



COMMUNITY
SERVICES

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U-Turn – Specialized Residential Services (MCFD & NWT) Annual Program Report 2021-2022

About us

PLEA has a long history of providing residential care services to young people within family settings in the community. The success of these services is due to our strong commitment to providing care that is based on the unique strengths, abilities, needs, and circumstances of each youth that is placed with us.

Our U-Turn program provides family care placements, supported by our staff teams for youth who have experienced limited success in other residential programs and face significant challenges in their lives. Although the reasons for youth requiring placements vary widely, every youth is provided with a safe, nurturing, and healthy family environment, and with the specific services they require.

U-Turn placements are typically planned and are long-term (i.e., more than 12 months in duration). Young people are referred to U-Turn by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), the Department of Health and Social Services of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), and Aboriginal Delegated Authorities. We have families across Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley regions. We have been providing this service since 2003.

In collaboration with the referring authority and other service providers who are involved in supporting the young person and their families, we ensure that our services are consistently youth-centred, effective, and inclusive. For both programs we develop and implement comprehensive service plans with each young person that include their strengths, ideas, and interests, and are sensitive to their culture and life experiences. We work closely with the Family Caregivers we contract with, and value the significant time and energy they devote to providing for the day-to-day needs of the youth living with them. We have three teams who operate on an outreach model that maximizes direct engagement with the youth we serve, and ongoing support to our Family Caregivers. Our teams are based in Vancouver, the Tri-Cities and Surrey.

www.plea.ca

Who we served...

(Inclusive of NWT and MCFD. See Appendix 1 for a breakdown by funder).

PROFILE: NWT and MCFD	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18
# OF CASES	51	52	52	55	63
# OF YOUTH	51	52	51	55	61
% YOUNG WOMEN	31	35	35	35	35
% YOUNG MEN	57	63	61	63	65
% SELF IDENTIFIED AS TRANSGENDER	12	2	4	2	0
% SELF IDENTIFIED AS INDIGENOUS	61	65	65	60	60
AVERAGE AGE WHEN CASES WERE OPENED	13	13	15	14	14
AVERAGE # OF DAYS IN PROGRAM BY DISCHARGED CASES (N = NUMBER OF DISCHARGED CASES)	770 N=22	706 N=19	628 N=17	538 N=22	653 N=27

How we did...against last year's goals

- 1. Grow and expand the photography program and skillset of staff and participants in completing new projects for 2021-22. Specifically to maintain the existing projects that have been completed and to create new projects with new ideas.**

The photography program had another successful year as the cameras were regularly utilized by participants throughout the past year. Participants and staff have been utilizing the cameras while taking part in contests like the gingerbread house and pumpkin carving contests. This was the third successful photography contest with increased participant engagement and the winner's photos being displayed at the Waypoint/Fraser office in Surrey. Additionally, photos from previous year's winners continue to be displayed in the halls of the Waypoint/Fraser office. Other projects completed this past year included participant photos being used to complete holiday and appreciation cards as well as annual calendars. There was also a new contest this past year for best pictures to be used for welcoming and birthday cards.

- 2. Continue to develop a platform for participants transitioning to adulthood. Continuing to provide limited suites for youth to live semi-independently at eighteen and transition to a tenancy agreement at nineteen and remain living in the suite. Also, ensuring that all participants completed the Wayfinder aging out checklist before turning nineteen and aging out of care.**

This past year the agency continued with the Wayfinder program from a Vancity grant to help support youth transitioning from care. The Wayfinder program continued to provide two Adult Transition Workers (one male and one female) seven hours a week each to help support youth and young adults. Both Adult Transition Workers are from within the U-Turn program. The supports provided included but not limited to providing semi-independent suites for youth to live in while a resident within the U-Turn program and then transition to a tenancy agreement within the same suite once they turn nineteen, support with financial assistance and connecting to AYA, education, employment, and general life skill development. One youth who transitioned to a semi-independent suite last year remained in the suite after turning nineteen and continues to live there. Also, another youth transitioned to a semi-independent suite for six months to help

prepare to transition to independent living. Two youth remained in their existing placement after turning nineteen while transitioning to CLBC and the Folkstone program within PLEA. All youth preparing to transition to adulthood completed the Wayfinder aging out checklist before turning nineteen. By completing the Wayfinder checklist other youth were able to successfully transition to independent living in their own place before turning nineteen.

