



Antigonish Women's Centre
& Sexual Assault Services

2025/26 Annual Report

ONE DOOR can change a life.

A new space for hope, healing & rebuilding.



Wrap-around supports for our
community, all in one place.

Coming
Fall 2026

Learn More



Be a part of what's possible.



Antigonish Women's Centre
& Sexual Assault Services



REID

IRON MAPLE
CONSTRUCTORS

Whats Inside

Who
We Are



Message
from our ED



Our
Financials



What we
Achieved



Our Year in
Pictures





Our purpose is rooted in safety, dignity, and support.

At the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association, we work alongside women and gender-diverse people to provide advocacy, resources, and compassionate, trauma-informed support. We are committed to fostering safety, reducing barriers, and strengthening our community through care, connection, and action.

Our Mission



We work to create personal, community, and social change for women and their families through direct services, community development, education, and celebration.

Our Feminism and Our Values

Our feminism advocates for the decision-making agency of diverse women, girls, Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people and challenges all of the societal barriers that undermine their choices, freedoms, gifts, and humanity.

We work to be empathetic and nonjudgmental, appreciating the whole lives, varied journeys, and expertise of women, girls, Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people.

We work to be action-oriented, intersectional, and critical in confronting all oppressions against women, girls, Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people and in redistributing power to and with them.

Our Guiding Values



Taking Action for a Just World



Support and Nurturance



Collaboration



Inclusion



Integrity

Our Work

As a Women's Centre and Sexual Assault Centre, we offer programs that benefit the community as a whole as well as facilitated support programs specifically for women, girls, Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people. Our sexual assault services are available to survivors of all genders.

We Work:

- at a collective level, providing educational and support programs for people of all genders,
- at a community level, through community development initiatives and by providing workshops and presentations for the public, schools, and service providers, and
- at a systemic and institutional level, addressing the structural barriers that women and other groups who experience oppression face as they try to take control of their lives, and by advocating for more just and equitable public policies and programs to be implemented.

DIRECT SERVICES

- Information
- Check-ins and supportive listening
- Problem solving and supportive counselling
- Crisis counselling
- Advocacy and accompaniment

PROGRAMS

- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program
- Specialized Trauma Therapy program
- Lindsay's Health Centre
- Justice Matters for Women: Rural Outreach in Guysborough and Antigonish Counties
- Antigonish-Guysborough Immigrant Support Program
- Healthy Relationships for Youth
- Emergency financial assistance
- Wellness and skills-building programs
- Healthy relationships, violence prevention, and education programs
- Circles of Support and Change
- Together Tuesdays

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SOCIAL ADVOCACY

- Sexualized Violence Prevention
- Poverty Reduction
- Honoring, Celebrating, and Remembering



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED BY ANITA STEWART



As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with gratitude for the strength, resilience and courage demonstrated by the individuals and families we have had the privilege to serve. Every day, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association (AWRCSASA), remains committed to supporting survivors, advancing gender equity and creating safer, more inclusive communities throughout our region.

This year has brought both progress and profound challenges. Across our communities, we continue to witness the impacts of financial strain, mental health concerns, food insecurity, rising housing costs, substance misuse and addiction, social isolation and also barriers to accessing health care. For many of the individuals accessing our services, these pressures are compounded by experiences of gender-based violence, sexual violence and systemic barriers.

More people are reaching out for crisis support, immigration support, prevention education and workshops, advocacy, trauma therapy, healthcare needs, and the list continues to grow. These increasing needs highlight the ongoing realities faced by women, gender-diverse folks, and families throughout our region.

In response, the AWRCSASA continues to evolve as the needs increase and we continue to adapt, advocate and recognize that meaningful change requires both immediate support for those experiencing harm and long-term efforts to address the root causes of violence and inequality.



This year also marks an exciting milestone for our organization and communities we serve. We are pleased to share that we anticipate construction on our new Centre to begin this fall! This transformative project represents far more than just a new building – it represents an innovative investment in the future of our community and in the well-being of those who rely on our services.

The new Centre will allow us to bring together a wide range of supports and resources under one roof, creating a welcoming hub where individuals can access services more easily, with fewer barriers and greater coordination of care. By housing the many services and programs we offer in one location, we will be able to provide more comprehensive and responsive support to those experiencing a wide range of challenges and barriers to accessing services.

