

KINA GBEZHGOMI
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

35TH ANNUAL REPORT 2025 - 2026



Our Children, Our Responsibility

CONTENTS

Agency Values **2**

Board Chairperson & Executive Director **3**

Collaborations and Partnerships **5**

Services **6-22**

Cultural and Specialized Services **6**

Protection and Other Mandated Services **13**

Quality Assurance **21**

Training **22**

Financial Position **23**

Property **24**

Human Resources **25**

Employee Milestones **26**

In Memoriam **28**

OUR FOUNDATION & COMMUNITIES SERVED

Vision Statement

Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services will honour and support our family's and community's inherent authority to care for their children based on unity, traditions, values, beliefs and customs.

Mission Statement

Our services ensure children are protected and stay connected with their culture, language and community while strengthening family and community relationships.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sherry Dayfox, Chairperson

Sheshegwaning First Nation Representative

Ingrid Madahbee, Vice Chairperson

Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation Representative

Leona Nahwegahbow-baa, Secretary Treasurer

Whitefish River First Nation Representative

Chris Bigras, Director

Zhiibaahaasing First Nation Representative

Jake Agoneh, Director

Sheguiandah First Nation Representative

Kim Aelick, Director

M'Chigeeng First Nation Representative

Bernadine Francis, Director

Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory Representative



Wiikwemkoong
Unceded Territory



Whitefish River
First Nation



Sheguiandah
First Nation



Aundeck Omni Kaning
First Nation



M'Chigeeng
First Nation



Sheshegwaning
First Nation



Zhiibaahaasing
First Nation



The City of Greater Sudbury
and The Sudbury District
Off-Reserve Children,
Youth and Families

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIRPERSON AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Aanii, Boozhoo

Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services (KGCFS) continued to make significant progress throughout fiscal year 2025-2026. Through the dedication of our staff, Board of Directors, Elders, Member First Nations and Territory leadership, caregivers, and community partners, we remained focused on strengthening services for children, youth, and families while building a sustainable future for the organization.

KGCFS was honoured to continue advancing initiatives designed to strengthen local services and supports for children and youth. Following the opening of the Enji-maajiigawat Mina-waadiziwin Youth Transition Home, the agency continued to support youth transitioning from care and youth requiring additional supports within our service area. At the same time, KGCFS advanced planning and licensing activities related to the Staff Model Home initiative, an important step in expanding local care options and reducing reliance on placements outside the region whenever possible. These initiatives reflect our commitment to ensuring that children and youth remain connected to their families, culture, language, community, and identity.

Throughout the year, KGCFS continued to work closely with Member First Nations and Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory to strengthen community-based service delivery and support local priorities. Prevention funding initiatives advanced during the year, helping ensure communities have greater opportunities to determine and deliver services that best meet the unique needs of their children, youth, and families. KGCFS also continued its commitment to providing culturally grounded services through cultural programming, traditional teachings, and opportunities for children and youth.

The Board of Directors dedicated considerable attention to financial stewardship and long-term sustainability planning throughout 2025-2026. Significant work was undertaken to review organizational funding challenges, develop strategies to address financial pressures, and support initiatives such as the Deficit Management Plan and Deferred Revenue Plan. These efforts are helping to position the agency for continued stability while ensuring that quality services remain available to those we serve.

We again welcomed new Directors to the Board this past fiscal year. Shining Turtle from Whitefish River First Nation has joined us. Valerie Assinewai from Sheguiandah, and Summer Beaudin from M'Chigeeng First Nation. We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to former Board Directors Jake and Kim for their service.

KGCFS also continued to strengthen governance and accountability through ongoing policy review, quality improvement initiatives, and strategic planning activities. The Board and management team remained focused on ensuring that organizational decisions continue to reflect the best interests of children and families while supporting the long-term goals of the agency and our Member First Nations.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to strengthening partnerships, expanding community-based services, advocating for equitable resources, and supporting positive outcomes for children, youth, and families across our region. We are grateful for the continued trust, guidance, and support provided by our Member First Nations and Territory, community partners, Elders, caregivers, staff, and supporters.

Together, we continue to build a stronger future for our children, families, and communities.

Sherry Dayfox

Chairperson

Denise Morrow

Executive Director

Reflecting on 35 Years

A vision carried forward by generations of leaders, Elders, staff, caregivers, families and communities.

Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services began with a clear conviction: Anishinabek communities must have the authority to care for their own children, in their own territory, according to their own laws, traditions, values and customs.

The groundwork was laid in 1984, when Chief Joseph Hare-baa presented Our Children - Our Responsibility to the United Chiefs and Councils of Manitoulin. Chief Leona Nahwegahbow-baa helped move that vision into action, introducing the motion to form a Child and Family Services Working Board. A development workplan followed in 1986, and seven years after the original proposal KGCFS was incorporated. The agency's official opening was celebrated on December 23, 1991.

Thirty-five years later, the founding purpose continues to guide every service: children belong within family, community and culture. KGCFS has grown from an emerging community-led vision into a multi-service Anishinabek agency supporting children, youth and families across Mnidoo Mnising and the District of Greater Sudbury.



KGCFS 34th Annual General Meeting Group Photo
hosted in Whitefish River First Nation – December 10, 2025

COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

KGCFS is committed to building strong relationships and collaborative partnerships that support the well-being of children, youth, families and communities. Together, we strengthen services, share knowledge, and create meaningful opportunities for lasting impact.

Collaborative Efforts and Protocol Developments

KGCFS is dedicated to fostering partnerships with member First Nations, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, Band Representatives, prevention teams, police services, health and education partners, Indigenous organizations, and community service providers.

New Initiatives This Fiscal Year

This fiscal year, KGCFS expanded its community partnerships by joining the Safe Centre Steering Committee, which focuses on supporting children affected by intimate partner violence, and the Sudbury LaCloche Icelandic Prevention Model Coalition, aimed

at empowering youth to make healthy life choices. KGCFS also participated in the Wikwemikong Tribal Police Service Situation Table, working alongside community partners to address issues related to addiction, mental health, homelessness, and criminal involvement.

Working Together

We also actively participate in initiatives such as the Sudbury Indigenous Sacred Circle, Health Advisory Council with HSN, the COMPASS Suicide Safety Network and the GSPS Indigenous Advisory Committee table. Additionally, we participate in many community tables including VTRA Steering Committee, RMT, OPP Regional Collaborative Review Committee, GSPS -Human Trafficking Table, Stronger Together, and Community Drug Strategy with Greater City of Sudbury in collaboration with community partners and more.

8 COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

- Manitoulin Health Centre
- Mnaamodzawin Health Services Inc.
- Public Health Sudbury & District
- Health Sciences North (HSN) NEO Kids
- HSN Pediatrics Quality Council
- Zhiibaahaasing First Nation
- Sheshegwaning First Nation
- Whitefish River First Nation

10 NEW AND RENEWED PROTOCOLS

- Canadian Mental Health Association Sudbury/Manitoulin (CMHA)
- Children's Community Network
- Compass
- Espanola Regional Hospital
- Health Sciences North
- Manitoulin Health Centre
- Manitoulin Northshore Victim Services
- Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre Inc.
- Northern Youth Services Inc.
- N'Swakamok Indigenous Friendship Centre



N'Swakamok Indigenous Friendship Centre
Protocol Signing Group Photo – December 3, 2025

Pictured left to right - Back Row: Dorothy Fox, KGCFS Elder-in-Residence; Marcella Guerin, KGCFS Service Manager and Judy Carter, KGCFS Cultural Enaadaamaaget

Front Row: Denise Morrow, KGCFS Executive Director; Marie Meawasige, NIFC Executive Director and Taryn Michel, NIFC Board President

OVERVIEW OF KGCFS SERVICES

Cultural and Specialized Services

Anishinaabe Aadziwin (Cultural Services)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

During the 2025-26 reporting year, funding limitations affected the operations of the Cultural Services department, resulting in fewer public gatherings and changes to service delivery structure. Despite these setbacks, the Cultural Services department continues to serve as a vital pillar of our agency. It not only delivers cultural services to children, youth, families and communities but also provides essential support to our staff. Our work is deeply rooted in Anishinaabe teachings and values, ensuring that culture remains a guiding force that strengthens and connects us.

CULTURE AT THE HEART OF OUR WORK

Each team is presented with an eagle feather as part of the agency's bundle. After six months of employment, every staff member receives a sacred bundle, which includes a copper cup, the four sacred medicines: tobacco, cedar, sweetgrass and sage. Additionally, a candle is included to remind staff of

the importance of nurturing their inner fire, which involves attending various ceremonies throughout the year.

The cultural department provides medicines and traditional teachings to support the well-being of staff. This ensures that when they meet with families facing challenging times, they are in a positive position to offer assistance.

Our cultural services include:

- Solstice Ceremonies
- Full Moon Ceremonies
- Letting Go Ceremonies
- Cedar Bath Ceremonies
- Family Circles
- Sweat Lodges
- Craft Nights

CLIENT CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The cultural department annually organizes events for youth in care, alongside the ongoing cultural services.

