

# Child Welfare: The System We Need

## Request for Proposals



## Who We Are

The Nova Scotia College of Social Workers exists to serve and protect Nova Scotians by effectively regulating the profession of social work. The NSCSW establishes, maintains, and regulates standards of professional practice. Our role is to ensure that Nova Scotians receive the services of skilled and competent social workers who are knowledgeable, ethical, qualified, and accountable to the people who receive social work services.

The NSCSW believes the people of Nova Scotia are entitled to receive the highest caliber of care from their social workers. To ensure this we provide membership services to support Registered Social Workers in maintaining the highest standards of professional competency, enabling participation in a broader provincial social work community.

We engage with members, government, employers, community groups, and citizens to build a stronger social work community, and to advance the social work profession in Nova Scotia. We believe social workers provide an essential service to support Nova Scotians in leading healthier, happier lives. The NSCSW engages with Nova Scotia's social work community in advocating for improvement to social policies, programs, and social justice.

We provide responsive, accountable leadership to ensure the highest standards of social work for Nova Scotians. We work in solidarity with Nova Scotians to advocate for policies that improve social conditions, challenge injustice and value diversity.

### *Our Values*

**Our work is grounded in integrity and professionalism which calls on us to be:**

#### **Respectful**

The College is respectful of the inherent dignity of every individual and strives for cultural humility and social change.

#### **Accessible**

The NSCSW provides communication and services that are accessible province-wide for members, stakeholders, and the public.

#### **Ethical**

The NSCSW follows the established national code of ethics that adheres to the values of the social work profession.

#### **Progressive**

The NSCSW is proactive in reflecting the values of social work, and supports innovation through education, research, and transformative community engagement, for the sake of social justice.



## Proposal Guidelines

This Request for Proposals represents the requirements for an open and competitive process. Proposals will be accepted until 5 p.m. ADT, August 20, 2021. Any proposals received after this date and time will be returned to the sender. All proposals must be signed by an official agent or representative or organization submitting the proposal.

If the organization submitting a proposal must outsource or contract any work to meet the requirements contained herein, this must be clearly stated in the proposal. Additionally, all costs included in proposals must be all-inclusive to include any outsourced or contracted work. Any proposals which call for outsourcing or contracting work must include a name and description of the organizations being contracted.

**All costs must be itemized to include an explanation of all fees and costs.**

Contract terms and conditions will be negotiated upon selection of the winning bidder for this RFP. All contractual terms and conditions will be subject to review by the NSCSW council.

All proposals should be sent to Alec Stratford – Executive Director/Registrar

[Alec.Stratford@NSCSW.org](mailto:Alec.Stratford@NSCSW.org)

## Project Guidelines

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this policy paper is to answer the following questions:

1. What would it take for every child in Nova Scotia to live in a home and a community free of poverty, violence and harm, that allowed them to reach their full potential?
2. What would it take to create a child protection system that embraced the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child, as well as the calls from the Black and Indigenous Nova Scotians for reform as enshrined in Truth and Reconciliation Commission and in the inquiry into the Home for Colored Children?

### *Audience*

The audience for this paper is Nova Scotians who are searching for quality and effective alternatives to our current child welfare system. This paper is also for system administrators and decision makers who make incredibly tough and challenging decisions daily about the child welfare system.

### *Goal*

Our goal is that this paper generates a process of critical self-reflection that allows Nova Scotians to create space for new approaches to child welfare. **We need a new way of thinking about child and family well-being.** It is our hope that this paper will spark discussion and action towards this goal.

## Backgrounder

On March 1, 2017, the Liberal government in Nova Scotia amended the Children and Family Services Act (the “2017 amendments”). These changes:

- expanded the definition of a child in need of protective services,
- added youth 16-19 years of age under voluntary services,
- limited the capacity of the judiciary to make decisions,
- prohibited a judge from making an order for access in a permanent care order,
- limited the opportunity for extending care for youth over 19, and
- tightened court timelines.

The former Minister of Community Services Joanne Bernard stated that the transformation of the Children and Family Services Act (the “Act,” or “CFSA”) was needed to keep Nova Scotian children in their homes and to provide support before a family is in crisis. Social workers and community organizations repeatedly reported their concerns with the 2017 amendments prior to implementation. They were concerned with limited new funding and resources to the system, increased caseloads and workloads due to the complexity of family needs, the readiness of staff and community organizations to implement the changes, and the ability of families to make necessary changes given the tighten court timelines.