The need for the Centre has never been more evident. As rates of gender-based violence continue to impact our

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED BY ANITA STEWART



communities and demand for services increases, we must ensure individuals and families have access to the resources they need to heal.

The new Centre will strengthen our capacity to meet the needs of our communities for generations to come. As we look ahead, our commitment remains unwavering. We will continue to listen to those we serve, respond to emerging needs, advocate for systemic change and work toward a community where safety, dignity, and equity are realities for all. I am filled with energy and enthusiasm by the opportunities that lie ahead.

I extend my sincere thanks to our Staff, Board of Directors, Capital Campaign Cabinet members, donors, community partners and most importantly, the individuals who place their trust in us during some of the most difficult moments in their lives. Your courage to walk through our door inspires us to keep doing the work we do!

Together, we are building a stronger, safer and more compassionate community.

Sincerely,

Anita Stewart, Executive Director



Anita Stewart pictured at the STFX Health Society's two day conference where she was one of seven guest speakers to present.

CLIENT SERVICES COORDINATOR

SUBMITTED BY KAREN KEIZER



It is hard to believe another year has passed while having the privilege of supporting the clients and staff at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre. I feel incredibly blessed to work in this field every day. This year has been one of constant growth, moving parts, challenges, and excitement for the future.

At the beginning of the calendar year, we kicked off our social media planning for Indigenous History Month, Pride Month, and Mental Health Month. I continually strive to advocate, raise awareness, and provide meaningful information to our followers while representing the core values and beliefs of the Centre. Our Facebook engagement continues to steadily increase, while Instagram growth has been slower. Moving forward, the social media team plans to focus on increasing reel and video content to help engage more Instagram followers.

Social media posts highlighted our foot

clinics, menopause cafés, exercise groups, endometriosis support groups, Neighbours, Friends & Families events, Internet Safety & Fraud workshops, STI clinics, Lindsay's Health Centre promotions, Sexual Assault Awareness initiatives, 16 Days of Activism, International Women's Week, Black History Month, Pride Month, gender-based violence awareness, and various community events and information sessions, to name a few.

This year, we also added a television to our entry seating area to provide information on community events, Centre updates, and programs. It has been a welcome addition, as people seem to genuinely engage with the content and take note of what is happening locally.

Last summer, we once again participated in the Highland Games parade. Our theme focused on our new building project, and we were able to raise community awareness while earning 3rd prize.



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CLIENT SERVICES COORDINATOR

SUBMITTED BY KAREN KEIZER



In September, we attended our annual staff retreat, which was both strategically beneficial and an excellent team-building opportunity. We spent our days planning for the year ahead, setting goals, and working collaboratively to identify challenges and remove obstacles. Our evenings were filled with laughter and bonding moments, which continue to strengthen our working relationships throughout the year.

Reaghan Sylvester, GBV Prevention & Awareness Coordinator, and I spear-headed a new event this year called "Say Yes to the Prom Dress." Over 50 prom dresses were collected in February, with the event taking place on the 28th. We had two seamstresses on site to take measurements and alter dresses, along with food, decorations, and prizes. The event introduced new young women to the

Centre and relieved financial pressure for those who could not afford dresses on their own. It was such a wonderful experience, and we hope to replicate it again next year.

I come to work each day truly grateful to be able to help people during times of crisis. Welcoming clients into a warm environment where they are valued as human beings, regardless of the circumstances that brought them to us, is a gift. One woman said to me, "Thank you. You are the first person I saw today who made me feel like you were happy to see me — that doesn't happen often." I feel fortunate to work in an environment where a small gesture of kindness can have that kind of impact on someone and their lives.

As I reflect on the past year, I am reminded that the work we do at the Centre extends far beyond programs and events. It is about creating a safe, supportive space where people feel seen, heard, and valued. I am grateful to work alongside such compassionate staff who continue to show up for our community every single day. I look forward to another year of growth, connection, and continuing to support the women, families, and individuals who place their trust in us.