Youth Summer Camps: Two camps are held, one in Sudbury and one on the Island. In July 2025, 11 children attended a camp at Atikameksheng

Pow-Wow grounds, while 12 participated in the August camp located in Aundeck Omni Kaning. Activities included teachings from knowledge keepers, medicine wheel teachings, cedar bath teachings, and sweat lodge construction. Youth could also pursue Anishnaabemowin Nooswin through tobacco offerings.

Mooz Akinonmaaget Maa Aki Program: This mentorship program, in collaboration with Greater City of Sudbury Police Services, focuses on a moose harvest and cultural skills through the 7 grandfather teachings. Five youth participated, with one serving as a mentor.

Winter Cultural Day Camp: Held annually at the Anishinaabe Spiritual Centre, the March 2026 camp had 16 attendees. Activities included team-building exercises, a scavenger hunt, wild meat harvesting hosted by Noojmowin Teg Health Centre, medicine teachings, shelter building and traditional snow snake games.

Number of Cultural Service Participants by Service Type in fiscal year 25-26

- 652 – Cultural Events
- 417 – Elder Support
- 347 – Cultural Presentation Requests
- 178 – Traditional Resources
- 277 – Ceremony
- 41 – Cedar Bath
- 11 – Smudging
- 51 – Brief Cultural Service



Education Team

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

During the reporting period from April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026, the Education Liaison Program continued to support the educational success and well-being of children and youth in care through advocacy, service coordination, and individualized educational supports. The program offered invaluable services to **34 children and youth** who required ongoing educational advocacy and support. Throughout this time, the Education Liaison fostered active partnerships with **16 schools, 3 school boards, and 2 First Nation education authorities** within the Sudbury and Manitoulin service area. Participants represented a range of educational settings, which included:

- 1 preschool student
- 11 elementary school students
- 6 middle school students
- 15 secondary school students
- 1 post-secondary student

Through strong partnerships with schools and educational professionals, the program helped ensure children and youth received timely and appropriate supports.

The youth served displayed a rich diversity in educational needs and developmental profiles. Among the current active caseload, participants were diagnosed with various disabilities or exceptionalities. All participants identified with one or more disabilities or exceptionalities, including learning disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), ADHD, communication exceptionalities, developmental delays, and mental health concerns.

Additionally, the program extended support to youth identifying as transgender and those involved in alternative education settings.

The Education team also faced challenges with the announcement of cutbacks and significant funding changes to Jordan’s Principle funding. This funding had previously enabled the Education Liaison to assign internal Education Support Workers for personalized in-class and out-of-class support, as well as tutoring.

In collaboration with internal KGCFS programs including Child Well-Being Services, Youth in Transition Services, Housing Support Services, Cultural Services, and Youth Outreach Services, the Education Liaison ensured that youth and families received integrated support that addressed their educational, social, emotional, cultural, and housing-related needs. Caregivers were offered personalized assistance during intake meetings and throughout the service delivery process, enhancing their understanding of the education system and the available educational supports.

Despite funding challenges during the reporting period, the Education Liaison Program remains committed to providing culturally grounded, strengths-based, and youth-centered supports that promote educational engagement, academic achievement, and overall well-being for Indigenous children and youth.



Family Finding

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

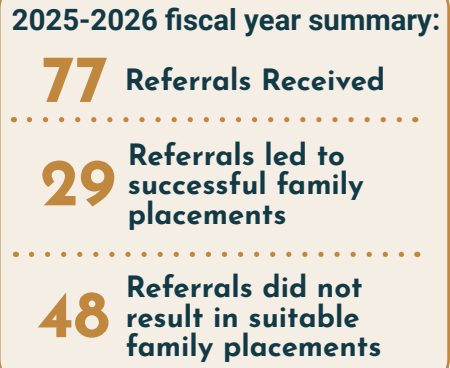
The Family Finding program utilizes the family finding model (www.familyfinding.org) to identify and engage relatives of children and youth either in care or at risk of entering care. This initiative ensures that every child benefits from the lifelong connections that families provide. The Family Finding worker builds relationships within KGCFS’ seven Member First Nations, facilitating the return of children to their families and communities.

LOCATING METHODS

The methods used for locating relatives include:

- Collaboration with the KGCFS Family Services team
- Social media platforms
- Family interviews
- Wiikwemkoong Heritage Organization resources
- Obituaries
- Band Representatives
- Band membership listings

KGCFS also fosters community engagement by setting up an agency booth at local events and pow-wows, which helps strengthen relationships with community members.



First Nation Prevention Program

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The KGCFS First Nation Prevention Program is dedicated to supporting member First Nation communities in providing culturally grounded, community-focused family and child wellness services. These services are directed to First Nations children and youth, under the age of 18 years, who are at risk of developing social, emotional, behavioural or psychiatric needs that require intervention.

funding. We collaborate closely with communities throughout every step of child welfare service delivery, which includes referrals, planning, and ongoing support both on and off reserve.

KGCFS transfers funding from the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services (MCCSS) to each First Nation for prevention services on reserve, and collects and reports community statistics quarterly on their behalf.

- Cultural education
- Parenting support
- Counseling

The aim is to assist families in ways that align with each Nation’s strengths, culture and priorities.

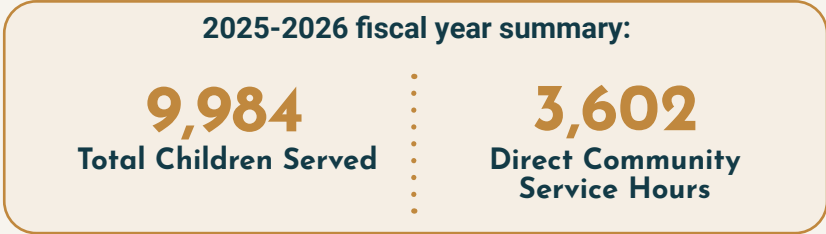
The Prevention Program encompasses more than just services, it strives to restore balance within families through culture, community, and connection. The true significance of this work lies in witnessing how each First Nation defines and leads its own healing journey. We are honored to support communities as they reclaim wellness for children and families in ways that resonate with their values and traditions.

KGCFS organizes regular meetings with Community Prevention Teams to share program updates, explore training opportunities, and offer guidance on Ministry

PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Prevention programs feature community-specific services such as:

- Advocacy
- Life skills training



Jordan's Principle

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The KGCFS Jordan's Principle Program assists First Nations children and youth in accessing essential services without delays or denials due to their status.

The program collaborated with families, communities and service providers to identify needs and support funding applications. It offers advocacy, application assistance, and service coordination, ensuring individualized support through a substantive equality approach.

Starting October 1, 2025, services transitioned back to Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory and M'Chigeeng First Nation for a more community-focused service delivery. This change supported a more community-based approach to service delivery and strengthened local involvement in responding to the needs of children, youth, and families.

The 2025–2026 fiscal year brought significant changes to the Jordan's Principle application and approval process. Indigenous Services Canada introduced updated operating procedures and implemented changes affecting how requests were reviewed and processed. These changes contributed to a pause in Jordan's Principle processes during late 2025 and into early 2026, creating additional challenges for families and service providers seeking timely supports.

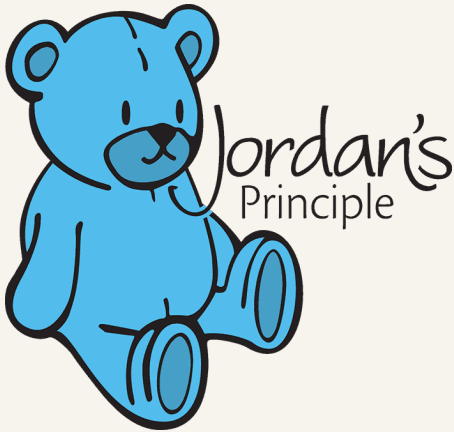
A PERIOD OF CHANGE AND COMMITMENT

In late 2025, the Jordan's Principle Team experienced a reduction in service coordinator positions due to funding constraints. The program was reduced to one supervisor and two service coordinators. Despite operating with a smaller team, staff remained committed to supporting families and advocating for children and youth throughout a period of significant change.

With the newly announced commitment from Indigenous Services Canada, the program is looking ahead to renewed growth. Service requests are beginning to increase, and the team expects to rebuild its capacity as demand for Jordan's Principle supports grows. This provides an opportunity to strengthen service delivery and continue responding to the needs of children, youth, families, and communities.

The program remains committed to working with families, communities, and service providers to reduce barriers and keep the needs and well-being of First Nations children and youth at the center of its work.

The KGCFS Jordan's Principle Program continued to advocate for children and youth and supported **51 approvals, totaling \$164,249.53 in approved funding by ISC.**



JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE BY THE NUMBERS
FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026

51 Approvals Supported

\$164,249.53
Approved Funding by ISC

444 Children, Youth & Families Supported

 **OUR COMMITMENT**

We will continue to advocate for children and youth, work in partnership with families and communities and ensure their needs and well-being remain at the heart of our work.

