



Child & Youth Advocacy Centres of Canada

Centres d'appui aux enfants et aux
adolescents du Canada

**STRATEGIC PLAN
2025-2027**

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Message from our Co-Chairs

Child and Youth Advocacy Centres (CYACs) have fundamentally transformed how we respond to child abuse in Canada. Our collaborative, integrated, and multi-disciplinary approach has proven to be the most effective way to support children, youth, families, and communities. Together, the more than 40 CYACs across our country help more than 10,000 children and families every year, providing them with the specialized, compassionate support they need to heal¹.

While the impact of CYACs is undeniable and we have so much to be proud of, there is a lot yet to accomplish. One-in-three children in Canada are likely to experience some form of abuse by the time they reach the age of 15²—this stark reality alongside the known effects of child abuse on health, social, and economic outcomes highlight the urgent need for coordinated action through a unified national strategy. As **Child & Youth Advocacy Centres of Canada (CYACC)**, we are answering that call—with conviction, commitment, and a shared sense of responsibility.

CYACC's 2025-2027 Strategic Plan is a comprehensive roadmap that represents the shared vision of CYACs from across the country and sets a bold course for CYACC as we enter the first phase of our collective mandate. Our Vision and Mission clearly define CYACC's role in supporting members as they advocate for children and youth, while our objectives and strategic initiatives outline the critical goals we will achieve together. It's a blueprint that highlights our commitment to supporting child and youth advocacy centres—and all those they serve.

This plan is more than a framework; it is a call to action. It provides the foundation upon which we will transform our collective goals into meaningful, tangible results that will benefit children, youth, and families across Canada. It is designed to be flexible, adapting as challenges and opportunities arise. Through collaboration, resource sharing, and mutual support, CYACC and its partners will strengthen the advocacy efforts that protect vulnerable children and youth who have experienced abuse.

We want to thank all those who have contributed to the development of this inaugural Strategic Plan, and we want to express our deep gratitude to Department of Justice Canada for their ongoing support and partnership, and for the invaluable expertise they continue to provide as we advance this important work.

We are energized and ready to embark on this journey on behalf of, and in collaboration with CYACs across Canada. Together, we will harness the full potential of collaboration to create lasting, positive change.

Karen Orser and Leah Zille
Co-Chairs of the Board of Directors
Child & Youth Advocacy Centres of Canada

¹ Results from the 2022-2023 Child Advocacy Centre/Child and Youth Advocacy Centre National Operational Survey. Stumpf, Bianca. Department of Justice Canada. January 2024

² Child abuse prevalence estimates in Canada; comparisons of nationally representative data from 2012 to 2022: a population-based study. Afifi, Tracie O. et al. The Lancet Regional Health – Americas, Volume 45, 101072

Our Vision

All children and youth impacted by abuse in Canada have access to the services and supports provided by a CYAC model that are of the highest quality and aligned with evidence-informed best practice.

Our Mission

To be relentless champions for children and youth through our support of all Canadian CYACs. Our focus is on raising awareness, increasing capacity, and advancing sustainability nationally.

Our Commitment

The long-term success of CYACs across Canada depends on their leadership as recognized experts in advocating for, and delivering coordinated, comprehensive services and support for child and youth victims and their families.

CYACC is committed to helping them reach this potential by:

- **Serving as a national voice** to unify and amplify the impact of CYACs by influencing decision-makers, and promoting the CYAC model and its role in intervention and support.
- **Advancing collaboration and partnerships** by connecting CYACs with national and regional partners to enhance service delivery, advocacy efforts, and resource sharing.
- **Elevating consistent, high-quality practices** by promoting national guidelines, exploring quality standards and accreditation, and collaborating with *Kindex – the Research and Knowledge Centre of Child and Youth Advocacy Centres in Canada*, to strengthen research and evidence-informed approaches.
- **Building a strong, engaged membership** through peer-to-peer connections, knowledge exchange and access to tools and resources that help CYACs strengthen their impact.

CYACC will be recognized as a vital partner and advocate, ensuring CYACs have the resources, partnerships, and support they need to make a lasting impact. Through our work, we will strengthen the ability of CYACs to provide services and ongoing support for children, youth, and families impacted by abuse.

Guiding Principles

Child & Youth Advocacy Centers of Canada will:

1. Maintain national focus on supporting CYACs and promoting the CYAC model.

2. Be a thought leader – a recognized authority in the field whose expertise and insights shape dialogue and action – and trusted source of information, best practices, and resources that build capacity and improve outcomes for children, youth and families impacted by abuse.
3. Promote trauma-informed and culturally safe approaches in all efforts to support CYACs.
4. Foster respect for the independence and contributions of its members, staff, volunteers, partners and funders.
5. Be accountable and transparent in sound governance, financial stewardship, member value, partnerships and communication.
6. Provide practical and adaptable support to elevate and strengthen CYACs in their work.
7. Foster connections and collaboration among CYACs, provincial and regional CYAC networks, and key stakeholders to expand a national collective impact.
8. Commit to Truth and Reconciliation by acknowledging the historical and ongoing colonial impacts on First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples working to minimize harm.

Key Assumptions for Success

The following key assumptions provide the foundation for CYACC’s early strategic priorities and long-term success. These assumptions reflect our commitment to supporting CYACs, ensuring member engagement, securing sustainable funding, and evolving our association to best serve our members.

Guiding assumptions:

1. CYACC exists to strengthen the work of individual CYACs. We will provide national-level support, be a national voice, and advocate for policies and approaches that benefit all members, while ensuring that CYACs and their regional and provincial networks maintain their autonomy to meet the unique needs of their communities.
2. CYACC will ensure strong member engagement through advisory committees, regional representation, and ongoing consultation. We are committed to an inclusive approach where all CYACs—regardless of size, location or resources—have a voice in shaping national priorities.
3. Most existing CYACs will join CYACC as members, and CYACC will provide opportunities for knowledge translation and exchange, idea generation, problem solving and peer support.

