



see what's possible...

KidStart 6-12's Annual Program Report 2025-26

About us

KidStart is a one-to-one volunteer mentoring program for children and youth who are at risk of experiencing serious difficulties in their lives. Our goals are to provide each participant with opportunities to develop a supportive relationship with a caring adult, to experience a sense of personal achievement, and to strengthen their resilience. We recruit, select, and support volunteer mentors who are consistent and positive role models. They meet weekly with the child or youth they are assigned to and engage them in a variety of community activities that are fun and have the potential to create new interests, discover inherent talents and abilities, and reinforce strengths.

KidStart is fundamentally preventive, rooted in the belief and supported by research – that early engagement with an adult mentor improves participants' capacity to overcome adversity and become more active and involved in their communities. KidStart's success is due to the outstanding commitment that our volunteers make to the program and the power of positive and meaningful relationships.

Volunteers are selected based on their demonstrated ability to accept young people unconditionally, develop caring relationships with them based on mutual trust, and model respectful attitudes and behavior. We require every volunteer to make a one-year commitment to KidStart. Our Coordinators provide all our mentors with ongoing support, supervision and learning opportunities to ensure that the objectives of the program are consistently met, and that mentors are recognized for their contributions.

PLEA has been providing service through KidStart for 40 years. It has been approved for police diversion referrals by the Vancouver Police Department since 2004.

This report focuses on the KidStart 6-12's program which is provided throughout Metro Vancouver. It is funded by PLEA's generous donors, grants, and gaming revenue. All children are eligible; referrals come from parents or guardians, family members, teachers, school counsellors, community workers, social workers, police, and others. We also receive funding from Family Services of Greater Vancouver (FSGV) who contract with us to refer children whose families are accessing their family counselling services.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) contracts with us in the Vancouver Coastal Region to refer youth aged 12-17 who are on probation, are diverted from court, or who may be transitioning from other PLEA youth justice programs; and in the Tri-Cities and Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows to refer youth who are 13 to 18 years old, and identified by their social workers, probation officers or others as being in need of a mentor. Through our program Kinnections we have extended the benefits of KidStart to older youth who are transitioning

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to independence from MCFD guardianship or are currently on a Youth Agreement. We are providing this contracted service in Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows.

Through our partnerships with John Howard Society of North Island and the John Howard Society of Victoria, the program has been successfully replicated in Campbell River, Courtenay, Comox and Victoria.

Who we served...

Overall

Profile	2025-26	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
# of cases ¹	135	103	105	110
# of children served	126	96	96	99
% female	67	67	78	68
% male	32	32	21	30
% self-identified as transgender	1	1	1	2
% self-identified as Indigenous	23	24	26	25
Average age when cases were opened	10	10	11	11

FSGV

Profile	2025-26	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
# of cases ²	11	15	10	12
# of children served	11	14	10	11
% female	55	71	90	50
% male	36	29	10	50
% self-identified as transgender	9	0	0	0
% self-identified as Indigenous	18	36	50	17
Average age when cases were opened	10	9	8	8

How we did...service delivery

Overall

Profile	2025-26	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
Average monthly caseload	84	68	63	70
Average # of days in program by discharged cases (N = discharged cases)	550 (N=31)	380 (N=35)	406 (N=47)	595 (N=52)
Average # of days wait (for opened cases) N = opened cases	220 (N=64)	246 (N=46)	193 (N=47)	289 (N=40)
# of volunteers	129	92	91	101

¹ # of cases can be greater than the # children because some children were re-referred

² # of cases can be greater than the # children because some children were re-referred

# of total volunteer hours ³	4156	3774	5598	5276
% of relationships lasting > 1 year	72	54	51	48

The program saw an increase in caseload due to an increase in new applicants. Volunteer hours increased this year as a result as well. The program supported its first self-identified transgender participants since the program's inception, while the number of females and males served remained unchanged.