Post-Majority Support Services

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

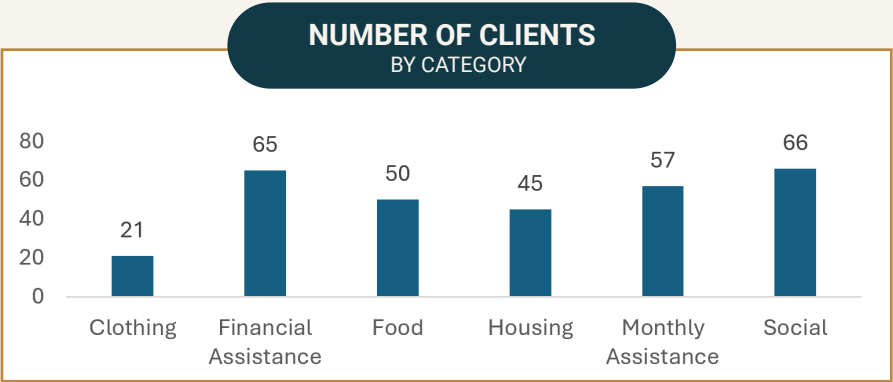
Post-Majority Support Services (PMSS) is a funding program through Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) that offers culturally appropriate wraparound support for eligible First Nation youth and young adults transitioning from care. Supports are guided by each youth's goals and may include housing, education, employment, health, culture, life skills and community connection.

PMSS services youth and young adults with a needs-based approach that prioritizes the overall well-being of the

Indigenous youth transitioning to independence. Emphasis is placed on their self-identified best-interests, including physical, emotional, cultural, relational and mental health safety and safe and secure housing. These supports are customized to reflect each individual's unique circumstances and needs, including time spent in care and out of care.

In the fiscal year 25-26, PMSS transitioned operations to each of the seven First Nations for a community-focused service delivery.

Planning discussions were initiated in July with all Youth enrolled in the program and their respective First Nation to prepare for transition in October. During this time, KGCFS supported the transition by collaborating with the respective First Nation communities, providing guidance on PMSS application processes, facilitating the transfer of client data, and engaging in consultations to address and prevent service gaps.



During the fiscal year 25-26, \$1,175,820 was secured through the PMSS program in various funding categories, as outlined in the chart.
Number of Claims: 131
Number of Youth Served: 83
Number of First Nations served: 34

Youth Personal Stories/Testimonies Gathered Over the Course of Service Delivery

"I have been very grateful for the help that PMSS was able to assist me reconnecting with my family during challenging times and providing me with the support I need throughout my daily life. It has given me the chance to live comfortably in my own apartment and create positive experiences."

"The PMSS Program has helped me wildly with everything including with helping me get on track and funding for apartment searches, resources, help me stay on track with my needs and stay focused."

"Having the help from KGCFS after being 18 has helped a lot, not sure where I would be without them".

Youth Outreach Team and Youth Transitional Housing Program

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Youth Outreach Program offers personalized support to First Nation children and youth aged 9 to 18 through direct referrals from their primary workers, addressing immediate needs. A key aspect of the Youth Outreach Workers' role is to promote mental health and well-being through regular check-ins, safety planning, and crisis response, helping youth navigate challenging or potentially harmful situations.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

•Conduct community outreach searches to locate vulnerable missing youth at risk of human and drug trafficking, often in collaboration with the Greater Sudbury Police Service (GSPS).

- Provide transportation support for appointments, school, or essential services.
- Assist with life skills, court support, and educational needs.
- Offer guidance and harm reduction support for youth facing mental health and addiction challenges, connecting them to resources and treatment options to facilitate safer, informed choices.

Youth outreach workers deliver compassionate care, ensuring that youth feel heard, safe, and connected while encouraging personal growth.

During the fiscal year 25-26, 1,159 services were provided to youth by Youth Outreach Workers.

CHALLENGES FACED This year presented significant challenges. Although many youth initially engage with services, their involvement often becomes sporadic, with many disengaging or not following through, despite available support. These patterns underscore the complexities of aiding at-risk youth and the necessity for persistent, trust-based approaches that meet them where they are, motivating them to make positive choices.

The program was incorporated into the Rapid Response Team just prior to the fiscal year because of funding limitations. Consequently, seven files for youth over the age of 18 had to be closed. Due to current funding constraints, the Youth Outreach Program ended in May 2026. This decision was not made lightly and reflects the challenging realities of our current funding systems.

2025-2026 fiscal year summary:



1,159
Services
Provided



229
Outreach &
Street Support



573
Check-ins &
Follow-ups

Feedback on the essential service of KGCFS Youth Outreach Workers

Overall, GSPS Missing Persons Unit identifies the integral role and responsibility the Youth Outreach Workers and the indispensable work preventing harm, emergencies and crises by engaging and working as a team with internal and external services who work directly to ensure a youth is safe from harm. Youth Outreach Workers are consistent in providing compassionate and harm reductive support and strengthening the safety net that keeps the most vulnerable youth in care from falling through cracks in accessing critical services during exigent circumstances.

Megan Skakum
Registered Social Worker with GSPS

Housing Support Program and Youth In Transition Program

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

During the fiscal year 2025-26, the Youth in Transition Worker (YITW) and Housing Support Worker (HSW) programs continued to provide culturally grounded, youth-centered supports to Indigenous youth transitioning into adulthood across the KGCFS service area. Working closely with youth, families, First Nations, schools, housing providers, and community partners, the programs assisted youth in achieving goals related to housing, education, employment, life skills development, cultural connection, and overall well-being. During the year, the YITW program supported 38 youth and the HSW program supported 56 youth, demonstrating the ongoing need for transition and housing supports within our communities.

Housing stability remained a primary focus throughout the year. Through individualized planning, advocacy, and coordinated service delivery, 28 youth were able to maintain stable housing while many others received support navigating housing systems, accessing community resources, developing financial literacy skills, and working toward greater independence. Positive outcomes were also achieved in education and employment, with youth working toward high school completion, pursuing post-secondary opportunities, and maintaining employment. Strong partnerships with First Nation communities and local service providers helped ensure youth had access to culturally relevant supports, housing resources,

educational opportunities, and wraparound services tailored to their individual needs. Despite significant challenges related to housing availability, rising costs, transportation barriers, and access to mental health and addictions services, youth continued to demonstrate resilience and progress toward their goals. The programs remained committed to providing relationship-based supports that strengthen cultural identity, community connection, and self-sufficiency. Through ongoing collaboration, advocacy, and culturally responsive service delivery, the YITW and HSW programs continue to play a vital role in helping Indigenous youth build stable, healthy, and successful futures as they transition into adulthood.

Youth Advisory Council

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

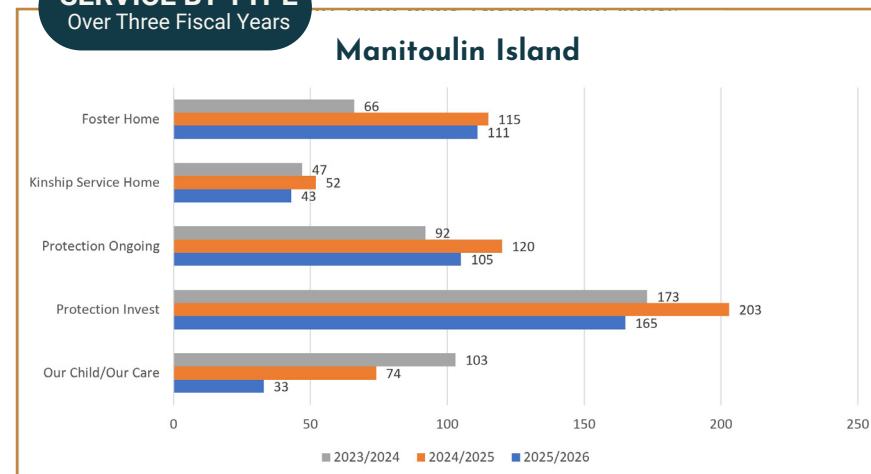
Throughout fiscal year 2025-26, the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) continued to provide an important forum for youth voice and engagement within Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services. The program supports youth by creating opportunities to share their perspectives, concerns, and ideas on issues that impact children and youth served by the agency. Feedback and recommendations from YAC members help inform agency policies, programs, and services, ensuring that youth voices remain an important part of organizational planning and decision-making.

YAC members participated in regular meetings and were provided opportunities for skill development, leadership growth, cultural learning, and peer connection. The program promotes a safe and supportive environment where youth can build relationships, strengthen life skills, participate in cultural activities, and learn about the Seven Grandfather Teachings while developing confidence and advocacy skills. During the year, the Youth Advisory Council experienced staffing transitions and ongoing recruitment challenges. Despite

these obstacles, the program successfully maintained youth engagement and transitioned coordination responsibilities to the Youth Cultural Enaadaamaaget role. KGCFS remains committed to strengthening youth participation and ensuring that young people continue to have meaningful opportunities to share their voices, contribute to agency initiatives, and help shape services for future generations.