3. To continue to maintain the MCFD global contract at an average of thirty occupied beds for 2021-22.

While the MCFD global contract had another successful year the average number of occupied beds was just below thirty at 28.58 occupied beds for 2021-22. The capacity of the contract remained at 35 beds.

4. Continue to offer the Transition Program as an alternative to early repatriation or move to another program for suitable candidates turning nineteen years old.

The Transitions Program continued to grow and evolve based on the needs of participants. We welcomed 4 more participants to the program for a total of 8 young people receiving services. Some have graduated into the program while 2 new young people came into the program from the NWT.

5. To offer more individualized education and training programs that meet the needs of individual caregivers which can be completed during weekly visits or remotely. The Services Coordinators will continue to facilitate smaller Caregiver trainings to their Caregivers approximately two to four sessions in 2021-22.

Online sessions have been facilitated by Service Coordinator's to cover various topics such as Trauma Informed Practice and caregiver wellness. Caregivers have found the interaction to be a great learning tool as well as a sense of comfort as the experience is shared.

6. Expand the use of Knowledge Keepers and Elders specific to the Dene Culture to support the cultural and learning needs of NWT participants.

This past September PLEA welcomed a Knowledge Keeper/Elder in residence. Chuck Lafferty joined the agency and offered support and cultural connection to all programs throughout PLEA however initially was introduced to the various programs and client needs through U-Turn and Transitions programming.

Chuck has had a tremendous impact on service planning, access to community programming, 1-1 support for many NWT participants including support during a family visit for a young man during Christmas in his home community (NWT). Chuck started out in his role spending time with staff and participants to truly understand the needs and how he could offer support and guidance. He has since broadened his supports throughout the agency however still attends various Outdoor Clubs, On the Land activities and other cultural activities throughout all programs at PLEA.

The connections and positive influence of the role have enhanced programming, helped staff and caregivers maintain a cultural perspective and connection to various ceremonies.

The program also continues to host quarterly Zoom sessions with Elder Duncan Sangris who shares with the team, participants, and family caregivers' traditional hunts, on the land experiences and drumming. As many of our youth in the NWT program come from the same region as Duncan, it assists us in maintaining connection to culture, language, and land.

7. Continue to support annual events through the Multicultural Group to enhance understanding and inclusivity of all cultures.

Due to the impacts of COVID and the restrictions attached to community events like the Multi-Cultural group has been placed on hold. In team planning meetings, there are plans to reignite the programming by June 2022.

Selected accomplishments...

Proudest Moments of 2021-22

1. Working with a local video producer the U-Turn Program designed, recorded, and edited multiple high-quality music videos. Participants wrote and recorded their own songs, designed the backdrop for the video and assisted in editing the final product. We produced 4 separate videos that profiled individual songs as well as a “behind the scenes” video that highlighted each of the songs and how they were produced. We enjoyed an on-line video release party where staff, participants and caregivers watched the music videos created by our youth.
2. Family visits have always been a part of our programming and goals. This priority and service goal has been greatly impacted by COVID as the travel and quarantine restrictions made it difficult to facilitate visits for our NWT participants. However, planning has commenced for many, and we recently facilitated two family visits back to the NWT.

We facilitated and supported regular local visits with natural families for several of the youth in our programs.