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

1. Offer 2 new training opportunities for volunteers centered around volunteer needs and topics of interest (i.e.: cultural training).

COMPLETED: In June we welcomed Westcoast Family Centers, who facilitated a TRC Talking Circle with volunteers. We had some great conversations about offering cultural connections to our Indigenous mentees. Great resources were provided, and mentors were also encouraged to connect with PLEA's Knowledge Keeper for any follow up support. In February we hosted Stigma Free Mental Health to equip mentors with the knowledge and resources to navigate conversations around mental health, wellbeing, and life challenges.

2. To implement outcomes measurement tools to better reflect impact on the quality of service we provide to our participants.

IN PROGRESS: The program created outcome measurement questions for mentors and mentees and their families that were tailored to the programs 'Theory of Change'. The program is in the process of implementing these questions on our case management system and will start the process of collecting data in the new fiscal year.

3. Explore the possibility of a new way of delivering our annual hamper campaign to provide families with some necessities and include gift cards for food as an alternative. Increased feedback from families includes being more culturally inclusive with food preferences and acknowledging food sensitivities.

COMPLETED: KidStart successfully updated its annual hamper campaign to better respond to observed family needs related to cultural food preferences and food sensitivities. This year, each hamper included a \$50 grocery gift card—representing a 100% increase from previous years—alongside essential food items. The overall value of each hamper shifted from \$125, previously comprised of \$100 in food and a \$25 gift card, to \$100 in food and a \$50 gift card.

The inclusion of gift cards is intended to enable families to supplement their hampers with fresh produce and other perishable items according to their needs. Families were able to select a gift card from one of three grocery retailers—Save-On-Foods, Canadian Superstore, or T&T Supermarket—all of which have a strong presence across KidStart's service delivery area and combined offer a range of pricing options and culturally diverse food selections. This updated approach increased flexibility for families, improved geographic accessibility, and supported more inclusive access to food while maintaining the provision of core essential items through the hamper program.

4. KidStart and PLEA's Communications and Development staff to complete yearly calendar of social media posts for Instagram and Facebook posts. Teams will work together to design new templates, add more live stories, and information on training, events, FAQs, and benefits of volunteering to enhance awareness of the program and recruit more volunteers.

COMPLETED: The KidStart and Communications and Development Team monthly to discuss new posts and activities happening in the month to highlight. Posts include spotlights on mentors and donors, activities for mentors

³ While the program has historically assumed that volunteer hours are under reported due to the voluntary nature of self-reporting and the fact that the reporting process is not as easy or intuitive as it ideally would be, current data indicates an average of approximately one hour per week per volunteer, compared to an expected two hours. This variance may reflect reporting gaps, under delivery of volunteer hours, or a combination of both, and will be examined further

and mentees to attend in different communities and information about ongoing initiatives taking place in the program. The team has seen this monthly engagement as valuable in continuing to keep on top of social media as a tool to raise awareness about the program. It resulted in net increase of 178 new followers across Facebook and Instagram, with the vast majority following our newer Instagram page. This is compared to a net increase of 11 the previous year.

5. Recruit a new Fund Development Specialist and secure \$456,952 in fundraising revenue

PARTIALLY COMPLETED: KidStart successfully recruited and onboarded a new Fund Development Specialist in June 2025, following the resignation of the previous postholder in March 2025. However, the program did not meet its fundraising revenue target for the year. This shortfall was largely attributable to a \$100,000 reduction in funding from a long-standing funder that revised its funding approach during the reporting period. KidStart did not apply for funding from this source during the year.

This outcome reinforced the importance of continuing to diversify and strengthen KidStart's fundraising base. Since then, KidStart has submitted an application to this funder's revised grant program.

6. Add an additional event into KidStart's calendar that brings together KidStart's volunteer mentors, mentees and their families, donors and others who support or are in some way connected to the program. The aim is to build community and connection around and within the program.