SOCIAL MEDIA



DATE	Facebook Views	Facebook Visits	New Follows (Facebook)	Instagram Reach	Instagram Visits	Instagram New Follows
Apr 2025	89,800	2,100	76	1,900	119	4
May 2025	53,400	1,500	33	1,600	110	9
Jun 2025	70,500	1,900	46	2,600	164	21
Jul 2025	67,100	2,000	30	2,000	85	11
Aug 2025	35,400	1,100	22	1,423	46	8
Sep 2025	75,700	2,600	40	15,460	152	13
Oct 2025	47,900	1,700	37	16,065	247	18
Nov 2025	32,600	1,100	31	10,619	72	15
Dec 2025	99,000	2,400	81	18,541	97	5
Jan 2026	86,600	1,900	38	6,634	72	8
Feb 2026	170,900	3,300	107	10,037	126	19
Mar 2026	164,500	3,700	145	12,488	165	18
Total	992,400	25,500	660	91,267	1,500	149

DEFINITIONS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA STATISTICS

Views- The number of times your content was played or displayed. Content includes videos, posts, stories, and ads.

Reach- Counts reach from the organic or paid distribution of your Facebook content, including posts, stories, and ads. It also includes reach from other sources, such as tags, check-ins and Page or profile visits.

Visits- The number of times your Page or profile was visited.

Follows- The number of times accounts followed you in the selected time period.

AWRCSASA PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



6029 Core Contacts

Calls: **2301**

Emails: **653**

Visits: **3075**

216 Project Contacts

Donations: \$46,664.47

Direct Mail (Canada Helps): **\$13,024.47**

Father Milflen Fund: **\$1,000.00**

Other: **\$27,215.00**

100 Women Who Care: **\$5425.00**

Opportunity Shop Vouchers: 359

Date	Number of Vouchers Distributed
Apr 2025	26
May 2025	34
June 2025	34
July 2025	28
Aug 2025	29
Sept 2025	37

Date	Number of Vouchers Distributed
Oct 2025	34
Nov 2025	36
Dec 2025	21
Jan 2026	28
Feb 2026	21
Mar 2026	31

CREATIVE CIRCLE



MONTH	# WEEKS AND ATTENDANCE	MONTHLY TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	# OF PARTICIPANTS
April, 2025	3 weeks- 9,8,10	27	13
May, 2025	3 weeks- 9,9,6	24	10
June, 2025	4 weeks- 10,11,8,9	38	12
July, 2025	Paused for Summer	0	0
Aug, 2025	Paused for Summer	0	0
Sept, 2025	3 weeks- 7,7,4	18	10
Oct, 2025	3 weeks- 8,6,5	19	9
Nov, 2025	3 weeks- 10,6,8	24	10
Dec, 2025	1 week- 6	6	6
Jan, 2026	Snow storms every Monday	0	0
Feb, 2026	2 weeks- 8,8	16	10
Mar, 2026	4 weeks- 7,7,5,6	25	8

BRINGING WOMEN TOGETHER: TOGETHER TUESDAYS

SUBMITTED BY VANGIE BABIN



Together Tuesdays is an amazing program where women gather to do an activity and share a meal. They get to meet new women and learn new skills.

This year, Vangie facilitated the Spring sessions with Vanessa Zwicker, Summer Student, along with guest facilitators.

The first session we painted clay pots and turned them into beehives and ladybugs. Some painted them as usable flower pots. The following week, a tree was painted on a canvas and once it was dry buttons were glued on to represent fruit. The following week we took the local community transit to the bowling alley and had a blast. It was a tremendous amount of fun. Vangie made jambalaya to serve, which none of them had ever tried before, and it was consumed in record time. The fourth session, Sarah England, a young local business woman, demonstrated how to make button bracelets. It was such a big hit, many of the women were able to make two each.

In June, Together Tuesday sessions included planting petunias in flower pots with Heather Blackburn; sea glass card creations with Jeannette Pittman; and last but not least to wrap up the program Picnic in Chisholm park with a few easy outside activities. Many of the women couldn't remember when they last had a picnic so it was great to remind them of the fun that can be had while gathering outside.

The beauty of this program is even though a sample is provided for them, the women have the absolute freedom to put their own spin onto the various projects. The women thoroughly enjoy this program and are already asking when the next set of sessions will begin.

BRINGING WOMEN TOGETHER: TOGETHER TUESDAYS

SUBMITTED BY VANGIE BABIN



In September, the Together Tuesday program started up once again after taking the summer off. The program started off with Crayon Creations which allows one to look at and appreciate pieces of abstract art. Afterwards, we all enjoyed homemade nachos.

The following week, we headed out to the Clayfire Café, which is a new pottery business in Antigonish. The women chose various items to paint and then left the items to be fired, which I later picked up and handed them back to each woman one at a time. Lots of ooo's and awe's, it felt like Christmas morning. After the pottery session we headed over to the Moonlight Restaurant for a lovely meal together.