The amended act and provision of child welfare services in Nova Scotia has had serious consequences:

- Over-representation of Indigenous and Black children in Nova Scotia's child welfare system.
- Referrals for child welfare services increased by 27% between 2015 and 2019, indicating increased surveillance of marginalized families.
- Applications under section 32 of the CFSA to family courts have increased by 17.5%.
- From Sept. 1, 2016, to Aug. 31, 2019, the Department of Community Services (DCS) required placements of safety 249 times for 201 young people. Some required more than one placement. In total, those young people spent 23,940 days in hotels, houses, or cottages in the province.
- The number of children brought into care from 2015-2019, between the ages of 0-11 has remained relatively stagnant. Whereas the amount of youth in care between ages of 12-19 has dropped by 30.4%. This is concerning because of:
  - **Human Trafficking** – In Nova Scotia, police have reported more families coming forward from every corner of the province to say their children, mostly daughters, have been forced into the sex trade and moved out of the province. Nova Scotia has the highest rate of human trafficking incidents in the country with 2.1 in 100,000 people.
  - **Youth Homelessness** – More data is needed to more closely examine the pervasiveness of youth homelessness in Nova Scotia. However, in 2016 it was estimated that 20% of the homeless population in Canada is comprised of youth

between the ages of 13-24. A high percentage of these young people are 2SLGBTQ+, Indigenous, and/or members of racialized communities.

- The 2017 amendments to the CFSA removed the ability of judges to award access after a permanent care and custody order is made. This change was counter to restorative best practices, and with the intent to facilitate more successful adoptions. However, adoptions have decreased by 68% between 2016 and 2020.

A Canadian Association of Social Workers study released in 2018 provides a summary of why social workers leave child protection work:

- unmanageable workload (75%);
- system wide changes, increased expectations and administrative procedures (68%);
- unrealistic expectations by the organization (65%);
- workloads that interfered with personal and family life (53%);
- the emotional toll felt from the work (63%);
- firsthand experiences of violence and aggression or threats of violence from a client (44%);
- organizations lack adequate mental health resources and wellness initiatives to address staff post-traumatic stress (53%); and
- lack of adequate services and programs in the community to meet the complex needs of children, youth and parents (53%).

In Nova Scotia the 2019 “How’s Work Going” survey demonstrates similar results:

- Only 44% of Department of Community Services employees indicated that they feel valued.
- At the root of this devaluing is a strong sense that workloads are unreasonable (57%).
- Only 41% indicated that they feel safe and supported to bring forward and try new ideas.
- Only 39% indicated that they have confidence in senior leadership

There was a striking rise of social worker short term illness hours, from 16,513 in the fiscal year 2013-14 to 26,105 in 2016-17 – an increase of nearly 10,000 hours.

Children, Youth and Family Services division saw its budget decrease by 28% over the past 5 years, with total spending topping 147 million in 2014-2015 budget year but falling to 101 million in 2018-2019.

## Scope of the Analysis

The report will begin by scoping out the root cause of the crisis in child welfare, paying particular attention to neoliberalism and its effects. It will map the state of the child welfare, compare actions completed from the calls in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Report, and the Inquiry into the Home for Colored Children.

This project will focus on applying the [Social Policy Framework](#) developed by CCPA-NS and the NS College of Social Workers. Applying the social policy framework generates solutions that are evidence-based and intersectional, ensuring that proposed equitable child welfare systems respond to the diversity of needs in the community and are informed by the best available research and data. The researcher will be required to work with an NSCSW working group to develop recommendations, based on the research and analysis.

Applying the social policy framework will facilitate the development of policy solutions based on these ten guiding principles:

### 1. *Interconnectedness*

What child welfare policy solutions would allow us to address multiple challenges and breakdown silos?

### 2. *Decolonization*

How will child welfare services be reimagined using indigenous knowledge and ways of being, ensuring solutions abandon colonial government paternalism and address the legacy of colonialism?

Can we point to solutions in the 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), including Jordan's Principle, and in the 231 Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls?

### 3. *Social Inclusion*

What child welfare policy solutions would address the deeply rooted systemic barriers in our policy, programs, and services. They should:

- redress the legacies of colonialism, racism, and slavery;
- remove socially created barriers to services and inclusion for people with disabilities, including invisible disabilities;
- challenge gender-based and heteronormative inequality;
- support newcomers and people living in the deepest poverty; and
- work for those in urban and rural locations

Social inclusion must be guaranteed for the children, youth and their families, as well as those providing child welfare services. It requires that we advance both equity and equality.

