

Item 9.1.1

**HALIFAX**

## **Youth Advocate Program (YAP)**

Empowering Youth, Strengthening Community

# What is YAP?

- A voluntary, community-based crime prevention and advocacy program for youth (aged 9–15) at risk of or engaging in criminalized activity.
- Pilot launched in 2007, made permanent in 2011.
- Operates with 9 Youth Advocate Workers, each serving one of the following communities with a total capacity of 45 youth:
  - Spryfield
  - Bayers Westwood/Fairview/Clayton Park
  - North End Halifax
  - Sackville
  - Dartmouth North
  - Dartmouth East
  - Woodside/Gaston Rd
  - Cole Harbour
  - Preston Township

# YAP's Goals & Core Approach

## Goals:

- Increase resiliency and pro-social skills.
- Strengthen family and community supports.
- Reduce involvement in the justice system.
- Foster safer, more inclusive communities.

## Core Approach:

- Focuses on addressing root causes.
- Collaboration, cultural safety, and adaptability.
- One-on-one mentorship and individualized action plans guided by Youth Advocate Workers based on unique youth and family needs.

# Eligibility Criteria for YAP Participants

- **Age:** 9-15 at the time of referral
- **Location:** Must live within YAP program boundaries
- **Behaviour:** Demonstrates behaviours linked to chargeable offenses or has been charged
- **Risk Factors:** Faces challenges in multiple life areas (e.g., home, school, community) with limited protective factors
- **Exposure to Violence:** Has been exposed to violence or crime (e.g., incarcerated family members, friends involved in criminal behaviour)
- **Skills:** Low resiliency and/or pro social skills
- **Support Connections:** Limited connection to support networks

# YAP Roadmap: From Referral to Graduation

## 1. Referral – direct from community

- Youth identified by referral source
- Consent from youth & guardian
- Referral submitted online

## 2. Intake

- Meet with youth & family to assess eligibility
- Assign Youth Advocate Worker, if accepted
- If not accepted, other resources provided

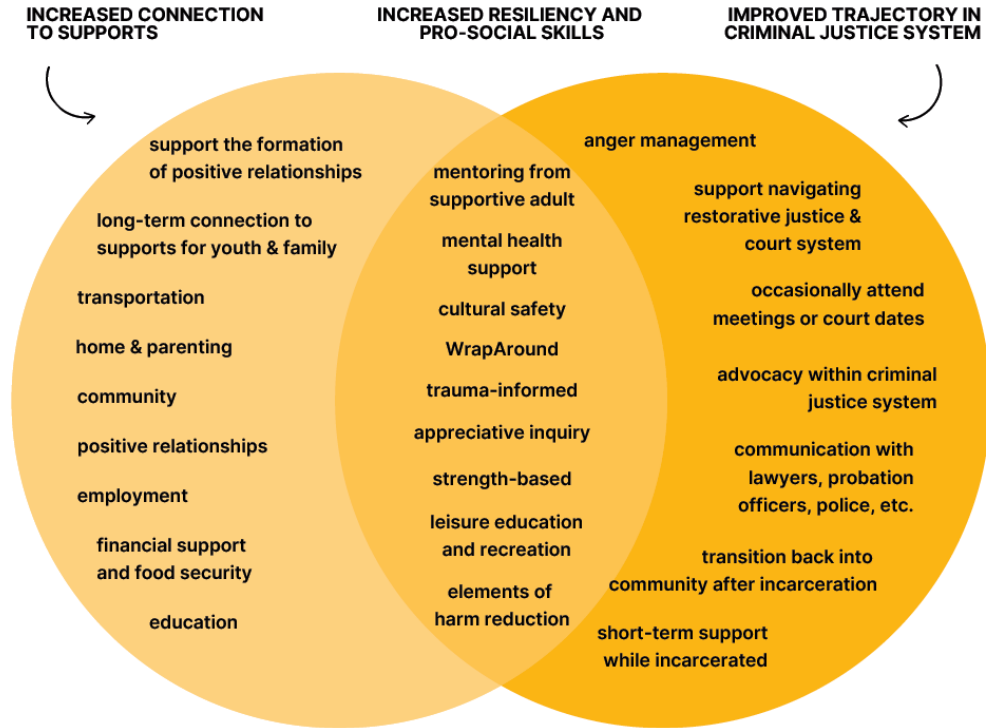
## 3. Program

- Regular check-ins & meetings
- Goal setting & action plan
- Mentoring & support
- Ongoing evaluation

## 4. Graduation

- Increased resiliency & pro social skills
- Improved support networks
- Positive trajectory in the criminal justice system
- Transition plan & final evaluation

# Program Action Planning



# Current Program Statistics

76 total referrals in 2024

87 active case files in 2024

Currently 39 active youth

Currently 37 referrals on waitlist

50 total youth in the program in 2024

11 graduations in 2024

Longest waitlist is in Bayers Westwood/Fairview/Clayton Park with 19 total youth, with 6 active, 2 waitlisted, and 11 referred

# Benefits of YAP: Youth

- **Increased Resiliency and Skills:** Builds pro-social skills to navigate challenges.
- **Improved Support Systems:** Connects youth and families with critical resources.
- **Reduction in Risk Factors:** Addresses root causes like exposure to violence or low self-esteem.
- **Personalized Development Plans:** Tailored action plans meet unique needs for growth.
- **Positive Trajectories:** Guides youth toward education, employment, and healthy life choices.



# Benefits of YAP: Communities

- **Crime Prevention:** Early intervention reduces crime, fostering safer neighborhoods.
- **Stronger Family Connections:** Reinforces family bonds, strengthening the community fabric.
- **Enhanced Civic Engagement:** Empowers youth to actively participate and lead in their communities.
- **Economic Impact:** Prepares youth for future roles, boosting local economies.
- **Collaborative Solutions:** Facilitates partnerships for unified community action.

# Addressing Gaps & Expanding Impact

## Gaps Identified

- Limited capacity: 40 active youth, 40 waitlisted.
- Increased need for culturally responsive supports.
- Insufficient prevention programs for younger youth.

## Future Projects – Going to Council

- Expand capacity with 2 new Supervisors, 2-3 new Youth Advocate Workers.
- Introduce culturally specific positions (e.g., Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, Newcomer/Immigrant).
- Launch SNAP program for early intervention (ages 6–12).
- Remove geographic boundaries to ensure equitable access.

# Thank You!

Questions?