

# Accountability Report 2014–2015

Department of Community Services ◀



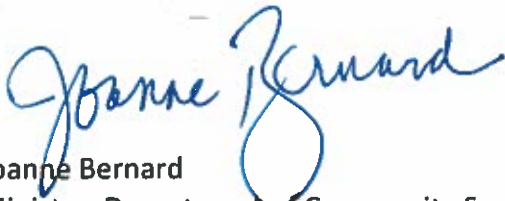
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## 1.0 Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Community Services for the year ended March 31, 2015 is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the *Department of Community Services' Statement of Mandate for the fiscal year 2014-2015*. The reporting of the Department of Community Services outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Community Services' management.

We acknowledge that this accountability report is the responsibility of Community Services' management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the *Department of Community Services' 2014-2015 Statement of Mandate*.



Joanne Bernard  
Minister, Department of Community Services



Lynn Hartwell  
Deputy Minister, Department of Community Services

## 2.0 Message from the Minister

I am pleased to present our 2014-15 Accountability Report on behalf of the Department of Community Services, as a summary of the activities of our Department over the last year.

The department achieved many of its goals in 2014-2015, and work started on a number of other important projects that are continuing in 2015-2016. The department supported children, youth and families by increasing funding to family resource centres, transition houses, second stage housing, supportive housing for youth, and women's centres. Work continues on a multi-year funding program for non-profit organizations. Transformation of how the department operates began in 2014-2015, resulting in a stronger focus on service delivery. Access to the disability support program has been improved by implementing a new *Level of Support Policy*.

The benefit reform process for the Employment Supports and Income Assistance program remains a priority project for the department. Amendments to the Children and Family Services Act were tabled in the Legislature. These represent the first significant change to this legislation in over 20 years. Year one in a three-year sexual violence strategy was completed and over 1,000 Nova Scotians took part in shaping actions and goals for the next two years. The Minister's Panel on Accessibility Legislation presented its report and recommendations, and over the next year work will continue to introduce this new legislation in the fall of 2016.

The mission of Community Services is to promote greater independence, self-reliance and security for Nova Scotians in need and provide the best service possible to our clients. While we recognize there is much more to do and the needs are complex, statistics in this report show progress, which is encouraging. I extend my sincere thanks to our dedicated staff whose focus is on making a positive impact on the lives of Nova Scotians.

This report provides an overview of these activities, including how we measure our success and the outcomes for the people we serve.

I hope you find this information both interesting and useful.

Regards,



Joanne Bernard

Minister, Department of Community Services

### 3.0 Introduction

The annual Accountability Report for the Department of Community Services reports on the progress achieved by the Department towards the outcomes and financial targets established in the *2014-2015 Statement of Mandate*. The *2014-2015 Statement of Mandate* is available on Community Services' website at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/department/Publications.html>.

### 4.0 Accomplishments

The table below describes the Department's accomplishments against the priorities identified in the *2014-2015 Statement of Mandate*.

Program Area	Priority	Status	Comments
ESIA	Improved Access to Essential Special Needs	Deferred	Changes to <i>Special Needs Regulations</i> will be incorporated as part of ESIA Transformation efforts.
	Towards a New ESIA Benefit Structure	Work in Progress	In 2014-2015, the Department continued the review of the ESIA benefit structure.
	Better Service to ESIA Clients	Work in Progress	In 2014-2015, the Department began a multi-year transformation initiative to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the ESIA program.
Children, Youth & Families	Amendments to the Children and Family Services Act	Work in Progress	In 2014-2015, Government approved the Department's plan to introduce amendments to the <i>Children and Family Services Act</i> in the Fall of 2015.
	Strengthening Community Capacity	Work in Progress	In 2014-2015, the Department began developing a modernized and accountable agreement process with its community partners.
	Increased Funding for Family Resource Centres	Completed	In 2014-2015, the Department provided an additional \$2 million in funding for Family Resource Centres.
	Outreach Services for Women and Children	Completed	In 2014-2015, the Department provided an additional \$500,000 in funding to Transition Houses, Second Stage Housing, and Women's Centres.