3. U-Turn supported another three graduations from high school through the support of the U-Learn Instructors. One youth successfully made the honour roll during the fall semester.
4. Three youth successfully transitioned from the U-Turn program back to their biological families and one youth was successfully adopted.
5. Two siblings were able to be placed together after living apart in different programs for several years.
6. Transitioned one youth while living in a semi-independent suite and remaining in the suite when he turned nineteen moving to a tenancy agreement. Also, one other youth lived in a semi-independent suite for six months before transitioning to independent living.
7. Our MCFD global contract was maintained at almost 29 beds for most of 2021-22. 26 referral calls took place this year as the U-Turn MCFD Global continued to be a program of preference for funders.
8. The U-Turn program continued to provide a U-Learn Instructor for individual’s needing academic support and planning. This is a valuable support to the program as many youth are very close to or are on schedule to graduate. 48 youth have been served including 18 from other programs (ONYX, Lighthouse, U-Link, Next Step and Genesis). While graduation is the goal of attending school not all youth are eligible to graduate while in the program. The support of the U-Learn Instructors allows many youth to be on track and have the opportunity to graduate after transitioning from the U-Turn program. While in the U-Turn program the

U-Learn Instructors can work with the schools and ensure a suitable education plan is developed that will allow the youth the best opportunity to be academically successful.

9. Increased use of the cameras through the photography program as many youth are finding their passion for photography and developing a skillset for taking photos.
10. Continued to utilize community supports such as Behavioural Interventionists and Occupational Therapists for expertise on Behavioural strategies that can best support clients with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) that assist in more successful service planning and specific support to the care team.
11. U-Turn youth participated in a new pumpkin carving contest in celebration of Halloween. Multiple youth carved pumpkins and submitted photographs of their creations. Prizes were awarded for most creative, scariest, and funniest pumpkins.

Selected stories¹...

1. We recently were able to facilitate a family visit with two participants (siblings) in Yellowknife. They spent time with extended family members and experienced the tail end of winter and a family dinner hosted by their caregiver. These few days spent with family and other supports in the community were missed last year due to the pandemic and this trip was a very welcomed connection for the family. This visit was a resounding success for the siblings but moreover it demonstrated to commitment from our caregiver who accompanied the youth and supported them.
2. Eva joined the U-Turn program shortly after her 18th birthday. She was living with mental health issues that had a significant impact on her well-being and functioning. She frequently expressed that she felt suicidal and had made multiple threats and attempts on her own life. The primary goal for her time in our care was to prepare for successful independence. She did not feel ready for independence and advised our team that “when we talk about aging out, it makes me want to kill myself”. Our team was especially gentle with Eva when taking steps to prepare for applying for funding, accessing assessments, lining up care options, finding an apartment, and safeguarding her living space. It was a highly collaborative venture with Eva’s PLEA team, her social worker’s team, and her biological family. Eva successfully moved into her own home. She grew to enjoy her own independent space and she has been successful in taking care of herself. Eva had developed a strong desire to complete her education and is working towards graduation in 2022. She continues to maintain strong connections with her supports and reaches out when she needs help. Eva overcame so many obstacles in the year she was with us. We are so proud of her efforts.
3. Ryan had a successful placement in the U-Turn program for eleven months before he was successfully adopted. Ryan developed a positive safe supportive relationship with his caregiver that allowed him to connect with all of his community supports on a regular basis. Ryan developed positive relationships with his Youth Support Workers who helped him to regularly attend school and engage in age-appropriate community activities like playing basketball. The care team including all of Ryan’s supports within the U-Turn program helped Ryan develop a profile that allowed him to be adopted. While the plan was always for Ryan to be adopted the program and care team helped Ryan maintain positive relationships and visits with his family. Once a suitable potential adoptive placement was located the program helped support with the transition leading to a successful adoptive placement. After Ryan was moved to his adoptive placement the

¹ Names have been changed to protect client privacy and confidentiality.

worker who supported the move describes it as one of his best working days ever.

Feedback from Participants and Stakeholders...

From Youth:

1. "Attention and care helped change my life"
2. "It's improving my behaviour and my placement is working well"
3. "PLEA has impacted my (sic) in a major way and for the better. I feel I have become a better individual...while being with PLEA"

From Caregivers:

4. "I feel very supported by my SC. She continually listens to me and actively supports what our needs are. She makes herself available as needed or is prompt in letting me know that she is busy with another youth. I appreciate that she supports what I need and advocates for me."

