

# Department of Community Services

## Responsibilities

The overall mandate of the Department of Community Services (DCS) is to provide for people in need. In doing so, the department offers a wide range of social services to Nova Scotians in need and operates under a broad legislative mandate. The services provided by the department form the social safety net and play a significant role in contributing to better futures for our children and families, persons with disabilities, and to the overall health and well-being of communities throughout Nova Scotia.

Within the department's programming (Employment Support and Income Assistance, Child, Youth and Family Supports, and the Disability Support Program), and that of the agency supporting it (Status of Women), Community Services aims to promote the independence, self-reliance, and security of the people we serve. This is achieved through excellence in service delivery, leadership, and collaboration with our partners.

The department works with individuals, families, youth, and children to enable them to meet their basic needs, have control over their own lives, be safe from abuse and violence, find and maintain employment, and participate as citizens in their communities. Programs and services are delivered by staff of the department, as well as a network of funded organizations throughout the province who are empowered to make decisions resulting in a positive outcome in people's lives. The department also ensures that services and supports are accessible, affordable, and sustainable, are delivered efficiently, and include a balanced mix of prevention and intervention programs.

### OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MINISTER

The Deputy Minister, responsible to the Minister of Community Services, is accountable for a wide range of social services, which are delivered directly by the department or by organizations receiving funding from the department. The Deputy Minister has overall responsibility for:

- carrying out government policies,
- implementing decisions made by the Minister and the Executive Council,
- providing quality advice and information to assist the Minister in making decisions securing the necessary resources to enable the department to carry out its mandate, and
- overseeing all aspects of the administration of the department.

Reporting directly to the Deputy Minister are:

- Associate Deputy Minister
- Executive Director, Employment Support & Income Assistance
- Executive Director, Child, Youth and Family Supports
- Executive Director, Disability Support Program
- Executive Director, Inclusion, Diversity and Community Relations
- Executive Director, Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
- Executive Lead on Child Poverty

The following Corporate Agency staff are located at Community Services and support the Minister and Deputy Minister:

- Director of Communications, Communications Nova Scotia
- Director of Human Resources, Public Service Commission
- Executive Director of Finance & Administration, Department of Finance and Treasury Board

#### **OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE DEPUTY MINISTER**

The Office of the Associate Deputy Minister is also responsible for ensuring the department achieves its outcomes. This includes ensuring that departmental supports and services are accessible, supports and services are delivered efficiently, and that staff and delivery partners are empowered to make a positive difference in people's lives.

Reporting directly to the Associate Deputy Minister are:

- Executive Director Policy & Innovation
- Executive Director Service Excellence
- Executive Director Strategic Services
- Administrative Team supporting the Minister's office

### **Core Programming**

#### **EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT AND INCOME ASSISTANCE**

Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) provides financial assistance and supports to people to meet their basic needs. Its programs are designed to help people with the costs of food, clothing, and shelter, and to link them to supports and services that will help them to be more independent, self-sufficient, and included in their community.

ESIA's employment programs help eligible income assistance recipients get the skills and training they need to be more employable and attach to meaningful work. This can include literacy and skills upgrading, training and job opportunities. The programs also provide preventative programming to youth at risk, focused on breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty through employment-based programming and post-secondary education.

The Pharmacare Program provides prescription drug coverage for people who receive assistance from the department. The department also provides the Nova Scotia Child Benefit, a non-taxable monthly payment provided to low-income families to assist with the cost of raising children under age 18.

### **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 programs to strengthen children, youth and families, support their safety and well-being, and maintain healthy family relationships. These services are funded by the department but provided primarily by community-based organizations and programs such as Family Resource Centres and Boys & Girls Clubs.

Child Protection receives and assess all referrals of potential abuse and neglect and considers intervention on a community based, voluntary or mandated basis. This includes conducting investigations related to reports of alleged child abuse and neglect, connecting families to services in the community or offering intervention on a voluntary basis. Child Protection respects the integrity of the family, the strengths of individuals and community and all attempts are made to reduce the risk of harm to children and youth in the home and community. When it is not possible to mitigate the risk to the child in the home, the Child, Youth and Family Supports services provides out-of-home support or placement services. Placement services are provided when children cannot remain safely at home, either on a temporary or permanent basis. The continuum of placements includes foster care, child and youth caring programs and adoption. All placement options for children must be either approved or licensed.