	Nova Scotia's First Sexual Violence Strategy	Work in Progress	In April 2015, the Government approved "Breaking the Silence: A Coordinated Response to Sexual Violence in Nova Scotia", renewing its commitment to a total investment of \$6M by 2016/2017.
	Supportive Housing for Youth	Completed	In 2014-2015, the Department provided \$350,000 in new annual funding for the Supportive Housing Youth Focus Team (SHYFT) in Yarmouth.
	Multi-Year Funding	Work in Progress	In 2014-2015, the Government committed to implementing a multi-year funding program for non-profit organizations.
Disability Support Program	Implementation of Individualized Funding Demonstration Projects	Work in Progress	In 2014-2015, the Department worked to develop two Family Demonstration Projects. The learning from these projects continues to inform future systems of individualized client-focused supports.
	Improved Access to the Disability Support Program	Completed	In 2014-2015, the Department implemented a new <i>Level of Support Policy</i> that enabled staff to leverage resources available in the community.
	New Legislation for the Disability Support Program	Deferred	The replacement of the <i>Homes for Special Care Act</i> has been deferred to the Spring of 2018 to ensure new legislation reflects the direction and goals of the transformed Disability Support Program.
	Accessibility Legislation	Work in Progress	A panel of 22 people from community and government organizations, assisted by volunteer subcommittees, was formed to hold consultations and provide government with direction and recommendations on what new legislation should contain to make Nova Scotia accessible to all.

## 5.0 Financial Results

<b>Department of Community Services (DCS)</b>				
<b>Estimated &amp; Actual Expenditures</b>				
<b>For the Year Ending March 31, 2015</b>				
<b>Operational Area</b>	<b>Estimate 2014-2015 (\$thousands)</b>	<b>Actual 2014-2015 (\$thousands)</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Gross Departmental Expenses:</b>				
Senior Management	1,763	1,860	97	
Corporate Services Unit	9,018	8,103	-915	1
Policy and Information Management	7,307	6,234	-1,073	1
Field Offices	14,970	15,699	729	
Disability Support Program	298,843	312,815	13,972	2
Child, Youth and Family Support	142,536	148,422	5,886	3
Housing Services	36,498	30,622	-5,876	4
Employment Support and Income Assistance	382,668	386,509	3,841	5
Housing Authority and Property Operations	9,130	8,887	-243	
NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women	763	826	63	
<b>Total Departmental Expenses</b>	<b>903,496</b>	<b>919,978</b>	<b>16,482</b>	
<b>Fees and Other Charges</b>	<b>-461</b>	<b>-194</b>	<b>267</b>	
<b>Ordinary Recoveries</b>	<b>-13,444</b>	<b>-17,742</b>	<b>-4,298</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>TCA Purchase Requirements</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>Provincial Funded Staff (FTE's)</b>	<b>1,731</b>	<b>1,731</b>	<b>0</b>	

### Notes to the Estimated and Actual Expenditures for the Year Ending March 31, 2015:

1. Underspent as a result of staff vacancies and other related costs such as travel, office supplies, and staff training, to offset other program cost pressures.
2. Overspent as a result of increasing caseloads and complexity and costs per case.

3. Overspent due to increasing caseloads and costs per case in the Maintenance of Children program.
4. Underspent due to lower than budgeted expenditures in Affordable Housing programs, the Housing Strategy, and Debt Servicing costs, resulting in a lower Provincial Grant to Housing Nova Scotia.
5. Overspent due to Pharmacare costs trending higher than budget as well as increasing Income Assistance costs per case.
6. Higher than budgeted recoveries are primarily the result of a reallocation of Federal recoveries for the LMAPD (Labour Market Agreement for People with Disabilities) program from the Department of Health and Wellness. Overall government expenditures under this program remain the same.

## 6.0 Measuring Our Performance

This section provides detailed information on the Department of Community Services' progress against the outcomes and targets identified in the *2014-2015 Statement of Mandate*.

### Increased number of Nova Scotians living independent of income assistance

#### 1. Measure: Number and Percent of Nova Scotians Living in Poverty

This measure represents the number and percentage of Nova Scotians whose total household income falls below a defined low-income threshold. The Department uses the *Statistics Canada* after-tax low-income cut-off (After-Tax LICO) to track poverty in Nova Scotia.