On September 30th, we were fortunate to have Heather Blackburn, accompanied with her daughter, Flo, bring some of their home-grown flowers for the women to make beautiful floral arrangements. Heather shared her love for the flowers and how special they can make one feel. Afterwards, we all enjoyed subs from Subway.

On October 7th, Jeannette Pittman led the group in name/word ornament creations made with wooden beads. After which we all enjoyed a meal of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

October 14th was organized by Laurie Smith with her Halloween inspired watermelon creations instead of the traditional pumpkin carvings. Spaghetti from The Wheel was enjoyed by all. Vanessa Zwicker took the lead on paint night with a pumpkin.

On October 28th, Sarah England lead us all in making jewelry creations which really inspired everyone. Everyone enjoyed pizza from El Forno.

On the last night, Nov 4th, Vangie and Faye Fraser led the group in tree decorations made from buttons and gems, which took it to the next level by lighting it up with battery operated lights. Momma burgers from A&W was on the menu, which surprised many, as they said they don't usually get to that end of town. Surveys were then handed out in order to improve the next set of Together Tuesday programs.

– Vangie Babin

BRINGING WOMEN TOGETHER: TOGETHER TUESDAYS

SUBMITTED BY VANGIE BABIN



PARTICIPATION

SPRING SESSION

WEEK 1: 8
WEEK 2: 10
WEEK 3: 9
WEEK 4: 8
WEEK 5: 9
WEEK 6: 9
WEEK 7: 10

FALL SESSION

WEEK 1: 3
WEEK 2: 7
WEEK 3: 7
WEEK 4: 8
WEEK 5: 8
WEEK 6: 8
WEEK 7: 8



CIRCLES OF SUPPORT

SUBMITTED BY JENNIFER DESMOND



The Circles of Support Program continued to support African Nova Scotian women from Antigonish, Upper Big Tracadie, Lincolnville, and Sunnyville through culturally grounded, safe, and empowering spaces focused on healing, connection, and well-being. Over the past year, the program included community gatherings, workshops, guest speaker sessions, Wellness Wednesday circles, and ongoing one-on-one support. Attendance remained strong, with 20–25 women attending major events and 10–15 women participating weekly.

The program remained rooted in key principles including cultural affirmation, community-centered support, emotional safety, holistic wellness, collaboration, and education around gender-based violence (GBV) and intimate partner violence (IPV). Women consistently described the space as one where they felt understood, valued, and supported.

Key sessions included the Phenomenal Women Circle, which focused on identity, resilience, self-worth, and empowerment through storytelling, affirmations, and reflection. The Paint & Praise Workshop combined creativity, faith, and healing through painting, prayer, and discussion centered on resilience, identity, and generational strength. Gather & Grow Circles created trusted spaces for Black women to discuss identity, motherhood, racism, grief, addictions, violence, leadership, and healing.

The Guest Speaker Series featured Barbara Roberts and Wyndolyn Brown, who led powerful discussions on self-worth, identity, GBV, sexual exploitation, healing, and resilience through culturally relevant and spiritually grounded approaches.

Participants described these sessions as validating, transformative, and deeply healing.

Weekly Wellness Wednesday sessions provided consistent emotional support, practical coping strategies, and culturally informed guidance around stress, parenting, relationships, racism, finances, mental wellness, and self-esteem. The reliability of these sessions helped foster trust, routine, and connection among participants.

A major strength of the program was the ongoing accessibility and one-on-one support available outside formal sessions. Women frequently reached out for emotional support, service navigation, guidance, and follow-up conversations, reinforcing the importance of trust, relationship-building, and community care.

Overall, participants reported increased confidence and self-worth, stronger connections across communities, safer spaces for healing conversations, greater awareness of GBV and exploitation, and renewed hope and emotional wellness. Many women described Circles of Support as not just a program, but a lifeline.



*Circles of Support:
Paint & Praise led
by Wyndolyn
Brown*

ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR

SUBMITTED BY MEGAN MYERS



Joining the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre as Administrative Coordinator this past August has been an incredibly rewarding experience. Although I have only been with the organization for part of this reporting year, I have already had the opportunity to witness the dedication, compassion, and collaboration that guide the work being done every day within our organization and throughout the community.