### 4. *Universality*

Child and family well-being programs and services must be accessible to all, regardless of income and paid for through general revenue from income taxes, rather than through user fees

or payroll taxes. Access is a right or entitlement of citizenship, and not based on one's ability to purchase in the market, or on risk or need.

The amended Act left in place a residual child welfare system, which generally limits involvement to those who are perceived to be the most in need. Overall Nova Scotia remains a system in which risk needs to be identified before programs are offered, moving further away from universal social programs. How do we shift away from this?

### *5. Climate Justice*

How do we develop child welfare policy to ensure that the brunt of adjustment in the transition to a green economy does not fall onto marginalized communities, and ensuring these communities benefit as much? A just transition relies on addressing environmental racism (which is a determinant of mental health) and on strong social policy (income support, skills retraining, infrastructure investments, pharmaceutical care, childcare, housing). It means taking the opportunity to develop holistic policies. As Naomi Klein has written, a green economy is a caring economy.

### *6. Decent Work and Well-Being*

How can we address the child welfare crisis to also ensure that parents, as well as those who provide child welfare related support services, are paid a living wage and provided with decent benefits for their well-being and that of the community?

### *7. Public Provision*

Delivery of care in our society must move away from the current approach, which relies heavily on either the market or the private sphere of the family (especially women) to meet our social needs. We see the limitations and injustice of this approach in child welfare, with women often being asked to regulate abusive partners and held accountable if they fail to do so. How do we ensure greater system responses, to ensure this burden does not fall onto women?

### *8. Fiscal Fairness*

We cannot have a child welfare system that creates and enhances child and family well-being without also transforming our taxing and spending. What are the specific budget recommendations that would address child welfare-specific spending measures (including possible reallocation) and tax measures?

### *9. Shared Governance*

Federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments need to cooperate in order to deliver programs and services such as child welfare. We have moved away from this model in favour of federal government retrenchment and "flexibility" for provinces and territories, resulting in weakened accountability, the erosion of national standards, and further fragmentation of Canada's patchwork of social programs. How can the federal government work with the provinces, territories, municipalities, and First Nations in the funding of child welfare services and the setting of standards? Federal transfers to the provinces and territories and equalization payments are integral to supporting universal child welfare services.

## 10. Democratization

The rising influence of corporations and business organizations in politics, alongside the declining power of labour unions and the weakening of equality-seeking civil society organizations, has damaged our democracy, and citizens are increasingly disillusioned with their governments. Governments need to consider the potential social impact of each policy they introduce, break down policy silos, and apply substantive gender-based and intersectional analyses. Communities need the capacity to engage and to shape public policy particularly around child welfare

Notably the amendments to CFSA removed many healthy checks and balances that allowed families, social workers and judges to work together in the best interest of the child, thus moving child welfare policy further away from the principle of democratization. More problematically the Act eroded public oversight and gave many discretionary powers to the Minister. How do we enhance democratic oversight of this system?

## Request for Proposal and Project Timeline

The initial proposal is due no later than 5 pm ADT, August 20, 2021.

Evaluation of proposals will be conducted from August 23-27. If additional information or discussions are needed with any bidders during this window, the bidder(s) will be notified.

The selection decision for this project will be made by August 30, 2021

Upon notification, the contract negotiation will be completed September 3, 2021

## Budget

All proposals must include proposed costs to complete the development and delivery requirements for the above scope.

## Bidder Qualifications

The bidder must list their:

- qualifications;
- project experience, including knowledge of child welfare policy and law;
- reference(s); and
- provide example(s) of similar projects.



## Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The selection team will evaluate all proposals based on the following criteria:

- experience and expertise in the field of child protection.
- experience and expertise in child welfare policy and program development, as well, as service delivery.
- qualifications and recent project experience;
- solid oral and writing skills;
- examples of relevant work experience; and
- competitive pricing.