Community Size / Family Size	Rural Area	Urban under 30,000	Urban 30,000-99,999	Urban 100,000-499,999	Urban
1 person	\$12,629	\$14,454	\$16,124	\$16,328	\$19,307
2 persons	\$15,371	\$17,592	\$19,625	\$19,872	\$23,498
3 persons	\$19,141	\$21,905	\$24,437	\$24,745	\$29,260
4 persons	\$23,879	\$27,329	\$30,487	\$30,871	\$36,504
5 persons	\$27,192	\$31,120	\$34,717	\$35,154	\$41,567

Source: Statistics Canada, *Low income cut-offs before and after tax by community and family size, 2011*, Table No. 202-0801.

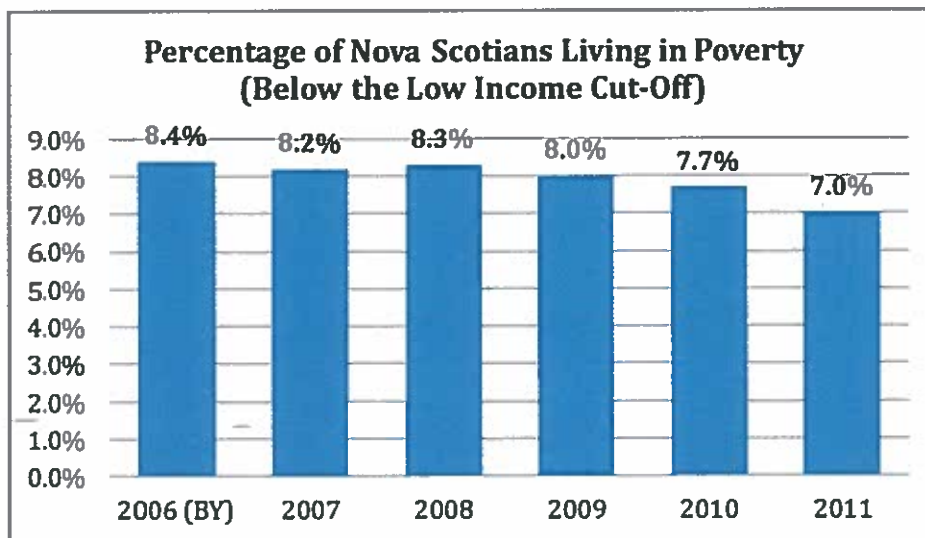


### What does this measure tell us?

A reduction in the number and percentage of people with incomes below the after-tax LICO is an indication that more people have income to spend on necessities such as food, shelter, and clothing, and that fewer need to depend on government transfer programs like Income Assistance.

### Where are we now?

The latest Statistics Canada information indicates in 2011, the number of persons living in low-income in Nova Scotia declined from 71,000 in 2010 to 64,000 in 2011<sup>1</sup>. The prevalence of persons living in low-income also declined, from 7.7 percent to 7.0 percent, the lowest on record since 1976 (the first year for which data is available).



Some measures taken by Government in 2014-2015, to help address the challenges faced by low-income Nova Scotians include:

- the development of an outcomes based model for the ESIA program;
- continued discussions with Labour & Advanced Education to streamline and improve access to employment programming for clients.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, "Income of Canadians, 2011", CANSIM Table 202-0802.

## Where do we want to be in the future?

Employment provides the best opportunity for individuals to attain self-sufficiency and exit from poverty. As such, the Department will continue to work towards the development of an outcome focused ESIA program that supports clients to gain employment and stay employed.

The initial focus will be on recipients who have strong potential for employment success. The focus will be on the development of appropriate employment maintenance supports to assist people who successfully obtain employment, to maintain same, and to subsequently reduce the number of people re-entering the ESIA system on a monthly basis.

