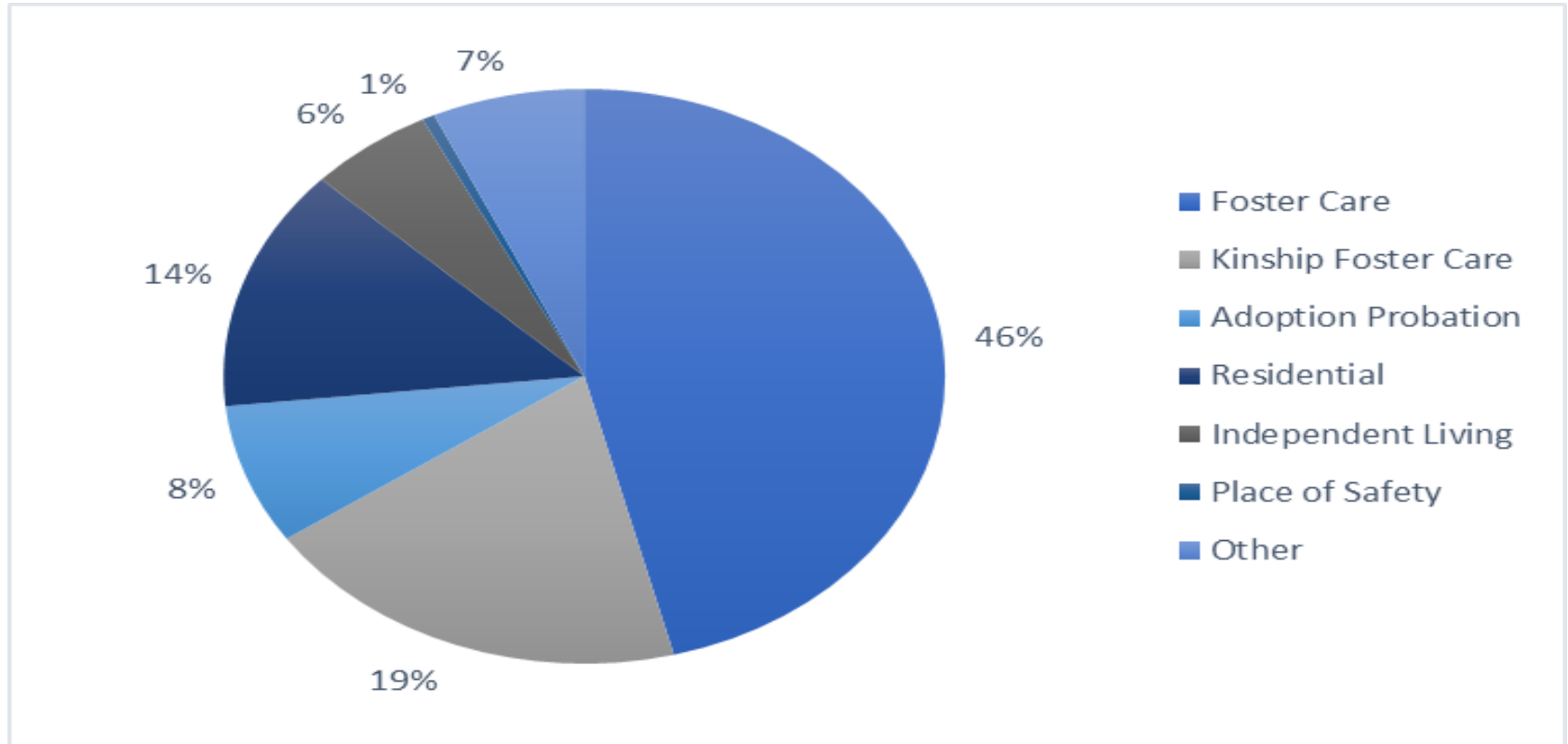
Residential Care (Level 2-4)

Residential child-caring facilities throughout Nova Scotia provide placement options for children in the care with moderate to severe emotional and behavioral challenges who require a higher level of supervision and structure than is available in foster care. Each facility offers a specified Level of Care (2-4).

These facilities are;

- regulated by an annual licensing process and provincial audits and reviews which holds them accountable to provincial policies to ensure quality care for children who are in the care of the Minister.
- operate 24 hours a day with professional child-caring facility employees who provide individual and/or group counselling.