IN PROGRESS: Plans are underway for KidStart's 1st annual summer BBQ, a much-anticipated gathering that will bring together donors, volunteer mentors, mentees and their families, and other supporters connected to the program. The event will celebrate the KidStart community and create opportunities for connection, relationship-building, and shared enjoyment.

Selected accomplishments...

1. This past holiday season, 58 children and their families were supported through the delivery of food hampers, helping address essential food needs during a period of heightened demand. With an increased fundraising target, the combined generosity of long-time donors and new supporters enabled us to meet this challenge and secure critical funding. We also welcomed many new hamper volunteers, their kindness, donation of their time and enthusiasm was priceless.

Every hamper included a toy or gift for each child and youth in the family, helping to ensure the holiday season included moments of joy and celebration. KidStart extends sincere thanks to the companies, organizations, and schools that organized toy drives in support of this initiative, including: Accenture, John B Neighborhood Pub, Douglas College, Arthur Murray Dance Studio Vancouver, Little Luna Crochet, Accenture, Sequeira (Edmonton and Vancouver), Westside Montessori Academy, Athena Marine Safety and Security, and The Giving Truck in collaboration with Fit Integrated.

2. Another highlight of our year was watching 77 children and youth head off to spring and summer camps they might not otherwise have been able to experience. Thanks to our Camp Fund, young people in our program, and many others across our community, were able to choose the camp that spoke to them—whether that meant sports, arts, science, nature, leadership, or simply the chance to try something completely new.

Some spent their days learning guitar, cooking in professional kitchens, or designing clothing. Others were out on the field playing basketball, volleyball, or ultimate frisbee. Many explored the outdoors through horseback riding, wilderness skills, and nature-based programs. We also supported youth attending leadership retreats, Indigenous cultural camps, and accessible camps for children with disabilities.

We capped off the season with a special day at the PNE, where 32 mentees and their mentors spent time together at Playland, laughing, riding coasters, and building relationships outside of camp settings.

3. Group activities held for mentors and mentees continued to receive high numbers of participants attending. Training and Roundtables hosted by Volunteer Coordinators also saw the most mentors attending sessions. Trainings included: Trauma Informed Boundaries, Stigma Free Meath Health and Cultural training. Roundtables held virtually included all KidStart program mentors. Opening this session to all has helped build relationships, and conversations on issues all mentors are currently facing, or have questions about. Volunteer Coordinators take turns hosting these sessions with great results and feedback!
4. In July, we welcomed 42 volunteers and their guests to a night of 'High Fives and Good Vibes' at the Rec Room, Brentwood. Every year we host our volunteers to thank them for giving their time to the mentees they are matched with. We also celebrate those who have been with the program for 2, 5 and 10 years. This year was even more special as we're celebrating 40 years of helping vulnerable children to grow and thrive. The event was sponsored by Nucleus Networks, the Rec Room, who discounted the room rental, and Indio and Shape, who donated four hours of free parking to our guests.

Selected stories...⁴

The children we work with experience big and small successes. The following illustrate the kind of growth and development that can occur for children with the support and guidance of their mentors.