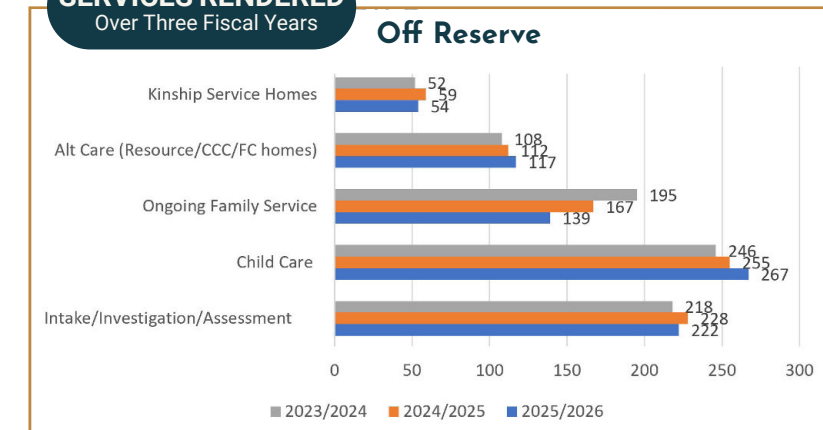
Protection and Mandated Services

SERVICE BY TYPE Over Three Fiscal Years



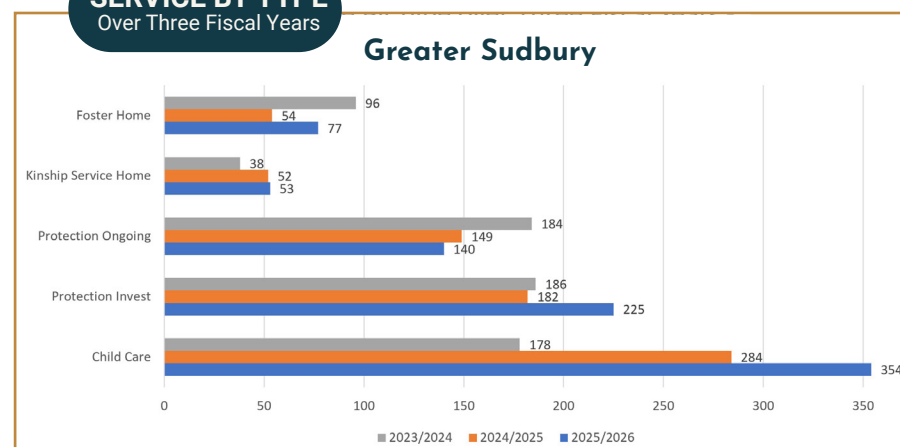
Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services delivered **457 services** mandated by the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services (MCCSS) to the **District of Manitoulin Island** and **849 services** to the **District of Greater Sudbury** in fiscal year 2025 – 2026.

SERVICES RENDERED Over Three Fiscal Years

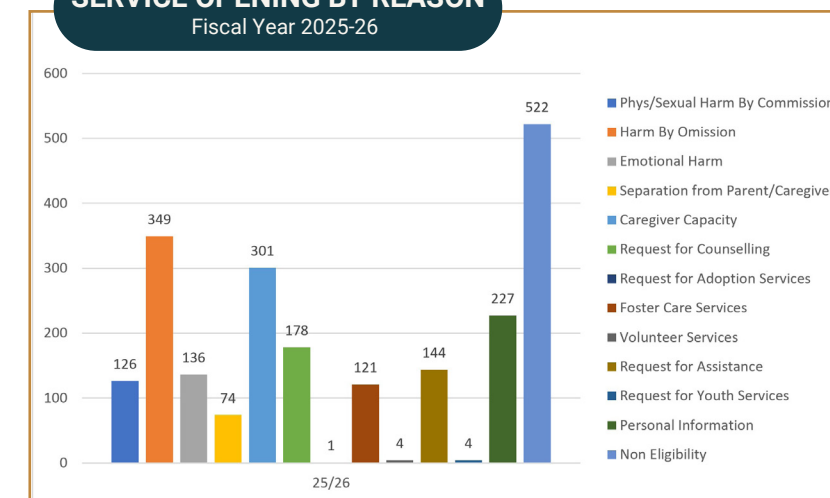


KGCFS received **2,187 referrals** within the Frontline system for child welfare services. The following graph indicates the prevalent reason for the opening of a service for the **1,665 eligible (75.9% of total referrals)** referrals, in accordance with the Ontario Child Protection Standards.

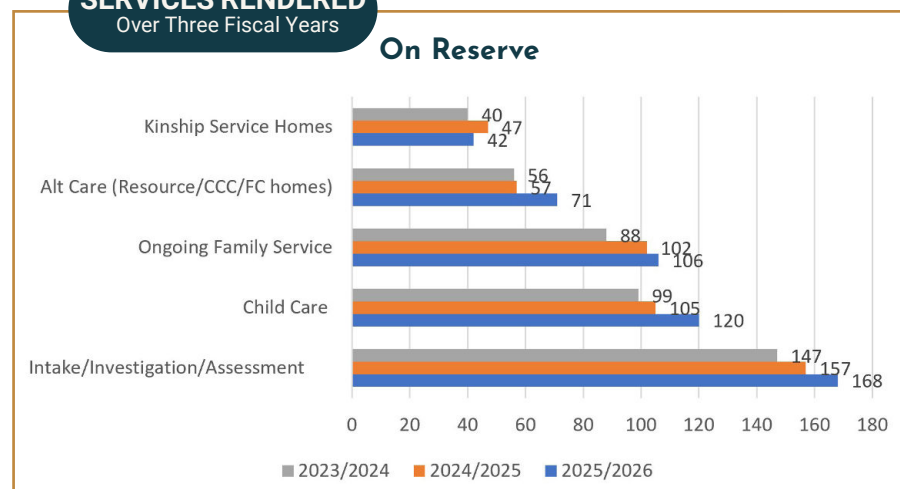
SERVICE BY TYPE Over Three Fiscal Years



SERVICE OPENING BY REASON Fiscal Year 2025-26

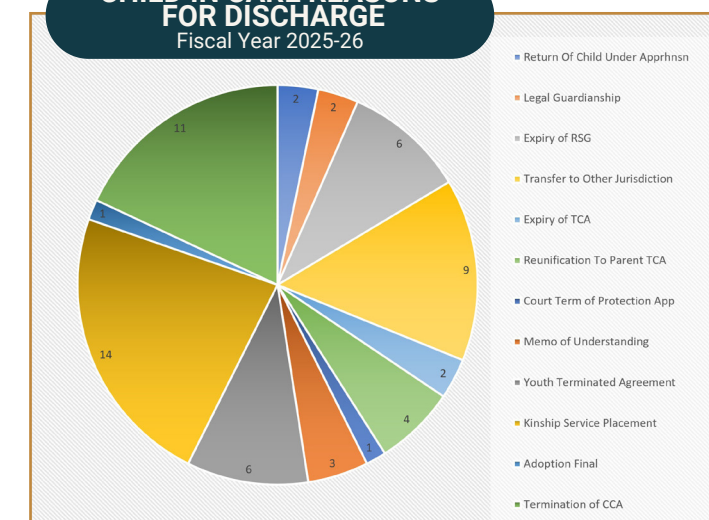


SERVICES RENDERED Over Three Fiscal Years



507 (38.8%) Ministry-mandated services were provided on reserve and 799 (61.2%) off reserve in fiscal year 2025-2026.

CHILD IN CARE REASONS FOR DISCHARGE Fiscal Year 2025-26



Child in Care

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Throughout the fiscal year 2025-2026, Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services remained committed to supporting positive outcomes for children and youth in care through culturally grounded, child-centered services. Ministry reviews completed during the year highlighted the agency's strong performance in meeting the needs of children and youth, with positive outcomes achieved in the areas of safety, permanency, well-being, education, and cultural connection.

The reviews confirmed that children and youth continued to receive individualized planning and supports designed to strengthen their connections to family, community, culture, language, and identity while promoting long-term stability and success.

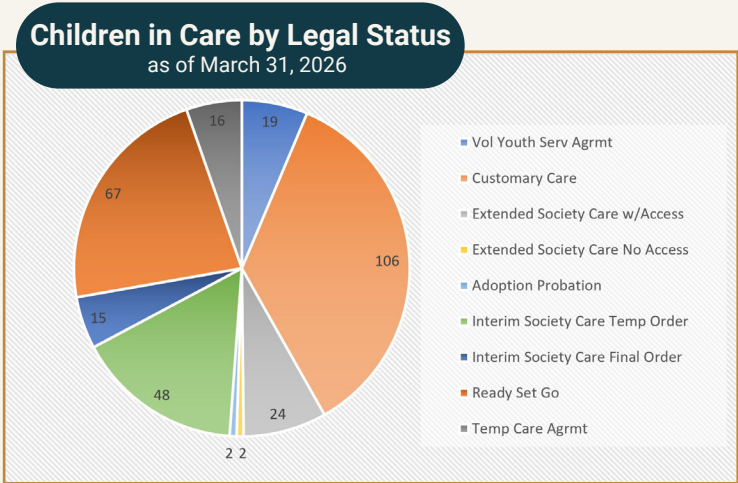
KGCFS continued to work collaboratively with caregivers, Member First Nations, Elders, schools, and community partners to ensure children and youth had access to the supports and services needed to thrive. Review findings demonstrated strong outcomes in permanency planning,

educational engagement, access to specialized services, and participation in cultural activities. All eligible children and youth reviewed were provided opportunities to engage in cultural programming and maintain connections to their First Nation communities, while educational planning and school supports remained a priority to help children achieve their full potential. The agency also continued to maintain a strong focus on placement stability and ensuring children received services that addressed their physical, emotional, developmental, and social needs.