Over the past several months, I have come to appreciate just how much care, coordination, and behind-the-scenes work goes into supporting the programs and services offered through AWRCSASA. From organizing daily operations and supporting staff needs to helping coordinate meetings, events, and community initiatives, I have quickly learned that every role within the organization contributes to creating a welcoming, supportive, and responsive environment for the individuals we serve.

One of the things that has stood out most to me since joining the team is the strong sense of collaboration among staff. There is a shared commitment to ensuring people feel heard, respected, and supported, and it has been inspiring to see the many ways staff continually adapt to meet evolving community needs with empathy and professionalism.

As someone new to the organization, I have



also been incredibly grateful for the support and encouragement I have received during my transition into this role. The patience, knowledge sharing, and kindness shown by colleagues have made me feel genuinely welcomed, and I deeply appreciate the opportunity to learn from such a passionate and experienced team.

Throughout this year, the AWRCSASA has continued to grow and evolve while remaining grounded in its mission and values. I feel fortunate to contribute to work that has such a meaningful impact within our community, and I look forward to continuing to learn, grow, and support the organization in the years ahead.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our staff team, board members, volunteers, funders, and community supporters. Your ongoing commitment and support make this work possible, and I am grateful to now be part of this organization and the important work it does.

Our Year in Pictures



AWRC staff attending the raising of the Pride flag at STFX in support and celebration.



AWRC staff spoke to Nova Scotia Health's Mental Health & Addictions team at St. Martha's Regional Hospital in Antigonish for their 'Team Away Training Day', to discuss programs and services we offer.



Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services

Staff members attended the Pathways to Safety Symposium in New Glasgow organized by PSART and Roots of Hope.



Staff provided information on Gender Based Violence at the Goshen Community Centre. The event was organized by Allison Grady, Health and Wellness Coordinator.



Shown below (L - R)
Allison Grady, AWRC, Blossom Labllois, Tajkeimik, Taq Bhandal, PhD, Vanessa Walker, CB Centre for Sexual Health, Wanda Earhart, Every Women's Centre



Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High Volunteer Fair 2026

Our Year in Pictures



Highland Games Parade



Pride Bingo at Candid



Staff dropping off Go-Bags to the Library, to support individuals leaving situations of Intimate Partner Violence. Bags were also delivered to A Roof Over Your Head, and the RCMP.



Staff handing out lemonade during Stroll the Main.



Four staff members at a training in Baddeck, NS facilitated by Sheri Coburn, MSW, RSW with the Crisis and Trauma Resource Institute.



Staff participated at the Red Dress Day March for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) in Paqtnkek, honouring the lives lost and advocating for justice and systemic change.



Two of our HRY staff attending PREVnet's, Community of Practice Annual Meeting in Toronto. This conference aims to join all projects funded by PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) to prevent youth dating violence.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUTH

SUBMITTED BY TAEYA JONES



Provincial Coordinators	Taeya Jones & Sarah Thomas
Regional Coordinators	Emily Trudeau, Olivia Hart, Catherine Boucher, & Kayla Milley

This year was marked by both growth and challenge for the Healthy Relationships for Youth (HRY) program. While ongoing reluctance from some Centres for Education continued to limit opportunities for broader program expansion, the HRY team remained adaptable and committed to delivering meaningful programming across Nova Scotia. Despite these barriers, the program successfully expanded into new schools and increased participation among returning school partners. The expansion of the HRY team also supported a wider range of workshops, presentations, and community initiatives, strengthening the program's provincial presence and increasing public awareness of healthy relationships education.

A highlight this year was the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's (DEECD) request for HRY to lead the development of a new provincial Bystander Intervention curriculum for grades 10–12. The request reflects recognition of the quality and expertise of both the AWRCSSA and the HRY program in youth relationship education.

Another important initiative was the launch of a pilot community-based HRY program in partnership with the AWRCSSA's GBV Prevention and Awareness Coordinator in Paqtnkek Mi'kmaq Nation. The 8-session program, delivered with female-identifying youth ages 10–13, is being developed collaboratively. This partnership supports culturally relevant adaptations informed by Indigenous knowledge and perspectives while helping guide the development of a flexible, standalone community-based HRY model and future adaptations to the school-based curriculum.

The primary challenge this year continued to be inconsistent support and engagement from some Centres for Education, which limited the program's ability to expand equitably across the province. These barriers impacted opportunities for broader implementation despite increasing demand for healthy relationships and gender-based violence prevention education. However, HRY remains committed to working flexibly with school partners and meeting each school community where they are. By adapting programming to the unique needs and realities of each location, the program remains optimistic that these relationships will continue to strengthen and support expanded delivery in the coming year.