## References

- Ainsworth, F. (2002). Mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect: Does it really make a difference? *Child & Family Social Work*, 7(1), 57-63.
- Bellis, M., Hughes, K., Ford, K., Ramos Rodriguez, G., Sethi, D., & Passmore, J. (2019). Life course health consequences and associated annual costs of adverse childhood experiences across Europe and North America: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Lancet Public Health*, 4(10), E517-E528.
- Barkley, J., and Wright, R. (2019). Nova Scotia Child Welfare in Crisis. Nova Scotia College of Social Workers. [https://issuu.com/nscsw/docs/connection\\_fall2019\\_webready/s/158875](https://issuu.com/nscsw/docs/connection_fall2019_webready/s/158875)
- Brogan, L. (2019). In the news: learning from tragedy. Nova Scotia College of Social Workers. <https://nscsw.org/learning-from-tragedy>
- Brown, C, Johnston, M and Ross, N (2020) Repositioning Social Work Practice in Mental Health in Nova Scotia. To be released in January of 2021.
- Brown, L., Callahan, M., Strega, S., Walmsley, C., & Dominelli, L. (2009). Manufacturing ghost fathers: The paradox of father presence and absence in child welfare. *Child & Family Social Work*, 14(1), 25-34.
- Burke, D (2019). Suspected human trafficking cases on the rise in N.S., say RCMP. *Chronicle Herald*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/human-trafficking-sex-trade-abuse-rcmp1.5035392>
- Bywaters, P., Bunting, L., Davidson, G., Hanratty, J., Mason, W., McCartan, C., & Steils, N. (2016). The relationship between poverty, child abuse and neglect: an evidence review. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Corbett, M. (2018). Children in voluntary care: an essential provision but one in need of reform. *Irish Journal of Family Law*, 21(1), 9-16.
- Cotter, A, (2020). Trafficking in persons in Canada, 2018. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00006-eng.htm>
- Council of Parties of the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children Restorative Inquiry. (2019). Journey to light : A different way forward : Final report of the restorative inquiry - Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children. Halifax, N.S.: Council of Parties of the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children Restorative Inquiry. retrieved from: <https://restorativeinquiry.ca/>

- Davies, L., Collings, S., & Krane, J. (2003). Making mothers visible: Implications for social work practice and education in child welfare. *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*, 5(2).
- Department of Community Services (2020). Provincial Approach to Address Human Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation. Government of Nova Scotia.  
<https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20200220001> CFSA Submission Engage Nova Scotia (2020).
- NS Quality of Life Initiative. PPT. presentation
- Findlay, T, Saulnier, C., Hébert Boyd, M. and O'Keefe Jennifer , Creating the future we all deserve: A social policy framework for Nova Scotia  
<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/the-future-we-deserve>
- Frank, L. and Fisher, L. (2020) 2019 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia Three decades lost. Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives.  
<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/2019-report-card-child-and-family-povertynova-scotia>
- Frank, L. and Saulnier, C. (2017) 2017 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives.  
<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/2017-report-card-child-and-family-povertynova-scotia>
- Frank, L., Fisher, L., and Saulnier, C., (2020) 2020 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia; Willful Neglect. Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives.  
<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/2019-report-card-child-and-family-povertynova-scotia>
- Frank, L., Saulnier, C., Fisher, L. and Lord, S. (2020) Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia: Anti-Racism, Anti-Poverty Statement. Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives.  
<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/newsroom/updates/child-and-family-poverty-nova-scotia-anti-racism-anti-poverty-statement>
- Gaetz, S. A., O'Grady, B., Kidd, S., & Schwan, K. (2016). Without a home: The national youth homelessness survey. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.
- Gorman, M. (2020) Rates of children in Nova Scotia's care requiring emergency placement are soaring. CBC website. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/community-serviceschildren-in-care-1.5379724>
- Graham, J., and Jahn, C. (2020) Affordable Housing in Nova Scotia in Light of the National Housing Strategy: Assessment. Standing Committee on Community Services.  
[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/cs/subm/cs\\_20200107.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/cs/subm/cs_20200107.pdf)
- Gubits, D.,
- Shinn, M., Bell, S., Wood, M., Dastrup, S. R., Solari, C., ... & McInnis, D. (2015). Family options study: Short-term impacts of housing and services interventions for homeless families. US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research.