Placement – All Children in Care



April 1, 2017

Potential placement option improvements

- **Alternative Out of Care Placements** – supporting private families and guardians to look after children who are not in care
- **Improvements to Foster Care Model** – redesigning the FC model to reflect the type of care being delivered and the needs of each child/youth
- **Diversified Residential System** – expanding and diversifying our residential placement options; increasing capacity with a focus on matching needs of each child/youth with placement rather than placement based solely on availability
- **Emergency Placement Options** – as part of the new placement continuum, including additional emergency placement options



Service Delivery

CYFS Staff Sessions

- 5 staff sessions “all hands on deck”– October/November 2017
- Service delivery led
 - Service Delivery Executive Director
 - Program Executive Director
 - Program Directors
 - Executive Director, Strategic Services
- all staff in attendance
- Format – mix of information imparted and feedback on what is needed in the delivery of programs and services

Immediate (<30 days)

- Expedited hiring and re-assignment of vacant positions
- Work with NSGEU and staff to streamline staff stability
- “float team” to finalize notes, close files, measure case/work loads
- Affirm clinical and supportive supervision models
- Ensure daily support for staff and supervisors
- Full and current SWOT on Access/Transportation
- Increase placement options

30-60-90 Day Implementation

30 Days (Dec 20 – Jan 20)

- Provide Placement Maps
- Enable Data Use on Smartphones
- Standards for Video Recording Equipment – Step One
- Post Hiring Pools Provincially
- #Askfrontlinestaff
- Modify requirements for Ecomap, Genogram and CHCT (Cultural History Collection Tool)
- Fix Feedback Loop
- Foster increased communication among Supervisors
- Forms

60 Days (Jan 20 – Feb 20)

- Improve Feedback Loop Process
- Evolve Pilot Supervisor Model
- Laptops / tablets – “tools to do the job” plan for frontline staff
- Affirm financial authority – x\$ on behalf of client
- Policy Manual – useability and forms
- ICM Fixes (time out, add attachments)
- Standards for Video Recording Equipment – Step Two (RFP / Standing Offer)

90 Days +

- Full Review Process for Financial Thresholds
- Policy Manual – review, improve, clarify (clean up overall)
- Youth 16 – 18 (how / training)
- Provide standard tool and training for Ecomap, Genograms

30 Day Plan - Description

Provide Placement Maps

- Provide staff with a map, that provides a visual representation of facilities – post on the Intranet.
- Name of the facility, Gov't or non-govt, Level 1-4, and capacity

Enable Data Use on Smartphones

- Approval granted effective immediately on use of data for Smartphones
- Instructions will be provided on how to enable data usage via email.

Standards for Video Recording Equipment

- **Step One:** Determine a standard for video recording solution for use province wide, ensuring compatibility with Health and Justice

Post Hiring Pools Provincially

- Working with the PSC to determine how competitions are processed to determine how this could be done
- Meetings scheduled in early January

30 Day Plan – Description Cont'd

#Askfrontlinestaff

- Engage frontline staff in Project Work, make space and time – discussions with SD Directors and TSU has begun
- Solutions and Support / TSU have incorporated in their processes (e.g. – consultation Policy 75, Access and Visitation Policy, Foster Care Recruitment project)

Ecomap, Genogram and CHCT Requirements

- Effective Dec 21st, **only upon substantiation of abuse and/or neglect allegations, will the CHCT, Ecomap and Genogram need to be completed** and placed on the file where they become *living* tools for use during the duration of the file. Policy Manual will be updated.

Fix Feedback Loop

- Step one: Acknowledge receipt and follow up
- Step two: Improve process for review and turn around
- Step three: Address outstanding items
- Email from CYFS with an update on action – attached.

Foster Increased Communications

- Identify opportunities for Supervisors and / or Managers to meet regularly and provide support to enable regular collaboration. Email to support from ED and Directors

30 Day Plan – Description Cont'd

Fix Forms

- All forms are being reviewed to determine opportunities for improvement, which will span the 30-60-90 day period.

Completed

- The CYFS 535 Initial Safety Assessment form (can now add rows)
- CYFS 545 Safety Assessment for Contact with Child are now expandable

Working on Now

- FCS-601 Foster Care Comments and Action Plan
- FCS-615 Critical Incident - Use of Physical Restraint
- FCS-619 Foster Family Review – 6M Following First Placement
- CYFS-558 Cultural Connection Plan

Upcoming

- FCS-623 Proposal for Contracted Foster Care at a Specialized Level of Care
- FCS-642 FOTS Referral
- FCS-624 Request for Approval to Initiate the Development of a Contracted Foster Family Resource
- CYFS-559 Culture and History Collection Tool

Thank You

Any Questions?