## 2. Measure: Number and Percentage of Children Living in Poverty

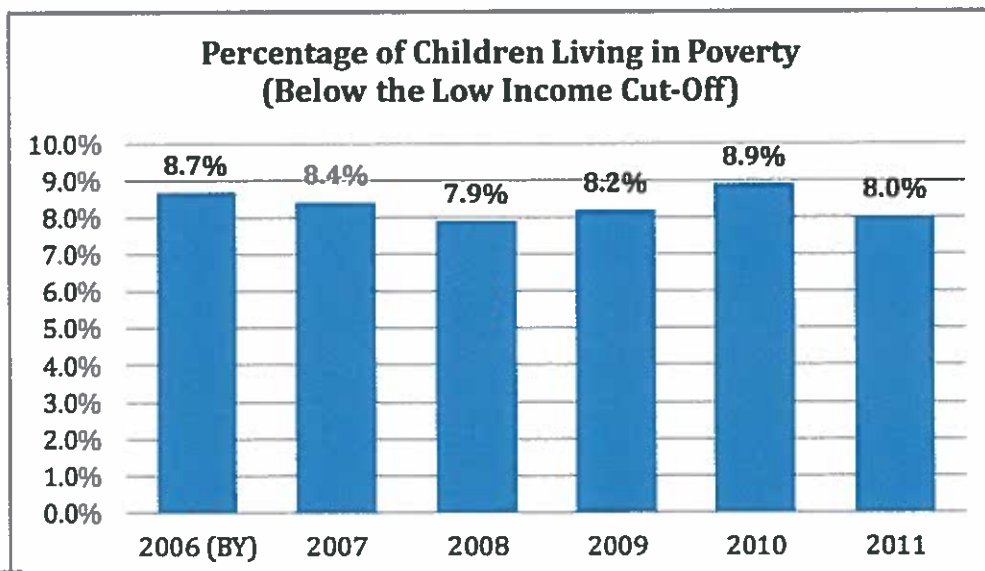
This measure represents the number and percentage of Nova Scotia children who live in households where the total household income falls below a defined low-income threshold. The Department uses the after-tax low-income cut-off (After-Tax LICO) to track child poverty in Nova Scotia.

### What does this measure tell us?

A reduction in the number or percentage of children who live in households with incomes below the after-tax LICO is an indication that fewer children have to live without necessities such as nutritious food, proper shelter, and clothing.

### Where are we now?

The latest Statistics Canada information indicates in 2011, the number of children living in low-income dropped from 15,000 to 13,000, and the prevalence also decreased, from 8.9 percent to 8.0 percent in comparison to the previous year.



In 2014-2015, to improve the outcomes of children, the Department has:

- extended the eligibility threshold of the Nova Scotia Child Benefit (NSCB) from \$25,000 to \$26,000 and as a result:
  - an additional 1,300 children were eligible for the support; and
  - upwards of 10,000 children who were already in receipt of the NSCB saw increases in their partial benefits;
- invested an additional \$2 million in funding to the Family Resource Centres;
- completed the research and analysis to support amendments to the *Children & Family Services Act*.

### **Where do we want to be in the future?**

In 2015-2016, the Department will begin the implementation of a more structured continuum of services from prevention through to early intervention, child protection, and out of home care. The goal is to rebalance the system to give prevention and early intervention more focus while providing children, young people and families with seamless access to a broad spectrum of supports and services that responds best to their needs.

The *Children and Family Services Act (CFSA)* will also be amended to increase the age from 16 to up to 19 years of age. In today's society, a 16 year old is not able to make their own way without support.

Furthermore, as part of the Benefit Reform work, the Department will be reviewing the financial supports – such as IA payments, child benefits, and other income tested programs and incentives – available to low-income families with children.