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HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUTH

SUBMITTED BY TAEYA JONES



The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's proposed new P-12 gender-based violence curriculum, developed in response to the recommendations of the Mass Casualty Commission, aligns closely with HRY's program goals and is expected to create further opportunities to expand HRY programming in schools across Nova Scotia during the 2026-2027 school year. Looking ahead, the program is also focused on broadening the range of workshops and educational opportunities offered through both school and community partnerships, while continuing to explore sustainable and flexible delivery models that support long-term accessibility, consistency, and impact across Nova Scotia communities.

OUR HRY TEAM



TAEYA JONES



SARAH THOMAS



EMILY TRUDEAU



OLIVIA HART



CATHERINE BOUCHER



KAYLA MILLEY

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUTH

SUBMITTED BY TAEYA JONES



HRY Participation 2025–2026:

Region	School	Total # of Youth Facilitators	Total # of Grade 9 participants
SRCE	Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School	48	207
SRCE	Fanning Education Centre/ Canso Academy	5	18
SRCE	Chedabucto Education Centre/ Guysborough Academy	9	15
SRCE	Dalbrae Academy	12	53
SRCE	Inverness Academy	7	24
SRCE	Cape Breton Highlands Academy	4	30
SRCE	St. Mary's Education Centre/Academy	24	20
SRCE	Strait Area Education Recreation Centre (SAERC)	10	62
SRCE	East Antigonish Education Centre/Academy	12	20
CCRCE	Oxford Regional Education Centre	6	29
CCRCE	Northumberland Regional High School	18	230
CCRCE	Cobequid Educational Centre	23	131
CSAP	École Acadienne de Pomquet	16	35
CSAP	École Beau-Port	3	19
HRCE	Halifax West High School	17	180
HRCE	J.L. Ilsley High School	51	362
HRCE	West Bedford High School	18	150
Totals	17 schools	283 YFs	1585 Grade 9's

HRY Workshops:

35 workshops delivered in schools and 5 delivered in community settings

LINDSAY'S HEALTH CENTRE

SUBMITTED BY DENISE MCCARRON-HART



The Lindsay's Health Centre continues to be a safe, welcoming, and supportive space for women and gender diverse people in Antigonish County and surrounding communities. Over the past year, we have seen incredible growth within the clinic and a continued increase in the need for accessible health services. More than ever, community members are reaching out for support, care, education, and connection – and we are proud to be a place where people feel heard, supported, and comfortable.

The demand for services continues to grow rapidly. Appointments are currently booking into the summer, with wait times averaging four to six weeks. We continue to maintain active cancellation lists to

try and accommodate urgent concerns whenever possible. Many people accessing our clinic do not have family doctors and often arrive feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, or unsure where to turn. Hearing patients say how grateful they are that our clinic exists reminds us daily how important these services truly are within our community.

This year also brought significant weather-related challenges, with 11 clinic days cancelled due to storms, which greatly impacted in-person appointment availability and contributed to increased cancellation numbers and longer wait times for patients trying to access care. We would love to be able to add additional clinic days. The need for accessible health services within our community continues to grow, and increased clinic capacity would allow us to reduce wait times and improve access to care for so many people who rely on our services.

Over the past year, we have also worked hard to make the clinic feel softer, calmer, and more comforting for the people walking through our doors. Even small changes to the space have been noticed by patients, with many commenting on how welcoming and safe the environment feels.

In May 2025, we were excited to welcome Cianna back from maternity leave. Cianna returned to clinic services on May 22, 2025, and began offering services in Guysborough on Mondays starting in July 2025, helping expand access to care for people in surrounding communities. Cianna is a Registered Social Worker with Nova Scotia Health who offers short-term one-to-one appointments focused on creating individualized plans and goals to support individuals experiencing mental health and addiction concerns.

On April 24, 2025, Dr. Moria MacLean provided an STI outreach clinic in Paqtnekek, helping bring sexual health services and support directly into the community.

We are also continuing to expand health education and support opportunities within the clinic. Plans are underway to collaborate with Allison Grady, Health & Wellness Coordinator at the AWRC, to offer both menopause and endometriosis support and information sessions for people in our community. In addition, we are planning future sexual health “check-in” days where individuals can access STI testing and treatment, birth control support, pregnancy-related concerns, and sexual health education in a welcoming and judgement-free environment.