### **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 day programs. DSP promotes participant's choice, independence, skill development and community inclusion. The goal of the program is to support participants at various stages of their development and independence through a range of programs. Support options include participation in day program activities, help for families who care for a family member with a disability in their own home, support for participants to live independently, and residential support for people with disabilities in licensed home by qualified staff.

### **INCLUSION, DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

The Inclusion, Diversity and Community Relations (IDCR) division is responsible to provide expert policy advice and leadership on the development and implementation of equity, inclusion, and diversity plans and strategies as it applies to all areas of the Department's services. An emphasis is placed on representing the needs and realities of historically underrepresented and/or marginalized communities and groups within the province.

IDCR develops principles and approaches that are culturally specific, support staff, helps develop and lead culturally specific strategies, develops and maintains relationships with specific communities of interest across the province. The division ensures an inclusion and diversity lens is applied to departmental strategies, policies, standards, program design, delivery, staff recruitment, and initiatives. IDCR works to deepen the understanding of staff about the impact of systemic racism experienced by Nova Scotians.

### **POLICY AND INNOVATION**

Policy and Innovation brings together the department's strategic policy, planning and project management functions with a suite of information activities that affect the overall direction, management, effectiveness, and efficiency of the department. Functions of the division include:

- Intergovernmental relations: provided intergovernmental strategic policy advice and secretariat support to the Minister and Deputy Minister of Community Services; facilitates information sharing and intergovernmental agreements; and supports all divisions by coordinating jurisdictional scans.

- Strategic policy and decision support: works closely with the Department's program and corporate divisions regarding all matters related to policy development, planning research analysis and evaluation to ensure robust policy decision-making. This team also liaises with Executive Council Office (ECO) on behalf of the department and facilitates departmental business planning.
- Information services and privacy: responsible for records management, freedom of information request, and privacy related activities of the department.
- Enterprise project delivery: leads collaborative development and delivery of priority projects for client divisions to support program and service improvements.

### **SERVICE EXCELLENCE**

The Service Excellence division develops and supports the department's systems including digital systems and operations to better enable us to serve our clients.

This division ensures our services are easier for clients to understand and access. It is also responsible to ensure that the tools and processes being developed for use by staff are focused on service excellence.

The division works across the department to enable a culture where every decision taken considers the impact on the citizen who will be served. This extends to decisions made in the areas of policy, technology and programs that are being developed and/or modernized.

### **STRATEGIC SERVICES**

The Strategic Services division is made up of four functional areas. The units provide client-focused solutions through collaborative relationships, innovative thinking and consistency. The units are:

- Service Provider Supports: supports service providers through the development of department-service provider contracts and agreements, and is the liaison to service providers regarding departmental communications, updates, and information.
- Licensing and Compliance: includes Licensing, Assistance Appeals and Compliance, and is responsible for ensuring high quality and effective licensing and inspection services for residential sites established in accordance with the *Homes for Special Care Act*, *Child Youth and Family Services Act* and their respective regulations. Manages all appeals under the *ESIA Act* and is responsible to identify compliance issues and risks that require strategies and processes in order to mitigate or resolve organizational concerns among licensed service providers.

- **Operational Supports:** leads facilities management, operations, transactional services, Emergency Social Services, and Safety teams. Provides support to internal partners, delivers external programming, and works to ensure that all staff have a safe place to work.
- **People and Culture:** supports engagement, internal communications, organizational development and training for the Department. Creates an effective client centric department through organizational development opportunities, coaching and training for all DCS staff.

### **NOVA SCOTIA ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

The Advisory Council is composed of citizen leaders who reflect the diversity of women across Nova Scotia and who have demonstrated interest and involvement in women's issues. The Status of Women office provides research, policy advice, and information services in pursuit of equality, fairness, and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia.

### **STRATEGIC INITIATIVES**

The Strategic Initiatives Unit is responsible for developing, implementing and overseeing key initiatives and areas, such as child poverty and other key strategies that Community Services is asked to coordinate and/or lead.

## **Acts Administered**

- *Adoption Records Act*
- *Children and Family Services Act*
- *Employment Support and Income Assistance Act*
- *Homes for Special Care Act*
- *Protection for Persons in Care Act*
- *Senior Citizen's Financial Aid Act*
- *Senior Citizens Social Services Act*
- *Social Assistance Act*

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