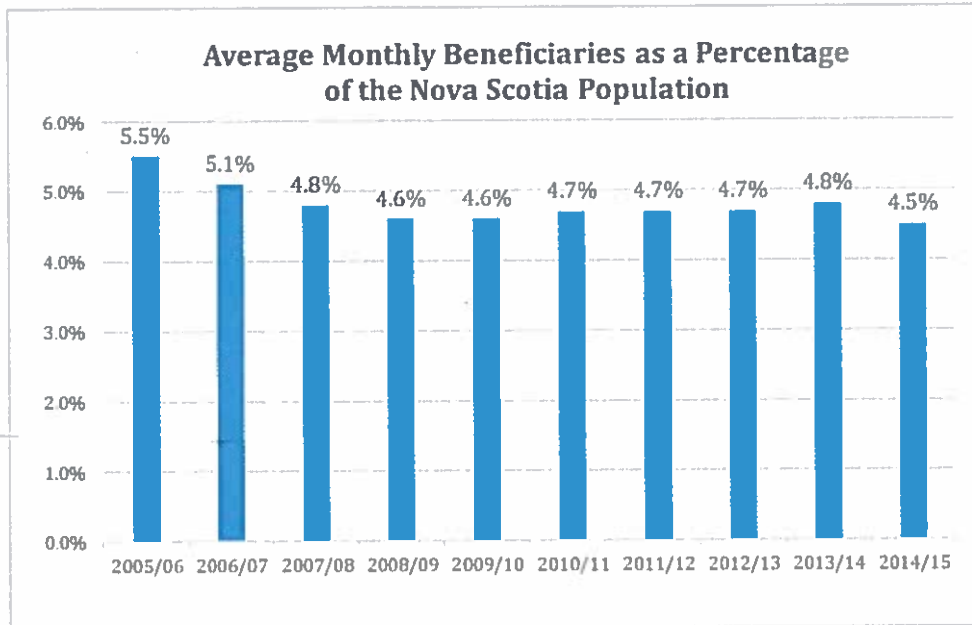
### **3. Measure: Average Monthly Beneficiaries as a Percentage of the Population**

The average number of people on the Department's income assistance caseload each fiscal year as a percentage of Nova Scotia's population represents the percentage of low-income households dependent, in whole or in part, on income assistance to meet their basic needs.

#### **What does this measure tell us?**

A reduction in the percentage of persons dependent on income assistance is an indication of better outcomes for low-income people. It represents the proportion of persons who have moved to the work force or are making the transition into the work force.

## Where are we now?



The percentage of Nova Scotia's population dependent, in whole or in part, on income assistance to meet their basic needs fell from 4.8 percent in 2013-2014 to 4.5 percent in 2014-2015.

Furthermore, the goal of reducing the caseload by 220 was realized as the average monthly caseload fell from 28,923 in 2013-2014 to 28,100 in 2014-2015.

## Where do we want to be in the future?

Our goal is to increase the number of Nova Scotians living independently of Income Assistance. Employment provides the best opportunity for individuals to attain self-sufficiency and exit from poverty. As such, the Department will ensure:

- our programs and services serve as a bridge to a better life;
- people, including those with disabilities, have a chance to take advantage of job opportunities;
- application processes are as simple as possible, so more time is being spent on what really counts – finding the right help for people.

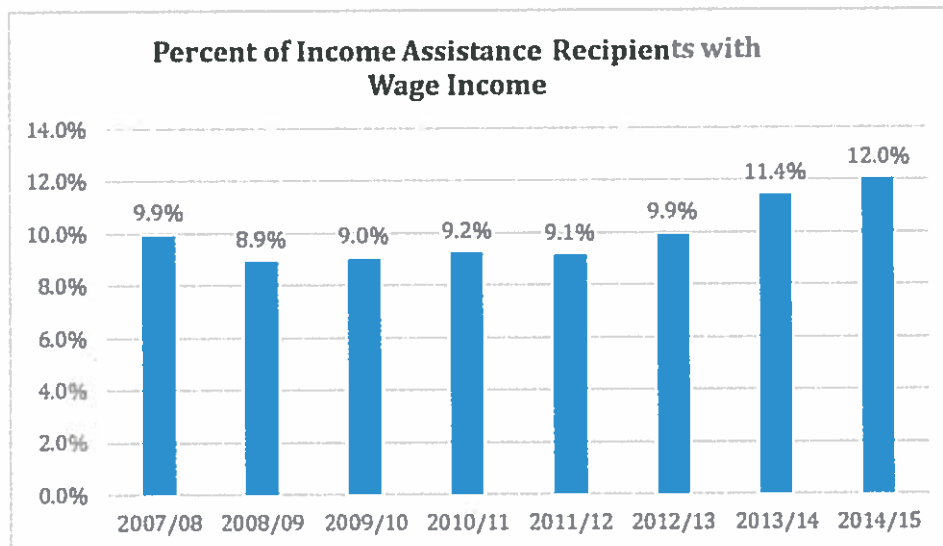
**4. Measure: Percentage of Income Assistance Recipients with Wage Income**

Employment Support Services helps eligible people on income assistance to become more self-sufficient. Involvement in employment activities such as volunteer or part-time work or career planning not only reduces reliance on income assistance but also enables individuals and families to achieve a greater degree of self-reliance and independence.