Throughout the year, children and youth in care achieved many significant milestones that reflected their resilience, growth, and determination. Successes included academic achievements such as graduating from Grade 8 and demonstrating improved school attendance and engagement. Youth also participated in athletic and recreational activities, earning recognition through school challenges, bowling competitions, Special Olympics events, and community sporting opportunities including the Little

NHL. Several children and youth reached important personal goals, such as strengthening family relationships through successful reunification, achieving significant milestones in their wellness and recovery journeys, developing new life skills such as independent swimming, and participating in meaningful cultural teachings and ceremonies, including receiving traditional spirit names. These accomplishments highlight the strengths, perseverance, and potential of the children and youth served by the agency.

KGCFS remains grateful to its caregivers, staff, Elders, Member First Nations, and community partners whose dedication and collaboration contribute to positive outcomes for children and youth in care. Ministry review findings and the many successes achieved this year reflect the agency's commitment to quality service, continuous improvement, and supporting children and youth to thrive while staying connected to their culture, identity, family, and community.



Child Review Team

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Child Review Team meets virtually a minimum of three times per year and on an as-needed basis to review high-risk or complex files. This collaborative table provides clinical direction and strengthens our service delivery, mandated under the CYFSA.

KGCFS is actively recruiting community members to join our Review Team. Based on developments of new protocols and our continuing commitment to collaboration with our community partners and practitioners; we welcome their expertise and contribution to this very important table.

Currently there are 12 members from our Community Partners that sit on this table from KGCFS, Noojmowin Teg Health Centre, Health Sciences North, Greater Sudbury Police Services, Ontario Provincial Police, and Wiikwemkoong Board of Education.

We recently welcomed 2 new members; internally, Pamela Manitowabi (KGCFS Legal Department Supervisor) and Ashley Hayes (Registered Nurse-HSN). Child Well-Being Workers, Supervisors and First Nations Representatives also attend.

**HIGHLIGHTS
SINCE INCEPTION**

- 12** Partner Members
- 18** Meetings Since 2022
- 29** Files Reviewed
- 40** Hours of focused service collaboration

Volunteer Drivers and Casual Support Workers

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Volunteer Drivers and Casual Support Workers program provides flexible transportation and direct support services that help children, youth, and families maintain connection to visits, appointments, school, cultural activities, and other essential services.

During the fiscal year 2025-2026, the program demonstrated strong service capacity through a high volume of completed drives while also supporting infant transportation, supervised parenting time, and hospital-based baby cuddling.

Together, these supports contributed to a timely service delivery, continuity of care, and improved access for families across the service area.

During the 2025-26 fiscal year, there were 2,414 volunteer drives completed.

Community Case Conferences

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Community Case Conferences continue being organized, planned and virtually hosted by KGCFS 3 times per year for most of our 7 member First Nations; Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory's case conference takes 6 days and is held twice per year.

KGCFS follows the lead of each First Nation when scheduling case conferences; as a result, the frequency of meetings may vary based on the needs and preferences of the community.

COLLABORATION IN ACTION

This fiscal year we added Customary Care and Repatriation Planning to the case conferences in collaboration with the First Nations to help ensure that the focus remains on families staying together.

These full file review meetings continue to aid in collaborative planning with our member First Nations as well as other First Nations; currently we hold regular Case Conferences with two other First Nations.

OUR COMMITMENT

KGCFS recognizes the importance of Community Case Conferences, and we remain committed to holding these case conference at each First Nation's discretion. **Community Case Conferences continue to take place.**

HIGHLIGHT

19 Case Conferences co-ordinated
138 Hours spent reviewing files in addition to our regular file reviews and collaboration.

Customary Care

Customary Care is recognized as the preferred and primary approach of providing care for children who cannot remain with their parent(s).

Grounded in Anishinaabe traditions and cultural values, the customary care approach ensures that children grow in a safe and loving environment that reflects the customs and practices of their Nation.

A family engaged in customary care welcomes a child into their home under a Customary Care Agreement (CCA). This agreement, supported by a Band Council Resolution, affirms the inherent rights of the First Nation or Unceded Territory to care for its children in accordance with community customs and teachings.

Customary care is more than a placement; it embodies a commitment to maintaining children's connections to their identity, language, extended family and community. It reflects our collective responsibility to nurture and support children in a way that honours who they are and where they come from.

2025-2026 fiscal year summary:

27 New Files Opened
37 Files Closed
124 Active Customary Care Agreements as of March 31, 2026
7 Youth signed Voluntary Youth Service Agreements

During the 2025-26 fiscal year, from April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026: 27 new files opened; and 37 closed. **On March 31, 2026, KGCFS had 124 active Customary Care Agreements.**

OF THE 37 CLOSED FILES:

- 4** Closed as agreements were no longer required
- 3** Closed as the community initiated Prevention Customary Care
- 3** Placed in the custody of their caregivers
- 1** Remained with caregiver and the service closed
- 3** Transferred to another territory
- 5** Youth signed Ready Set Go Agreements

Family Support

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Family Support Program delivers structured, family-centered services that strengthen parenting capacity, support family connections, and promote child safety and well-being. Through parenting time, sibling connections, infant visits, in-home support, and responsive coverage across communities, the program helps families build on their strengths while accessing practical guidance, cultural connections, and community-based resources. The program's flexible service model allows staff to respond to diverse family needs across Greater Sudbury and Manitoulin while maintaining a focus on prevention, stability, and meaningful engagement.

PARENTING TIME PROGRAM

Eight full-time staff are dedicated to supporting ongoing parenting time and sibling connections. Their responsibilities include transporting children to and from visits, assisting with baby cuddling at HSN, infant transports, and assisting with weekly baby visits. The program also provides a weekend rotation service to support parenting time, sibling contact, and pop-in visits. Services are also available for special family occasions, working families, and cultural events such as Pow-Wows and circles.

2025-2026 fiscal year summary:

78 Open Files
229 Family Members Supported

IN-HOME FAMILY SUPPORT

Two staff provided direct support to families across the Manitoulin and Greater Sudbury jurisdictions. Staff connected families with appropriate supports and community-based services while maintaining active caseloads throughout the fiscal year. The program received positive feedback from First Nation Representatives, families, and colleagues.

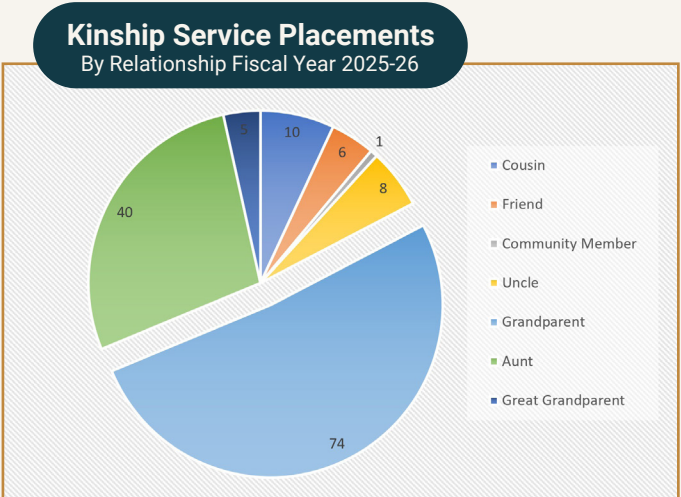
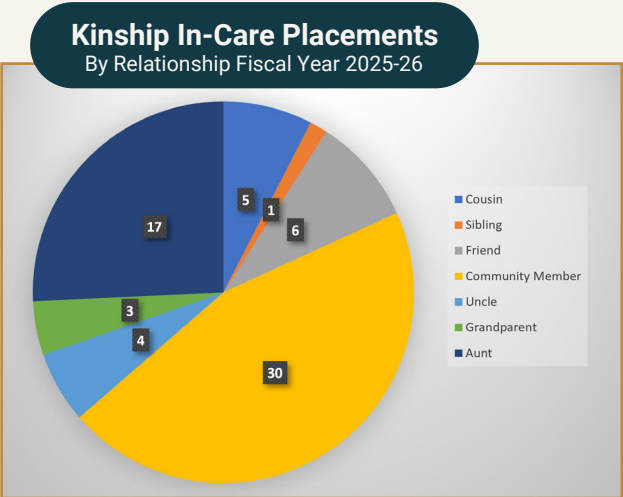
2025-2026 fiscal year summary:

39 Open Files
163 Family Members Supported

Kinship Services

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

KGCFS emphasizes Kinship Service assessments and support for families as the least intrusive option when considering out-of-home placements. Over the last three fiscal years, placements with grandparents have consistently represented the majority of Kinship In-Care placements, contributing to the goal of keeping children within their communities. Over the fiscal year, we have seen a slight increase in Kinship Services and Kinship In-Care Placements. For Kinship In-Care Placements almost half of the children were placed with a community member; the majority of children (almost 60%) in Kinship Service Placements were placed with their grandparents or great-grandparents.