- Before eleven-year-old Sean met his mentor, he was struggling with anxiety, social connection and access to opportunities. Sean is the youngest of 4 boys and lost his sister in 2022. Coming from a single-parent household, Sean's mother has been trying to provide as best as possible for her sons while also struggling with grief and her own mental health. Since connecting to his KidStart Mentor, Sean has tried many new experiences, including going to his first BC Lions game and trying Karate classes! Sean has started opening up to his mentor, sharing his experience of being bullied at school. While out with his mentor, Sean leans on him for support and can focus on having fun and just being a kid! He regularly shares his love of animals, art, and movies with his mentor. With the support of his mentor, Sean continues to develop his resilience and self-confidence.
- Eleven-year-old Aiden was struggling in his home environment, having been exposed to ongoing family conflict and often feeling caught in the middle. These challenges impacted his relationships at home and his ability to navigate boundaries in a positive way. It was identified that Aiden would benefit from having a consistent and positive male role model in his life. Aiden has been matched with his KidStart mentor for 4 years and is 15 years old now. Over time, they have built a strong and supportive relationship. Together, they enjoy spending time in the community, going for walks, bike riding, and trying new things like bubble tea. Through this connection, Aiden has become much more open and talkative, often sharing stories about his life and experiences. Recently, Aiden has been doing well in school and takes pride in his achievements, particularly in math and science. He has started thinking about his future and enjoys discussing different career paths with his mentor. Over time, Aiden has shown meaningful growth in his confidence, communication, and ability to manage challenges at home. The consistency of his mentor and the support around him have helped Aiden build stronger relationships and develop a more positive sense of self.
- 12-year-old Tania was struggling at school with some significant behavior issues, which seemed to stem from a lack of positive one-on-one attention. Her mentor was a bit nervous due to the reported behavioral issues, but wanted to give the match a chance, and they developed a wonderful relationship. Tania responds so well to her mentor and thrives in a one-to-one setting. They regularly play sports, go to the pool, or find a neat community event to attend. Tania's mentor reports that she is a pleasure to spend time with and at the end of

⁴ Names have been changed to protect mentee privacy and confidentiality

the day, is just a kid who wants to have fun. And that's exactly what they're doing!

Feedback from KidStart Families and Mentors

- "I must say, having a big buddy is a positive influence in my daughter's life. Thank you once again." (Mentee's mother)
- "Thank you again for helping to send the kids to camp I can't begin to tell you how needed this will be for the kids. This means so much." (Mentee's mother)
- "My daughter has made such a great connection with her mentor. We are very grateful." (Mentee's family)
- "After I picked her up, she pulled out a Valentine's Day card for me. I would be lying if I didn't tell you I almost teared up. She picked a Hanna Montana-themed card that said "Even when you're a big dork like me, you gotta luck out sometimes. I sure did when I met you!", and she signed my name and her name at the top. I feel so grateful to have this experience! I was thinking back to the first year as a mentor and how hard some moments were for me, but now I know it is all worth it." (KidStart mentor)

Biggest challenges...

1. The program experienced ongoing staffing shifts throughout the year as a result of personnel leaves, resignations, and staff transitions within the broader agency. As new staff joined the program, time and resources were required for training, onboarding, and ongoing mentoring, as well as for establishing relationships with donors, mentors, mentees, and their families.

Despite these changes, the program continued to support all caseloads and prioritized continuity of service. Efforts were made to ensure smooth transitions for families and volunteers while working toward greater staffing stability. Likewise, grant applications and appeals continued to be submitted and managed during this period, supported by interim fundraising capacity and the gradual transition of responsibilities to newly onboarded staff.

2. The program saw a trend of referrals from professionals for participants with complex mental health. Some referrals received were not appropriate and were redirected back to referring professionals with suggested resources. In some cases, referrals were made by professionals for a participant, however the family was not in agreement with the referral and declined support. More education on appropriate referrals will be addressed with professionals when referrals take place moving forward to ensure all are in agreement.
3. Fundraising efforts continue to be affected by broader economic conditions that are impacting government, foundations, corporations, and individual donors alike. Increased competition for limited funding, shifting funder priorities, and rising demand for services across the nonprofit sector have contributed to a more competitive and unpredictable fundraising environment. These dynamics require greater effort to sustain existing funding levels while also identifying new opportunities, underscoring the importance of long-term donor stewardship, diversification of revenue sources, and adaptability in fundraising strategies.

Our team...



Learning undertaken...