From External Stakeholders:

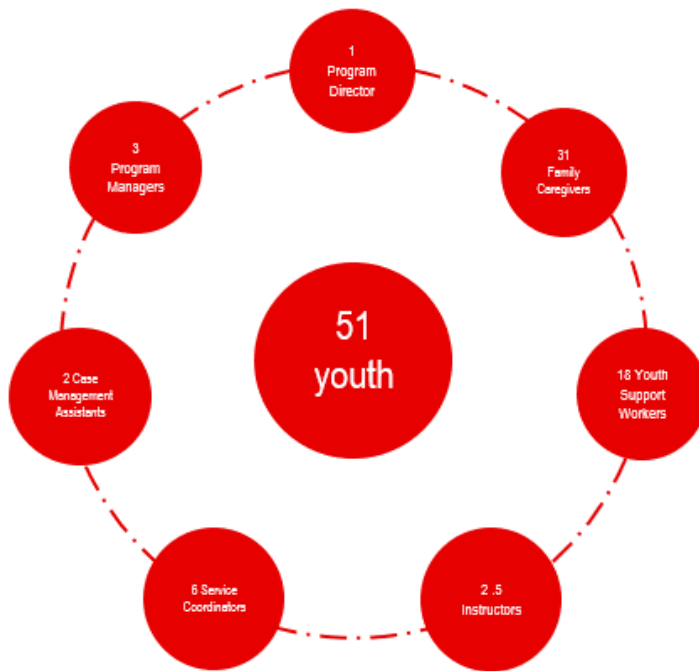
5. "I really like that the caregivers are supported and that the expectations and realities of working with youth are consistent with the caregivers. PLEA does an excellent job of supporting goals for the youth."
6. "PLEA staff have continued to show there (sic) flexibility and commitment when working with extremely vulnerable youth."

Data was gathered from the 2022 Participant, Stakeholder, and Caregiver Survey.

Biggest challenges...

1. Working through a Global Pandemic while trying to maintain the interactive and creative programming that keeps our participants engaged.
2. Being able to offer the right caregiver and home for very complex youth coming from the Northwest Territories. Some of the referrals that we have received from the NWT are often beyond the scope and capacity of the U-Turn program.
3. Finding and approving new Caregivers.
4. Limited available homes that can provide successful placements for youth with autism.
5. Limited available housing for youth transitioning to adulthood.
6. Increased challenges in managing Youth Support Worker staffing levels, both in regular full time and in casual support. These challenges were due to staffing illnesses. Majority of new applicants for casual and temporary Youth Support worker positions were underqualified for the role and lacked direct experience with youth. In addition, significant delays in HUB approvals lost potential new staff to other employers.

Our team...staffing²



Our team...learning undertaken

- LivingWorks Suicide Prevention Training
- Trauma Informed Practice
- Vicarious Trauma Training - Strategies for Resilience
- Train the Trainer – Naloxone Training
- Attachment Training for the YSW team
- San’yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training
- Indigenous Canada online training through the University of Alberta
- FASD Staff Training
- Mandt De-escalation
- Caring about Food Safety
- First Aid
- Privacy and Information Sharing
- Human Trafficking Awareness
- Medical Assistance Training
- CTRI Depression Practical Intervention Strategies
- CTRI Trauma Strategies
- Communicable Diseases
- Cyber Strategies
- Respectful workplace

² # of individuals as opposed to FTEs as per March 31st, 2020

- Thinking about Children & Attachment
- Building a Resilient Brain in the Face of Adverse Childhood Experiences with Dr. Chuck Geddes
- Renting it Right (Parts 1 & 2)
- Road Safety at work
- ADHD The Real Deal Seminar
- Alex Howard's Three Core Emotional Needs
- Hilary Jacob, Emotional Education
- Dr. Arielle Schwarts, Becoming Free From Dissociation
- Dr. Nzinga Harrison, Comprehensive, compassionate approach to treating addiction
- Dr. Gabor Mate, The Five Levels of compassion
- Fentanyl Awareness
- Naloxone Training

PLEA supported educational development:

- Bachelor's degree in Social Work
- 1 staff working towards their Masters Degree – Clinical Counselling
- 1 staff completing Bachelor of Arts in CYCC
- UBC Continuing Studies
- Provided practicums to MSW, BACYC and BA Criminology students

Our team...new and ongoing relationships

- Peter Jong – Aboriginal Elder and Carver
- Duncan Sangris - Dene Knowledge Keeper
- Asante Centre – Assessment Centre
- Little Buddies Occupational Therapy
- Happy Herd Animal Rescue
- Paranoyd Music Studios
- Friendly Landlord Network – Aunt Leah's
- Spirit of the Children – Support Programs
- WorkBC
- Triangle Employment Programs
- Elizabeth McWilliams- Hewitt – Behavioural Consultant
- Partnership training – PLEA and Foster Family Coalition of the NWT
- Ears Forward Coaching- Equine Therapy
- Charmaine Hammond- Professional presenter and trainer

Next year's goals...

1. Continue to provide opportunities for participants transitioning to adulthood ensuring that the aging out checklist is being completed and supporting to locate appropriate housing.
2. To maintain the MCFD global contract at an average of thirty occupied beds for 2022-23.
3. Expand the photography program and skillset of staff and participants in completing new projects for 2022-

23. Specifically creating new ideas for new projects.
4. To provide specific autism training to all staff and recruit at least one caregiver who can provide a specialized placement for youth with autism.
5. To secure increased annual funding for the U-Learn program by applying for community grants.
6. Expand the use of Knowledge Keepers and Elders specific to the Dene Culture to support the cultural and learning needs of NWT participants.
7. Continue to support annual events through the Multicultural Group that enhance understanding and inclusivity of all cultures.

For more information...

Contact Tina Tomyk, Program Director at 604-616-1057 or email ttomyk@plea.bc.ca

Appendix – U-Turn By Funder

PROFILE: MCFD	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
# OF CASES	43	42	40	40	40	47
# OF YOUTH	43	42	40	40	39	46
% YOUNG WOMEN	30	31	35	33	25	26
% YOUNG MEN	58	62	60	65	75	70
% SELF IDENTIFIED AS TRANSGENDER	12	7	5	2	0	4
% SELF IDENTIFIED AS INDIGENOUS	53	57	55	43	38	38
AVERAGE AGE WHEN CASES WERE OPENED	13	13	15	15	14	15
AVERAGE # OF DAYS IN PROGRAM BY DISCHARGED CASES (N = NUMBER OF DISCHARGED CASES)	731 N=18	486 N=15	501 N=14	614 N=16	411 N=18	386 N=21

PROFILE: NWT	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
# OF CASES	8	9	15	14	22	19
# OF YOUTH	8	9	11	14	21	19
% YOUNG WOMEN	38	33	36	50	55	53
% YOUNG MEN	50	56	64	50	45	42
% SELF IDENTIFIED AS TRANSGENDER	12	11	0	0	0	5
% SELF IDENTIFIED AS INDIGENOUS	100	100	100	100	100	100
AVERAGE AGE WHEN CASES WERE OPENED	11	11	11	15	15	14
AVERAGE # OF DAYS IN PROGRAM BY DISCHARGED CASES (N = NUMBER OF DISCHARGED CASES)	947 N=4	1305 N=3	1222 N=3	1113 N=4	1139 N=9	488 N=1

PROFILE: U-LEARN	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
# OF CASES	81	71	70	68	72	67
# OF YOUTH	79	69	64	62	65	64
% YOUNG WOMEN	33	29	30	31	29	37
% YOUNG MEN	61	65	67	69	70	63
% SELF IDENTIFIED AS TRANSGENDER	6	6	3	0	1	0
% SELF IDENTIFIED AS INDIGENOUS	6	70	67	71	72	70
AVERAGE AGE WHEN CASES WERE OPENED	18	17	17	17	17	17
AVERAGE # OF DAYS IN PROGRAM BY DISCHARGED CASES (N = NUMBER OF DISCHARGED CASES)	931 N=34	428 N=13	293 N=22	512 N=23	484 N=30	235 N=24