**What does this measure tell us?**

This measure indicates the percentage of income assistance recipients with wage income. Included in this calculation are individuals who are still receiving income assistance at a reduced amount because their earned wages are not sufficient to completely exit the program.

**Where are we now?**



In 2014-2015, 12.0 percent of income assistance recipients had wage income. This represents a 0.6 percent increase from the previous year and exceeds the 2014-2015 target of 11 percent of recipients with wage income.

**Where do we want to be in the future?**

As part of its Benefit Reform Initiative, the Department will be reviewing all of its employment support programming and services, aligning where appropriate within the department and across government, to enable clients to find and maintain employment.

In 2015-2016, the Department will work with Careers Nova Scotia (LAE), on the introduction of service standards and common tools, including assessment and case management, for those ESIA clients most closely aligned with labour market readiness – those considered “job ready”, including those who may require some additional support to obtain and maintain employment.

An increased percentage of income assistance recipients with wage income is an indicator of an increased movement to labour market attachment and therefore movement towards a greater degree of self-reliance and independence.

## Improved educational, justice, health, social and economic determinants of children in care and children of income assistance recipients

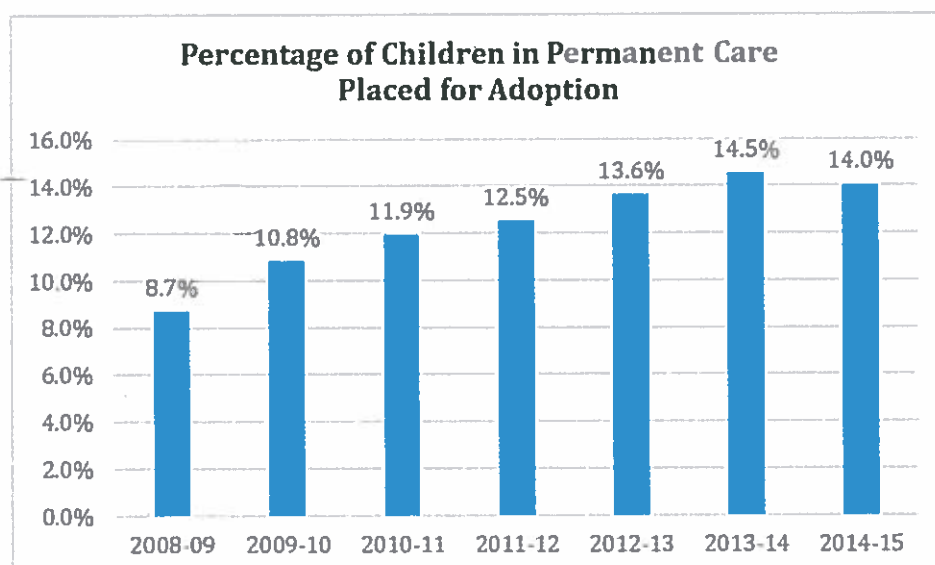
### 1. Measure: Percentage of Children in Permanent Care Placed for Adoption

The Department is responsible for Nova Scotian children when they cannot be safely and securely cared for by their own families. Where a child is in the Department’s permanent care and legally free for adoption, it is in the child’s best interest to be placed for adoption. Research has shown that a secure stable family environment is an important factor in healthy child development.

#### What does this measure tell us?

This measure reports on the percentage of children in the Department’s permanent care that are placed for adoption. The percentage includes adoptions that have not yet been finalized.

#### Where are we now?



The Department continued to implement improvements as part of its adoption strategy, with an overall percentage of children in permanent care placed for adoption of 14 percent in 2014-2015. This was a 0.5 percent decrease from the previous year but continued to exceed the adoption target of 13.6 percent set out in the 2014-2015 Statement of Mandate.

**Where do we want to be in the future?**

Assuring children have a stable family environment in which to grow and prosper continues to be a priority for the Department. In 2015-2016, the *Children and Family Services Act* will be amended to:

- permit children born in other jurisdictions who have been placed with families in Nova Scotia to have adoptions completed without undue delay
- allow persons with whom a child has been placed under the Maintenance and Custody Act to be able to apply for adoption
- enable the transfer of adoption subsidies if an adoptive parent dies or is unable to care for the child.