Volunteer Mentors:

- Trauma Informed Boundaries Training
- Keeping Kids Safe Online
- LivingWorks Suicide Prevention Training
- First Aid training
- MCFD Privacy Training
- Stigma Free Training
- Cultural Trainings
- Roundtable Meetings
- Truth and Reconciliation Talking Circle

Volunteer Coordinators:

- Cyber Security
- Domestic Violence in the Workplace
- Respectful Workplace
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Preventing Communicable Diseases
- Gender Diversity and Human Trafficking
- PLEA Youth Outreach training
- Path Cultural Competency Training
- Naloxone Certification
- Volunteer Retention Webinar
- Positive Behavioral Support
- Anxiety in Children and Youth - Practical Intervention Strategies

- Response Based Practice
- Navigating Difficult Conversations
- First Aid training
- Mandt Training
- Addiction Treatment: Clinical Skills for Healthcare Providers

Fundraising Specialist:

- Recalibrate Your Events to Fuel Year-Round Fundraising - Chad Barger
- How to Keep All Those Donors You Worked So Hard to Get - Chad Barger
- Optimizing Your Website for Donations – CanadaHelps
- Using Data to Boost Year-End Giving - Denis Romanov (Digital Specialist at CanadaHelps)
- Marketing your Monthly Giving Program – Chad Barger
- Leveraging AI for Nonprofits: Readiness, Risks, and Real-World Action – Stanford Social Innovation Review
- Monthly Giving: Your Nonprofit Sustainability Plan – Chad Barger
- Sector Signals: The Trends Shaping the Sector in 2026 – The Imagine Canada Team
- Build a Nonprofit Fundraising Plan - T. Clay Buck

New relationships...

We welcomed Eldorado Gold Corporation into our giving family this year. In addition to recognizing new contributions, we are deeply grateful for the continued support of our long-term donors, whose enduring commitment remains a cornerstone of the program's success:

- Advantage Box Co. Ltd.
- Ames Family Foundation
- Andrew Mahon Foundation
- BC Gaming Commission
- CKNW Kids' Fund
- CIBC
- Dayhu Family Foundation
- Eddie's Hang-up Display Ltd
- Fraser Valley Realtors Charitable Foundation
- Gordon Fund for Children, held at the Vancouver Foundation
- Hamber Foundation
- John B Neighbourhood Pub
- Little Luna Crochet
- Loyal Protestant Association
- Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General
- Nucleus Networks
- Phylliss & Irving Snider Foundation
- RCABC Guarantee Corp
- Radius Group
- Reay & Linda Mackay Fund, held at the Fiera Capital Foundation
- Stewart Fund (held at the Vancouver Foundation)
- Trinity United Church Women

Our sincere appreciation extends to the many individual donors who are at the heart of our community. While space does not permit acknowledging each supporter by name, their collective generosity is essential to sustaining KidStart's programs and the families they serve. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to our monthly donors, including members of our staff, whose continued commitment reflects a deep belief in KidStart's mission. Their consistent, month-to-month support provides vital stability and plays a significant role in sustaining the organization's work throughout the year.

Next year's goals...

1. Increase inclusivity and accessibility for mentee families whose primary language is not English by translating KidStart's Letter of Permission and Family Guide into Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), Tagalog, Farsi, Punjabi, and Spanish.
2. Host a Summer BBQ for donors, mentors, mentees, and their families to celebrate mentorship, build connections across the program, and increase awareness of KidStart's work.

3. Secure \$450,437 in fundraising revenue, primarily through grants and corporate partnerships, while increasing sustainable, recurring support through expanded individual and monthly giving.
4. Begin systematic outcomes data collection for mentors, mentees, and families using the KidStart Outcomes Measurement framework to assess program effectiveness, efficiency, quality, satisfaction, and accessibility in relation to program goals.
5. Provide Duty to Report training to all volunteer mentors to support appropriate handling of disclosures and ensure consistent reporting practices.

For more information...

For programming contact Camila Jimenez, Program Manager, at 604-764-0293 or email cjimenez@plea.bc.ca.

For fundraising contact Shelina Jamani, Fund Development Specialist at 604-364-3076 or email sjamani@plea.bc.ca.