Kinship Service refers to out-of-care placements with family, friends, and other caregivers. Kinship In-Care refers to in-care placements with family, friends, and other caregivers.

Foster Care

OUR COMMITMENT

Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services continues to provide family-based residential care for children in care with exceptional behaviours, social, emotional and medical needs.

We are pleased to report that KGCFS has received another Regular License from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. Our 2025-2026 review is set to take place in the fall of 2026.

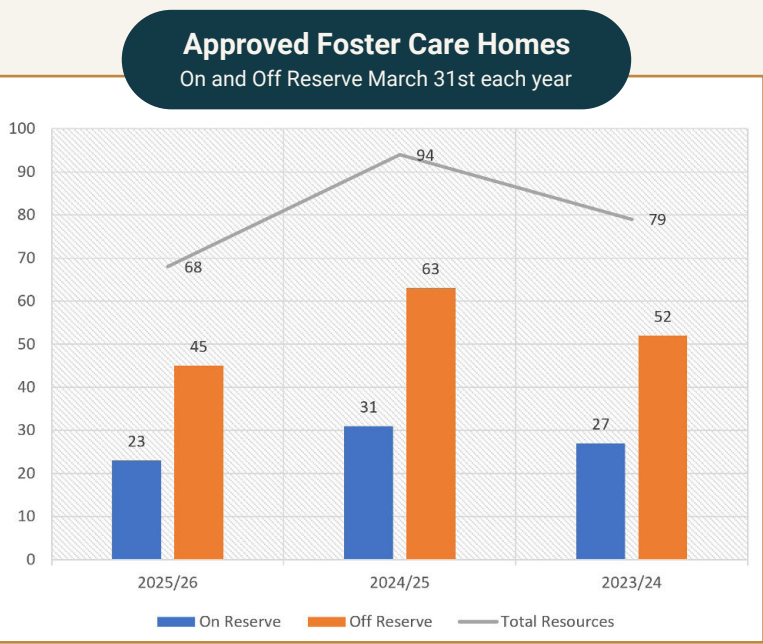
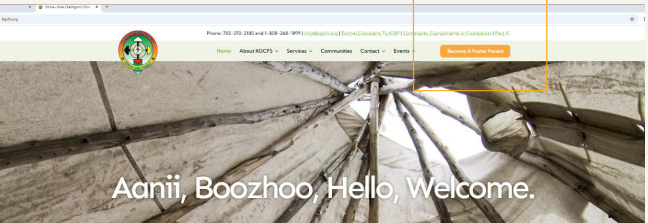
Our Foster Care department has been proactive in supporting applicants to meet housing and safety licensing standards and in strengthening the support network for foster parents. We also continue to increase the number of screened and approved support people and homes to ensure consistent relief providers.

ONGOING COLLABORATION

We are continuously building strong relationships with our First Nation partners and band representatives in relation to repatriating children back to their respective families, as well as ensuring children remain connected to their culture, families, homes and communities through Kinship Care and Customary Care placements.

ONGOING NEED FOR LOCAL FOSTER HOMES

The demand for foster homes is increasing, not only in our local communities but across Ontario as well. During this fiscal reporting period, we upgraded our website to enhance our foster care page to increase awareness, developed a new recruitment package that provides detailed information about the process and requirements for becoming a foster parent with KGCFS. These initiatives create more opportunities for the public to connect with our agency and start their journey toward becoming foster parents.



CURRENT FOSTER CARE RESOURCES

- 13** Customary Care Beds
- 26** Regular Foster Care Beds
- 1** Kinship Care Bed
- 41** Outside Paid Resources

CULTURAL RESOURCES AND TRAINING

The Foster Care team is dedicated to encouraging participation in monthly cultural programming hosted by the KGCFS Cultural Department. We also promoted language resources and developed culturally relevant workshops designed to incorporate teachings and strengthen support among our foster parents. Furthermore, we continue to ensure that the children in our foster homes receive support in their holistic well-being; focusing on their physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and cultural development.

During the 25-26 fiscal year, we hosted four, two day SPIRIT Training sessions with a total of 50 participants completing 800 in-person hours. New to KGCFS during this fiscal reporting is a Ministry requirement for foster parents to complete Kujali Training. A specialized four-part virtual, self-paced program designed to better support the social, emotional, and cultural well-being of Black children and youth in care. All training is available on the OACAS website for the foster parents.

Voluntary Youth Service Agreement (VYSA) and Ready Set Go (RSG)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The **Voluntary Youth Service Agreement** supports youth aged **16 to 17** who need help meeting their needs and remaining safe. The agreement is voluntary and does not place the youth in care, rather gives them access to support services.

Each youth works with a KGCFS VYSA worker on goal planning and support. A representative from the Office of the Children’s Lawyer helps the youth understand their rights and ensures their voice is reflected in planning for their future.

Ready Set Go supports eligible **young people from age 18 until their 23rd birthday** as they transition into adulthood. Youth direct their own transition planning, with KGCFS staff helping them navigate housing, education, employment, health and wellness, practical life skills, obtaining identification and their connections to family, culture and community.

KGCFS walks alongside youth as they build safe, stable and independent futures.

- Of the 82 youth registered with VYSA and RSG:**
- **40 youth** are attending high school
 - **18 youth** have received their high school diploma
 - **4 youth** are currently attending post-secondary school
 - **11 youth** are working
 - **2 youth** have attended treatment programs
 - **6 youth** are attending college
 - **3 youth** have graduated from college and are attending university
 - **2 youth** are studying Indigenous Social Work at LU
 - **2 youth** joined the Army
 - **1 youth** is attending culinary school
 - **1 youth** is in college to become an ECE

LIVED EXPERIENCE | STAFF REFLECTION

Reflecting on My Journey in Care

Growing up in care from a young age, my journey was not always easy. Through the challenges, I was fortunate to have an amazing worker who believed in me, supported my growth, and showed me the importance of having someone in your corner.

At the time, I didn’t fully understand how youth could be supported within the system or the many resources and opportunities available to them. Today, I have the opportunity to see that system from a different perspective, to recognize those supports, advocate for youth, and help implement them in my own practice.

I pursued my Indigenous Social Work studies at Cambrian College and completed my community placement. I later joined Kina Gbezhgomi Children and Family Services and now work alongside young people as they transition into adulthood.

Being able to come full circle in this way is incredibly meaningful to me. I went from being a youth in care who was supported by someone who believed in my potential, to now being in a position where I can offer that support for someone else. My experiences have not only shaped who I am, but have given me a deeper understanding of the importance of connection, trust, advocacy, and believing in a young person’s potential.

“I am grateful that I get to turn my own journey into a purpose, supporting youth, helping them recognize their strengths, and reminding them that **their past does not have to define their future.**”

Shared anonymously by a KGCFS staff member with lived experience.

Quality Assurance and Training

QUALITY ASSURANCE (QA) DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW The Quality Assurance Department provides essential data and reports to Executive Management and other stakeholders, focusing on improving services for children and families.

The Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Rapid Response Youth Trainer aims to offer wholistic training for children and youth in care (ages 9-18) and their support systems, integrating cultural and mental health services. This training promotes education and awareness while

fostering ongoing development in mental health and trauma-informed practices. It equips caregivers, families and workers with practical tools and guidance to better understand and support the well-being and development of children and youth in care.

In addition, KGCFS remains committed to building staff capacity through a range of in-house training opportunities coordinated by the Coordinator of Training Initiatives, ensuring staff have access to relevant and responsive professional development.

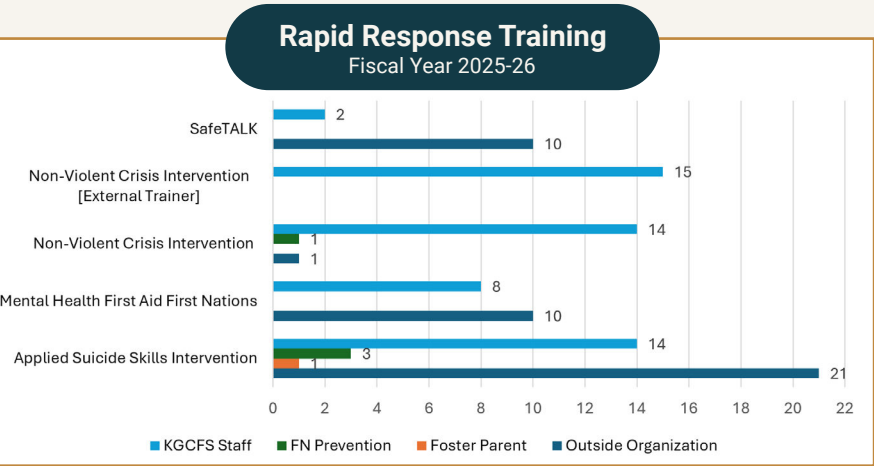
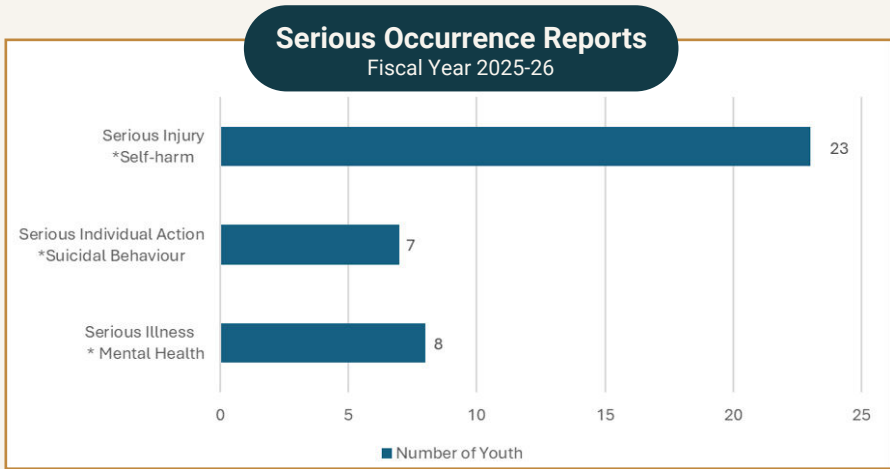
Goals & Benefits:

- Improved training consistency
- Equip staff and caregivers with essential skills
- Engage caregivers and older youth in support roles

Key Focus Areas for 2025/2026 Training:

- Suicide Prevention (ASIST, Safe Talk)
- Mental Health First Aid
- Health&Safety(FirstAidandCPR)
- Trauma-Informed Practices
- Indigenous Authorized Training
- Non-Violent Crisis Intervention
- Naloxone Training

SERIOUS OCCURRENCE (SO) Statistics Report From April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026, KGCFS recorded **37 serious occurrence reports** involving mental health and self-harm among youth in care, highlighting the ongoing need for enhanced training and support services.



RAPID RESPONSE TEAM TRAINING

In the 2025/2026 fiscal year, KGCFS successfully trained a total of 100 participants. The individuals who received the accredited training included internal staff, community partners, volunteers, and foster parents.

COORDINATOR OF TRAINING INITIATIVES

In-house training for Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services' employees has been maintained to strengthen internal training capacity, supporting enhanced skill development, knowledge, and awareness.

Some of these training initiatives included community partners, foster parents, First Nation Representatives, and KGCFS volunteers. **617 Participants were trained during the 2025-2026 fiscal year.** (shown in chart below)

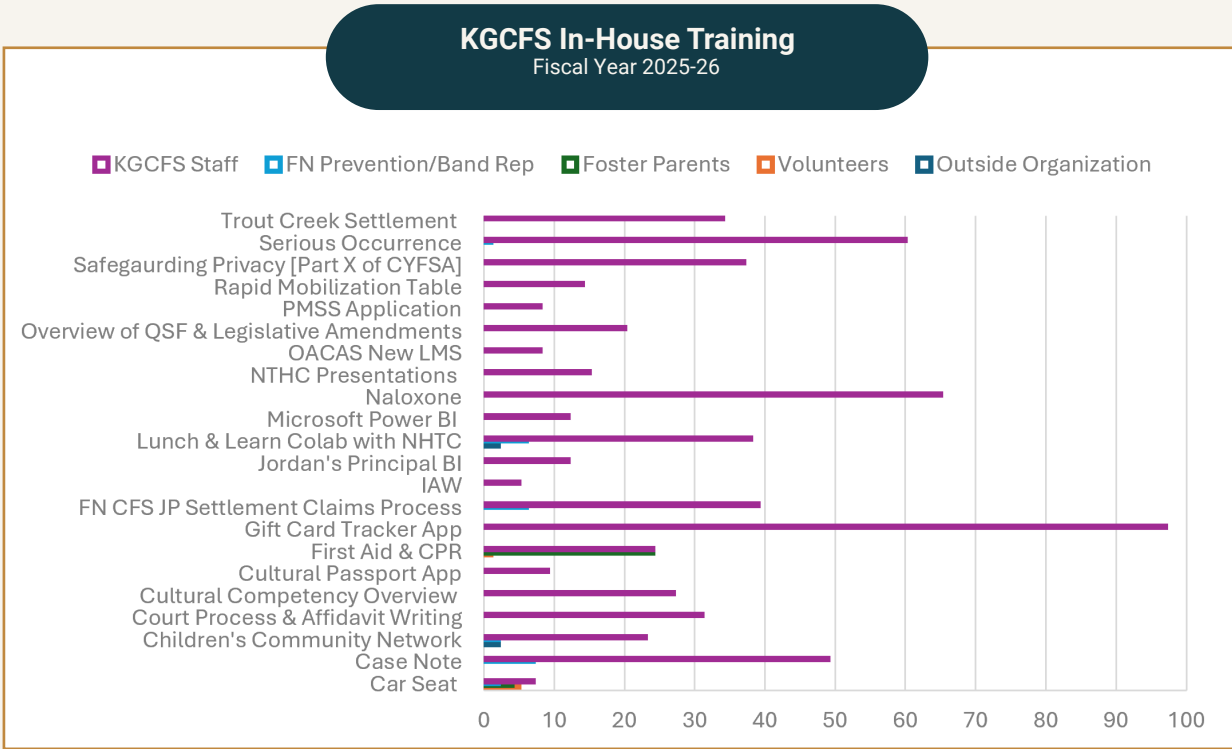
Successes:

- Positive feedback from participants on accredited training, noting personal and professional benefits
- Training locations were balanced between Manitoulin and Sudbury
- Integrated lived and Indigenous experiences enhanced learning.
- The program was well received by community-based teams

Challenges:

- Insufficient participants led to the cancellation of training sessions requiring 8 or more
- Scheduling training proved difficult for foster parents and staff
- Reliance on private contractors for classes needing two trainers impacted availability

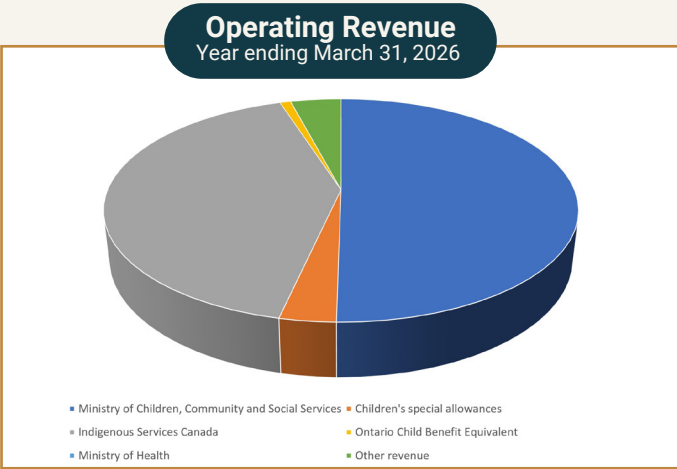
KGCFS Internal Portal for Employees to access training



FINANCIAL POSITION

Operating Revenue, Year Ending March 31, 2026:

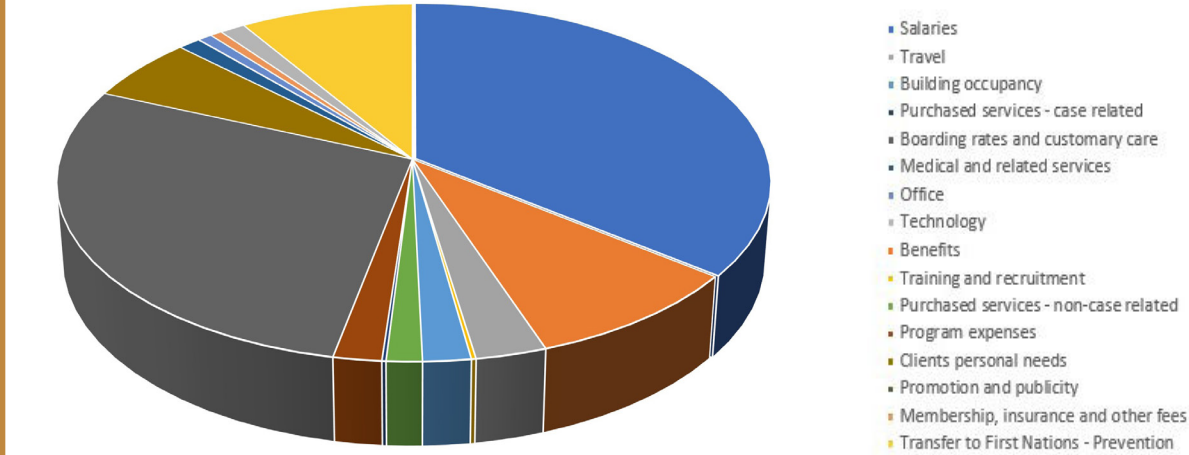
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services	21,785,491
Children’s special allowances	1,404,570
Indigenous Services Canada	17,998,257
Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent	374,126
Ministry of Health	8,323
Other revenue	1,776,929



Operating Expenses, Year Ending March 31, 2026:

Salaries	15,942,679
Benefits	4,080,587
Travel	1,284,076
Training and recruitment	83,211
Building occupancy	864,890
Purchased services - non-case related	644,126
Purchased services - case related	73,739
Program expenses	872,967
Boarding rates and customary care	12,692,322
Clients personal needs	2,601,454
Medical and related services	522,233
Promotion and publicity	11,775
Office	327,304
Membership, insurance and other fees	276,226
Technology	585,852
Transfer to First Nations - Prevention	4,004,987
Miscellaneous	238,806
Amortization of capital assets	458,972