Operational assumptions:

4. CYACC will be funded primarily by the *Department of Justice Canada* in 2025–2026. At the same time, we will begin identifying additional and complementary sources of funding to support long-term financial sustainability and ensure we can continue to meet the evolving needs of our members.
5. By the end of 2026–2027, most services currently available to network members will be consolidated under CYACC.
6. CYACC will collaborate with Kindex, to strengthen CYACs through research, advocacy, knowledge mobilization, capacity building efforts and the development of best practices.

Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority 1: Strengthen the national network of CYACs

CYACC will build upon the strong foundation of existing provincial, regional and national CYAC networks to foster collaboration, increase member value and amplify the impact of CYACs across the country.

As the national voice for CYACs, CYACC will elevate the collective profile of CYACs and the CYAC model, advocate for their needs, and support their critical work. By engaging federal decision-makers, and key partners and stakeholders, we will help CYACs enhance their reach, consistency and sustainability of the high-quality services and supports they provide to children, youth and their families – while delivering meaningful value to members.

CYACC will work with partners such as *Boost Child & Youth Advocacy Centre* and *Kindex* to assess and enhance existing resources available to CYACs, including the national meeting, quarterly network calls, and knowledge mobilization activities. Over the next three years we will begin to consolidate many of these supports under the CYACC umbrella to streamline access and better align with member needs.

We will also collaborate with *Kindex* to evaluate current knowledge mobilization activities to ensure they continue to bring value to members and will play a key role in connecting members to high-quality, relevant initiatives offered by our members and partners.

Strategic Priority 2: Build strategic partnerships

CYACC will strengthen, cultivate and expand relationships with key partners to enhance the reach and impact of CYACC and support for CYACs and the CYAC model. By working with organizations, agencies, government partners, and communities aligned with our mission, CYACC will enhance national coordination and advocacy for the work and role of CYACs.

CYACC will foster national partnerships with police organizations, child protection services, medical and mental health professionals, victim supports, and other

stakeholders to support the ability of CYACs across the country to deliver high-quality, coordinated services to children, youth and their families.

CYACC is committed to ensuring that all CYACs have the tools and partnerships needed to serve diverse communities, including Indigenous, newcomer, and underserved populations. We will prioritize meaningful engagement and partnerships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis leaders to shape culturally relevant supports and ensure that our work actively contributes to reconciliation.

Strategic Priority 3: Champion the CYAC model through thought leadership

CYACC will serve as a national leader on issues impacting CYACs and their delivery of services for children, youth and the families they serve. As part of our commitment to thought leadership, we will work to identify priority issues where CYACC and its members are uniquely positioned to inform and influence. We will equip CYAC leaders and advocates with the tools they need, and create opportunities for them to raise awareness of the work of CYACs and the value of the CYAC model in supporting children and youth who have experienced abuse.

CYACC will continue to collaborate with the *Department of Justice Canada*, while also engaging other relevant federal departments, to ensure children, youth and families impacted by abuse receive the specialized support they need through CYACs and the CYAC model. We will help to strengthen policies, and funding frameworks, and serve as a trusted national expert on justice and child protection system responses to align with the multidisciplinary approach of CYACs across the country.

Through these efforts, CYACC will position itself – and its members – as trusted experts who can advise governments on policy decisions and initiatives that advance the CYAC model, improve services and supports, and secure long-term policy and funding commitments.

Strategic Priority 4: Advance best practices and lay the foundation for accreditation

CYACC will support CYACs in organizational excellence through access to current and relevant best practices and a framework for accreditation. Partnering with like-minded organizations, such as *Kindex*, CYACC will help ensure CYACs have a place to exchange knowledge and access research and tools to support practice.

CYACC will review existing national best practice guidelines and establish an ongoing review process to ensure they remain current, relevant and reflective of both Canadian and international standards and evolve alongside emerging research and practice needs. These efforts represent early steps towards developing a national accreditation program.

Strategic Priority 5: Strengthen CYACC governance and financial sustainability

CYACC is committed to building a foundation for sustainable operations and financial stability to ensure we can support CYACs now and in the future.

A robust governance framework will guide CYACC's strategic direction, ensuring accountability, transparency and equity in our operations. This will include key governance committees to oversee essential functions, as well as committees to drive forward specific priorities.

At the same time, CYACC will develop and execute a financial sustainability strategy that includes the introduction of member dues and continued federal government funding, while exploring additional opportunities such as sponsorships, partnerships and support from foundations and other funders.

The member fee structure will be designed within the context of this diversified funding strategy and will aim to be inclusive, representative, and feasible for CYACs of all sizes and organizational structures.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to our child and youth-serving partners and those who work with children and youth and their families impacted by abuse and violence. Their perspectives were collected and thoughtfully considered in the development of this Strategic Plan.

We also extend our appreciation to the CYAC leaders, staff, and multidisciplinary team colleagues across Canada whose dedication and insight will guide the work of this new association. CYACC's role is to support and strengthen centres that provide essential services to children, youth, and families impacted by abuse. Through collaboration, advocacy, and capacity building, we will work to ensure that CYACs have the resources, partnerships, and support they need to deliver high-quality multidisciplinary services.

We would also like to acknowledge the time, commitment and support provided by the *Department of Justice Canada* as we lay the foundations for this association and our collective work. We look forward to continuing this partnership as we advance our mission to support and strengthen CYACs from coast to coast to coast.