- Kagi, R., & Regala, R.(2012). Translating the adverse childhood experiences (ace) study into public policy: Progress and possibility in Washington State. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community*, 40(4), 271-277. DOI: 10.1080/10852352.2012.707442  
CFSA Submission
- Leviten-Reid, 2020. Housing and Homelessness Post Covid-19: What Policy Tools are Required?. Nova Scotia Action Coalition for Community Well-Being.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAm2due8cII&t=897s>
- McLeod, S. (2007). Maslow's hierarchy of needs. *Simply psychology*, 1, 1-8.  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/children-in-care-policy-review-communityservices-1.5432535>
- Municipal Affairs And Housing (2020) Standing Committee On Community Services Municipal Affairs And Housing.  
[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/cs/subm/cs\\_20200107.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/cs/subm/cs_20200107.pdf)
- National inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls (2019). Reclaiming power and place.  
[https://www.mmiwgffada.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2019/06/Executive\\_Summary.pdf](https://www.mmiwgffada.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2019/06/Executive_Summary.pdf)
- Nova Scotia Action Coalition for Community Well-Being. (2020). Calling on municipal candidates to prioritize housing policies that will support all Nova Scotians.  
<https://nsaccw.org/press-release-calling-on-municipal-candidates-to-prioritize-housing-policies-that-will-support-all-nova-scotians>
- Nova Scotia Legislature (2017). Children and Family Services Act, Government of Nova Scotia.  
<https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/children%20and%20family%20services.pdf> NSCSW, 2019.
- Panel Discussion Child Welfare on the Brink. NSCSW Facebook.  
<https://www.facebook.com/114157965269659/videos/2301392103446762>
- Peddle, S. (2017) N.S. social workers suffering burnout, NDP says. *Chronicle Herald*.  
<http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/1504190-infographic-n.s.-social-workers-sufferingburnout-ndp-says> Province of Nova Scotia (2019)
- How's Work Going? Report Nova Scotia Public Service Commission.  
<https://novascotia.ca/psc/employeeCentre/employeeSurvey/2019survey/2019- HWG-Dept-Community-Services.pdf>
- Raz, M. (2017). Unintended consequences of expanded mandatory reporting laws. *Pediatrics*, 139(4).
- Ross, N., Gilbert, R., Torres, S., Dugas, K., Jefferies, P., McDonald, S., Savage, S. & Ungar, M. (2020). Adverse childhood experiences: Assessing the impact on physical and psychosocial health in adulthood and the mitigating role of resilience. *Child Abuse and Neglect Journal*, 103, 104440.
- Saulnier C., (2020a) One step forward for low-waged workers in Halifax? Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. <https://behindthenumbers.ca/articles/one-step-forward-for-low-wagedworkers-in-halifax>

- Saulnier C., (2020b)) Nova Scotians made to wait for the trickle-down that will never come. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.  
<https://behindthenumbers.ca/2020/02/25/novascotians-made-to-wait-for-the-trickle-down-that-will-never-come>
- Saulnier, C. and Frank, L.(2019) "Unappreciated and underpaid" Early Childhood Educators in Nova Scotia. Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives – Nova Scotia Office.  
<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/early-childhood-educators-ns>  
Savoury, G, (2019)
- Review of the Effectiveness of New Brunswick’s Child Protection System. Government of New Brunswick.  
<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/sdds/pdf/Protection/Child/ReviewOfTheEffectivenessOfNewBrunswicksChildProtectionSystem.pdf>
- Shay, J. (2014). Moral injury. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 31(2), 182.
- Stall, N. M., Jones, A., Brown, K. A., Rochon, P. A., & Costa, A. P. (2020). For-profit long-term care homes and the risk of COVID-19 outbreaks and resident deaths. *CMAJ*, 192(33), E946- E955
- Stoughton, J. (2017). A Framing Analysis of News Discourse in the Case of Environmental Racism in Lincolntonville, Nova Scotia (Doctoral dissertation).
- Stratford, A. (2020). Black Lives Matter: Dismantling white supremacy in social work. Nova Scotia College of Social Workers. <https://nscsw.org/dismantling-white-supremacy/>
- Thompson, R (2015) Brief To The Law Amendments Committee On Bill 112, Amendments To The Children And Family Services Act. Nova Scotia Legislator,  
[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/62\\_2\\_LACSubmissions/2015116/2015116-112-015.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/62_2_LACSubmissions/2015116/2015116-112-015.pdf)
- Trocmé, N., Knoke, D., & Blackstock, C. (2004). Pathways to the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in Canada’s child welfare system. *Social Service Review*, 78(4), 577-600. Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. [http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)
- Van Dernoot, Lipsky, L. (2010). Trauma stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others. ReadHowYouWant.com
- Weinberg, M. (2009). Moral distress: A missing but relevant concept for ethics in social work. *Canadian Social Work Review/Revue canadienne de service social*, 139-151.
- Weinberg, M. (2020). The Absence of Racism As A Fundamental Concern In Ethics in Social Work. Nova Scotia College of Social Workers-Connection Magazine.  
<https://nscsw.org/news-events/connection-magazine/>
- Wilkinson, R., & Pickett, K. (2011). The spirit level: Why greater equality makes societies stronger. Bloomsbury Publishing USA. CFSA Submission
- Wortley, S,. (2019) Halifax, Nova Scotia: Street Checks Report. Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission.  
[https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/editoruploads/halifax\\_street\\_checks\\_report\\_march\\_2019\\_0.pdf](https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/editoruploads/halifax_street_checks_report_march_2019_0.pdf)