

# Youth Outreach Program

## Overview

### Background:

The Nova Scotia Department of Community Services has legislative oversight for the Child, Family Services Act while the Child, Youth and Families Supports Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services provides oversight for programs, services and policies for children, youth, and families required to implement the Act. This includes Prevention & Early Intervention, Child Protection, and Placement Services. The Youth Outreach program is under the Prevention & Early Intervention division.

In May 2022, the YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia (Lunenburg County YMCA branch) signed an agreement with the DCS to provide the Youth Outreach Program (YOP) which provides services for youth in all of Lunenburg and Queens County. In December, 2022, with the need for supports in Queens County growing, an additional program was added to support youth in all of Queens County.

### What is the Youth Outreach Program?

The YOP is a community-based program, designed to improve the immediate and long-term social, educational/vocational, economic and health outcomes for vulnerable youth.

### Intended Population:

The YOP is intended for youth listed below and intended to support equitable access, and is culturally responsive to the needs of all Nova Scotians.

#### **YOP serve Youth 12 – 24 years old, who have been, are at risk of, or are:**

- Experiencing multiple risk factors across the social determinants of health, including but not limited to, poverty, ability, social isolation, unstable housing/homelessness, family violence, sexual violence, substance abuse, emotional/mental health issues and intergenerational trauma.
- Impacted by discrimination (i.e., African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaq/Indigenous, Acadian, 2SLGBTQ+, and immigrant/newcomers) and experiencing systemic, historical and societal inequalities, which exponentially compound the impact of the risk factors.
- In the care and custody of the Minister of Community Services or Mi'kmaq Family and Children Services, or who have been or are connected to the Department through Youth Services or Post-Care and Custody Agreements.

### Program Streams & Their Intended Population:

The YOP has three (3) program streams: General, Sexual Violence Prevention, and Youth in Care. Some Youth Programs deliver all streams while others deliver only one. The YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia has agreed to provide support for the following two streams:

- **General Stream:** Youth who are 16 – 24 years old experiencing risk factors, and who may, or may not, be connected to Child Welfare programs.

- **Youth In Care Stream:** Youth 12 – 19 years old in the Minister’s care who are in a number of settings across the Child Welfare Placement continuum, including temporary and permanent care.

## What are the Areas of Focus of the YOP in general?

The areas of focus are largely dependent on the specific needs of youth in the community, organizational capacity, existing resources, and how these services complement any existing programming.

- **Holistic Development:**
  - Providing and connecting youth to opportunities to engage in holistic wellness programming that promotes overall well-being.
- **Healthy Relationships:**
  - Helping to identify and link youth to positive adult role models, mentors, teachers, health care providers, etc. Ideally, youth have at least one caring and consistent adult in their lives.
  - Helping youth understand and experience healthy relationships. Among others, this includes supporting healthy peer relationships, which are of importance to young people.
- **Youth and Family Relationships:**
  - Encouraging and supporting positive family relationships. This includes helping to resolve conflict between youth and their caregivers and/or family.
- **Personal and Life-Skill Development:**
  - Providing and connecting youth to activities that support the exploration of personal interests and the development of their self-efficacy, self-advocacy, interpersonal and life skills. Skill building activities can happen within individual, family, friend and community settings.
- **Community Youth Engagement:**
  - Providing and connecting youth to opportunities for engagement and contribution. This can take many shapes in many ways; through providing opportunities for youth expression, involvement in community service and/or creating opportunities for decision-making and leadership at various levels of project and/or programming.
- **Safer Spaces:**
  - Collaboratively creating and providing safe spaces that are designed to meet the needs of all youth. This includes physical and virtual infrastructure, as well as spaces and programming that supports emotional and cultural safety and inclusivity.
- **Basic Needs:**
  - Facilitating the connections between youth and needed supports and services.
  - Making information available to youth and their families about available resources and supports to support their needs.
- **Emergency Response:**
  - Facilitating the connections between youth and needed supports and services, addressing significant risks and immediate crisis; and providing emergency and basic need supports, where and when available.
- **Cultural and Personal Identity:**
  - Supporting and encouraging a youth’s positive relationship with their culture and racial identity. This can happen in a variety of ways, including connecting youth with positive, culturally-matched role models from within the organization or from the broader community.