Operating Expenses
Year ending March 31, 2026



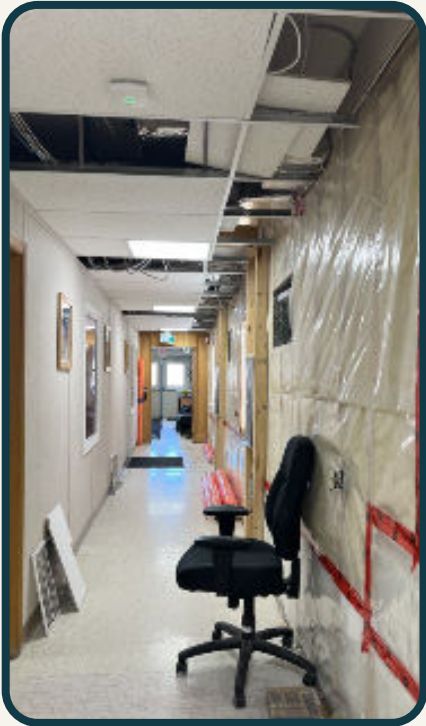
Property

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Property Department is vital for the operations of Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services in Sudbury and Manitoulin, managing maintenance, safety, and building operations across various facilities. Key responsibilities include:

-Building Operations and Maintenance: Overseeing 6 offices, 3 agency foster homes, 3 agency youth residences, agency vehicles and storage facilities, ensuring safety and compliance through regular inspections.

During the 2025-26 fiscal year, a significant roof repair project was required at one of our sites. This resulted in the temporary relocation of 35 employees for several months. The project was successfully completed, and normal operations have since resumed.



-Contract Services: Maintaining partnerships and overseeing external service providers for janitorial services, maintenance, and grounds keeping, while addressing winter snow removal challenges.

-Program Support Services: Assisting agency programs with event planning, cultural activities, and client placements, ensuring effective delivery of services and alignment with cultural needs.



-Health and Safety: Supporting the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC) with monthly meetings to enhance workplace safety, ergonomics, and remote work setups.

Additional responsibilities include:

- Oversight of workplace ergonomics.
- Support for home office setups to ensure safe remote work environments.
- Ongoing monitoring of workplace safety standards and compliance.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Human Resources guided KGCFS through organizational change while strengthening workforce supports, employee development and wellness.

NAVIGATING CHANGE

During the 25-26 fiscal year, like many organizations in the sector, the KGCFS Human Resources department was required to respond to financial and funding pressures that resulted in a workforce reduction and organizational realignment.

These decisions were not taken lightly, and significant care was taken to approach this process in a thoughtful and respectful manner, with a focus on supporting affected staff.

Leadership worked closely with Human Resources to implement changes in a way that maintained continuity of services for children, youth, and families. Wherever possible, the organization prioritized internal placements and reassignments, allowing a number of employees to transition into new roles within the agency.

However, for those leaving the organization, KGCFS provided enhanced notice periods and individualized transition support to assist with off-boarding planning and next steps. This approach reflects the agency's commitment to treating employees with dignity and respect, even during periods of significant change.

STRENGTHENING WORKFORCE

This period of change also created opportunities to review structures and align resources more closely with current service needs. As a result, KGCFS has moved forward with a more streamlined and sustainable staffing model, while continuing to invest in the development and well-being of its workforce.

In addition to supporting organizational change, efforts this year continued to focus on strengthening the employee lifecycle-from recruitment and onboarding to development and transition-ensuring that the organization remained responsive to both operational needs and evolving sector requirements.

Human Resources also expanded its role this year to include pension and benefits administration. This transition has allowed for greater alignment and support across programs such as OMERS, Sun Life benefits, the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), and timekeeping systems. This work helps ensure that employees have access to strong, reliable supports that contribute to overall well-being.

WELLNESS + ACCESSIBILITY

Additionally, KGCFS enrolled in the GoodLife Fitness, corporate fitness program. This allows staff to receive a 20% discount on any GoodLife membership and enrollment fees are waived. This offering also extends to family members and friends of those staff who enroll. Within the first six months of the program, there were 20 members enrolled during the fiscal year 2025-26.

Throughout the year, Human Resources remained accessible to staff, providing guidance on workplace matters, supporting professional growth, and promoting health and wellness. These efforts contribute to a resilient workforce that is better equipped to meet the evolving needs of children, youth, and families served by KGCFS.



EMPLOYEE MILESTONES

During the Annual General Meeting, Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services honours employees who reach significant years-of-service milestones. This page is dedicated to all KGCFS staff, with special congratulations to those being recognized at the 35th Annual General Meeting.

Keep up the important work you do!



Leona Nahwegahbow-baa receiving recognition gift 41 years of dedication



KGCFS Staff hand drumming during 34th Annual General Meeting

25

Years of Service

- Vanessa Paibomsai, Foster Care Resource Worker

15

Years of Service

- Scott Madahbee, Foster Care Supervisor
- Denise Morrow, Executive Director

10

Years of Service

- Tanya Chorney-Fernandez, Child Well Being Worker
- Heather Corbiere, Team Assistant
- John Ferguson, Child Well Being Worker
- Tracey Houle, Service Supervisor
- Kora-Lyn Paulin, Child Well Being Worker
- Ginger Radey, Foster Care Resource Worker

5

Years of Service

- Charlene Armitage, Administrative Assistant
- Tiffany Assiniwe, Human Resources Admin Assistant
- Christine Brouillette-Piche, Legal Assistant
- Kristin Debassige, Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator
- Terri Gunner, Human Resources Admin Assistant
- Vaneesha Mashru, Child Well Being Worker
- Spencer Moore, Human Resources Legal Manager
- Marcella Nabigon-Guerin, Service Manager
- Crystal Noel, Child Well Being Worker
- Jeffrey Paul, Child Well Being Worker
- Shelaine Williamson, Child Well Being Worker
- Victoria Williamson, Human Resources Admin Assistant

EVENTS AND RECOGNITION DAYS



KGCFS Management with
Algoma-Manitoulin MPP, Bill Rosenberg
at Enji-maajigawat Mina-waadiziwin July 2025



KGCFS Employees at KTEI Fall Harvest 2025



KGCFS Sudbury Protection team during
National Ribbon Skirt Day January 2026



KGCFS and MNVS group photo during the
Protocol Agreement Renewal July 2025



KGCFS and ERHHC group photo during the
Protocol Agreement Renewal August 2025



KGCFS Employees with Sudbury Wolves reps delivering
donation of teddy bears from the 2025 Teddy Bear Toss



KGCFS Employees receiving knitted items generously
donated from the Sudbury Royal Canadian Legion Branch 76

HONOURING THEIR LEGACY In Memoriam

In the early months of 2026, Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services mourned the passing of two cherished members who significantly contributed to the agency's legacy: Leona Nahwegahbow-baa and William (Bill) Antoine-baa.

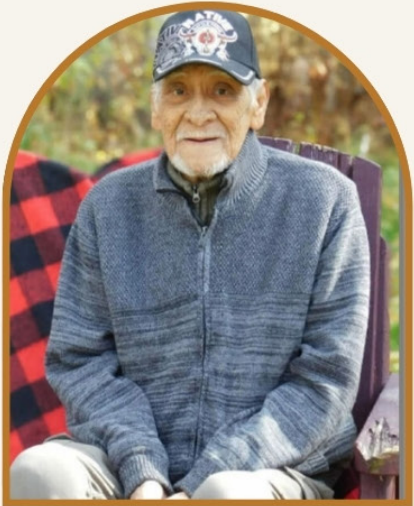


Leona Nahwegahbow-baa FOUNDATIONAL LEADER | BOARD DIRECTOR

Leona-baa was a founding member whose journey with KGCFS began at its inception. She dedicated many years to serving on our Board of Directors. As a former Chief of Whitefish River First Nation, she provided invaluable leadership, cultural insight, and guidance in promoting the agency's vision for First Nations-directed child and family services.

William (Bill) Antoine-baa FOUNDATIONAL LEADER | BOARD DIRECTOR

William's commitment to KGCFS ensured that the agency's work remained rooted in Anishinabek culture, traditions, and teachings. As a respected Elder, former Chief of Sheshegwaning, and a member of the Elders Advisory Council, he generously imparted his wisdom and life experiences, supporting healing and cultural connections for children, youth, and families.



**Their leadership, expertise and guidance
helped shape the agency we are today.**

KGCFS has greatly benefited from their leadership, expertise, and guidance. We remain profoundly grateful for their dedication and honor the enduring contributions they made to the agency and the communities we serve.

Miigwetch / Thank you!

If you want additional copies of the KGCFS 2025-2026 Annual Report,
please download from our website at
www.kgcfs.org

Our Children, Our Responsibility



Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services

98 Pottawatomi Avenue
Wiikwemkoong, ON

1-800-268-1899
1-705-370-2100

info@kgcfs.org

kgcfs.org