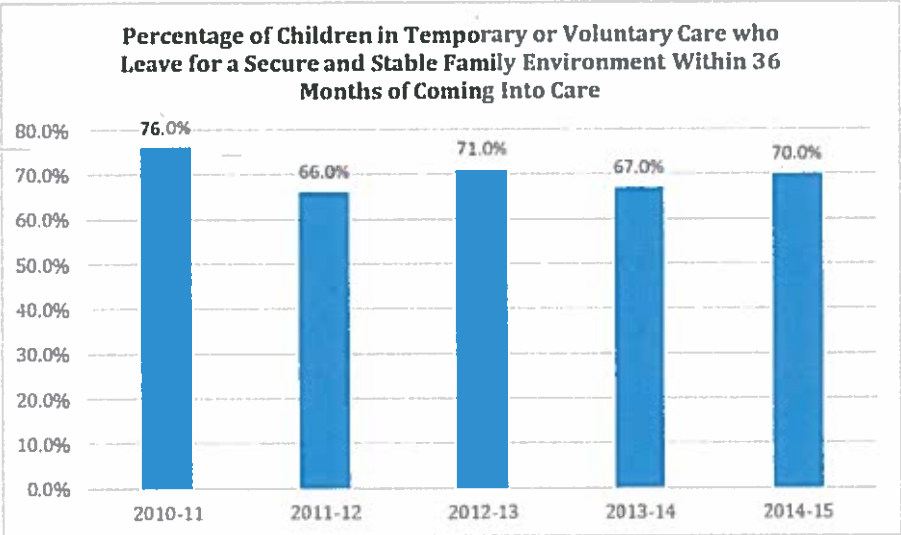
**2. Measure: Percentage of children in temporary or voluntary care who leave for a secure and stable family environment within 36 months of coming into care**

A secure and stable family environment is a critical factor in healthy child development, educational attainment and overall well-being and social development.

**What does this measure tell us?**

This measure reports on the percentage of children in temporary or voluntary care who leave for a secure and stable family environment within 36 months of coming into care.

**Where are we now?**



In 2014-2015, 70 percent of children in temporary or voluntary care left for a secure and stable family environment within 36 months of coming into care. This was a three percent increase from the previous year and thus, achieved the target set out in the 2014-2015 Statement of Mandate (i.e. to increase the percentage of children in care who transition to a secure and stable family environment within 36 months of coming into care).

### Where do we want to be in the future?

The Department wishes to continue to see an increase the percentage of children in care who transition to a secure and stable family environment within 36 months of coming into care.

As mentioned above, the Department will continue to implement improvements including specialized training for staff, new permanency planning standards, and a new tool to track both children in care and families who are waiting to adopt.

## Improve opportunities for social inclusion for persons with disabilities

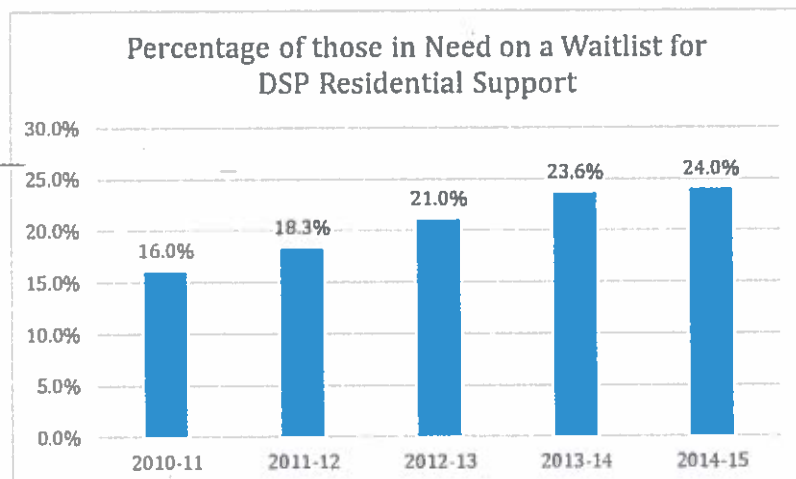
### 1. Measure: Percentage of those in Need Who are on a Waitlist for DSP Residential Support

Timely access to appropriate residential supports can improve independence and social inclusion for persons with disabilities.