## Services The YOP Offer:

- **Emergency Response:**
  - Facilitates connections between youth to needed supports and services, addresses significant risks and immediate crisis; and provides emergency and basic needs supports, *where and when available*.
- **Outreach:**
  - Meets youth where they are at and where they feel most safe and engages youth who might not otherwise have access to services. A key component of outreach is the service is not stationary, but mobile and meeting those in need of outreach services at the locations where they are.
- **Accompaniment:**
  - Means a Youth Outreach Worker accompanies and supports youth in navigating and interpreting systems and services. It also means building meaningful connections and support systems and cultivating a relationship of trust with the youth.
- **Supportive & Solution Focused Conversations:**
  - Is a collaborative way to discuss and find solutions to problems, difficulties or challenges in life as well as to highlight strengths and help nudge youth through the stages of change, when appropriate.
- **Referrals and/or Linkages to Community:**
  - Supports youth to better navigate their community to access diverse opportunities, resources and networks to support their needs.
- **Family Work:**
  - May include, where appropriate, addressing youth-family relationships through support sessions for families and loved ones who are providing primary care for youth or families with whom the youth may be re-engaging.

## What about a Drop-In Centre?

### **Bridgewater servicing Lunenburg County**

The YMCA YOP is operated at Y Our Safe Space – Empowering Youth at 425 King Street, Bridgewater, NS. This space not only includes office space, but also a safe space for youth to connect, socialize, get support and receive advice. Drop-In Programs are open to Youth (Monday 2:30pm – 5pm, Tuesday 3:30pm – 7pm). No registration is required. This safe space provides hang out spaces, phone, computer & Wi-Fi access, meals (on Tuesdays) and access to tv, music, video games, board games, air hockey table, pool table, access to laundry facilities, access to personal care items, access to Life Skills Workshops and much more!

Although we do not have showers and storage available at 425 King Street, we do have access to showers through the Lunenburg County YMCA (75 High Street, Bridgewater). Limited storage can be arranged. If access is required to any of these services, we can make arrangement that are discrete, respectful and confidential.

### **Liverpool servicing Queens County**

The Liverpool YMCA Drop-In Centre (YOP) is located at 40 Water Street, Liverpool, NS. This space not only includes office space, but also a safe space for youth to connect, socialize, get support and receive advice. Drop-In Programs are open to Youth (Wednesday 2:30pm – 5pm, Thursday 2:30pm – 6pm). No

registration is required. This safe space provides hang out spaces, phone, computer & Wi-Fi access, meals (on Tuesdays) and access to tv, music, video games, board games, air hockey table, pool table, access to laundry facilities, access to personal care items, access to Life Skills Workshops and much more!

### Programs to Come - some sooner, others later:

- Tutoring
- Employment
- Social enterprise & entrepreneurial skills
- Formal mentoring
- Peer Support Groups
- Positive cultural socialization
- Supportive counselling
- Youth-family relationships &/or conflict resolution support

### How does a youth become involved in YOP?

There are three ways a youth may access the YOP:

- Self-referral – youth in the General Stream may self-refer
- Referral through a third party organization or agency
- Referral through a Child Welfare Agency – specific to youth in care stream

### What happens after a Youth is referred?

With the exception of any drop-in programming, all youth who access the YOP must come through the referral process.

1. Referral is received by Kim Whitman-Mansfield, Youth Director, via email at [kim.whitman-mansfield@ns.ymca.ca](mailto:kim.whitman-mansfield@ns.ymca.ca)
2. Referral is reviewed and a Youth Outreach Worker is assigned.
3. Youth Outreach Worker makes contact with youth and arranges an appointment to complete the intake form, consent agreement, transportation waiver (if needed) and goal setting.  
**Note:** the program is voluntary and youth will be invited to engage but not mandated.
4. Youth Outreach Worker will work with the Youth to help them address their immediate needs, and design a program to help support the youth to move toward their goals within the areas of focus and the capacity of the organization and community.