#### What does this measure tell us?

A reduction in the percentage of people on the waitlist for DSP Residential Support - including both individuals with no support and those receiving support through existing programs (which are either not of their choosing or do not meet their current needs) - is a signal of improved opportunities for independence and social inclusion.

#### Where are we now?





In 2014-2015, the percentage of DSP clients on the waitlist for residential supports continued to increase. This increase, albeit smaller than previous years, can be attributed to aging caregivers looking for placements, a lack of day programs and an increase in complex cases.

It should be noted that, in the past two years, the Department has been able to provide 65 new placements from the waitlist, however the number of people requesting services is still greater than those coming off the waitlist.

**Where do we want to be in the future?**

The Department continues to recognize that being on a waitlist is difficult for individuals and/or families looking for support. It is for this reason that the Disability Support Program is changing to offer more choice and inclusion.

Through continued DSP Transformation, the Department wishes to reduce the number of clients on DSP waitlists in 2015-2016.

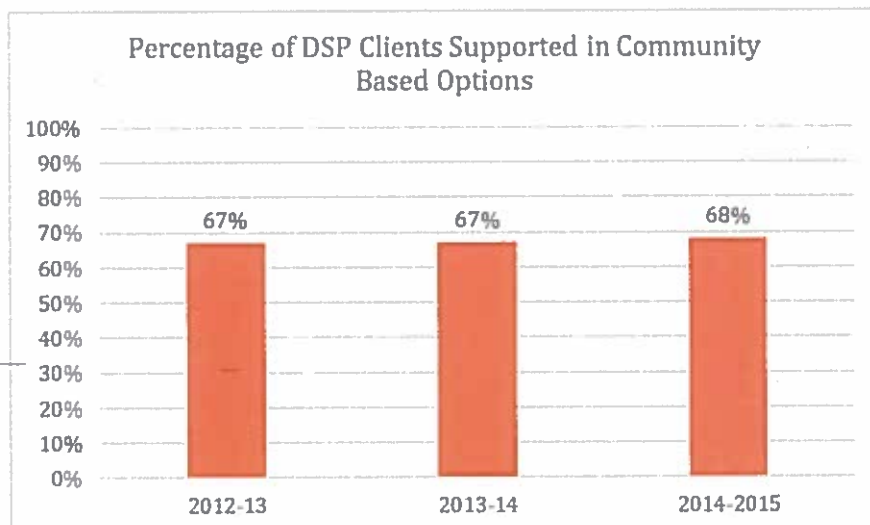
**2. Measure: Percentage of DSP Clients supported in Community Based Options**

Community based options enable persons with disabilities to remain in their own homes with family, or alternate home-like settings, and in their communities.

**What does this measure tell us?**

This measure calculates the percentage of DSP clients being supported in community based options.

**Where are we now?**



In 2014-2015, approximately 68 percent of clients in the Disability Support Program were supported in community based options. This is a one percent increase from the previous year, thus exceeding the target set out in the 2014-2015 Statement of Mandate (i.e. to increase the percentage of DSP clients supported in community based options).

### **Where do we want to be in the future?**

The Department has committed to focusing on three key areas of action:

- increasing community-based living with social and economic inclusion;
- modernizing services and programs based on choice, flexibility and person-directed planning; and,
- reducing reliance on larger residential facilities.

In 2015-2016, the Department will continue to work towards the transformation of the DSP program. Adding capacity through ILS and AFS programs as well as instituting new person-centered approaches will provide more choices for individuals/families to live in community based options.

## Appendix A: Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

### Annual Report under Section 18 of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*

The Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labor Board.

A Wrongdoing for the purposes of the Act is:

- a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations
- b) a misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets
- c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment, or
- d) directing or counselling someone to commit a wrongdoing

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Department of Community Services

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2014-2015
The number of disclosures received	n/a
The number of findings of wrongdoing	n/a
Details of each wrongdoing <i>(insert separate row for each wrongdoing)</i>	n/a
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing <i>(insert separate row for each wrongdoing)</i>	n/a