This year, our team attended the AWRC Staff Retreat held September 16–18, which provided

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LINDSAY'S HEALTH CENTRE

SUBMITTED BY DENISE MCCARRON-HART



valuable opportunities for connection and team collaboration.

We have also been focusing on increasing awareness of the clinic through social media and community engagement. Promoting sexual and reproductive health, normalizing conversations around these topics,, and helping people learn about the services available to them has become an important part of connecting with the community. We are also looking forward to hosting an upcoming Women's Health event on June 24.

Our clinic team also attended a GreenShield presentation regarding the Essential Medicines Program. Following this meeting, Lindsay's Health Centre now offers support and guidance for eligible patients interested in accessing the GreenShield Essential Medicines Program through our clinic.

Lastly, in March 2026, Dr. Moria MacLean shared notice of her upcoming departure from the clinic. Over the years, Dr. MacLean has provided compassionate care and support to many women and gender-diverse individuals within our community and surrounding areas. Her dedication to women's health has been greatly appreciated, and we

sincerely thank her for the care she has provided to so many patients throughout her time with the clinic.



Photos: LHC supporting Denim Day for Sexual Assault Awareness Month, last day before Christmas break, LHC at Pride event at StFX

CLINIC STATISTICS SUMMARY

Provider	Patient Visits	No Shows	Cancellations	Total Booked
NP Pamela Reyes	249	19	89	357
Dr. Moira MacLean	780	44	319	1,143
Cianna MacKeigan	83	2	33	118

HEALTH & WELLNESS COORDINATOR

SUBMITTED BY ALLISON GRADY



This past year has demonstrated the meaningful impact that accessible, community-based wellness and support programs can have on overall health and well-being. Through our fitness classes held in Country Harbour, Melrose and Sherbrooke, participants consistently shared positive feedback regarding improvements in both physical and mental health. Many described feeling more connected, confident, supported, and motivated while also experiencing reduced isolation, stress, and anxiety through regular participation and community engagement.



Our menopause cafes have provided much needed education, support and open discussion surrounding menopause and women's health. Participants have expressed appreciation for having a safe and welcoming environment where their experiences were acknowledged, validated, and supported.

In addition, the introduction to and growth of our Endometriosis Support groups created important opportunities for connection, education, and peer support. Individuals living with endometriosis shared that the groups helped reduce feelings of isolation while providing understanding, encouragement, and access to valuable resources and shared experiences.

As we move forward, we remain dedicated to strengthening and expanding programs that promote health, resilience, education, and connection throughout our community.

I am grateful for the ongoing support, mentorship, and opportunities for learning and development that the AWRCSSA has provided. As I move forward in this role, I remain committed to continuing to learn, grow, and contribute to programs that empower individuals and support health, wellness, and resilience throughout our community.

COLLABORATIVE EVENTS 2025-2026

- Attended the Paqtn'kek Health Center Interagency meeting with Gisele Carpenter (Support Worker)
- Attended the Pride Walk in Antigonish
- Attended the Paqtn'kek Women's Support Groups
- Spoke at the first annual Atlantic Menopause Show in Halifax on October 17, 2025
- Completed both Birth and Post Partum Doula training with Trena Gallant
- Attended a conference in London, Ontario with Anita Stewart on Innovations in addressing Gender-Based Violence and Trauma & Violence Informed Health.

HEALTH & WELLNESS COORDINATOR

SUBMITTED BY ALLISON GRADY



- Attended a Neighbours, Friends, & Family Training at GALA in Guysborough with Natalie
- Attended a Valentine's Luncheon at Carlton Place in Guysborough
- Attended Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute training in Baddeck
- Attended a "Healing with Endo." talk with guest speaker Cairista MacIsaac

MENOPAUSE CAFE'S

Date	Location	Topic
April 24, 2025	Antigonish	Presentation by Shawna O'hearn
June 19, 2025	Antigonish	Group Discussion
October 14, 2025	Canso	Menopause & Hormonal Yoga
March 18, 2026	Canso	Hanna Inskeep presented on Muscle and Stretch

ENDOMETRIOSIS SUPPORT GROUP

Date	Location	Topic
June 21, 2025	Guysborough	Support Group
August 2025	Antigonish	Support Group
March 14, 2026	Guysborough	Healing with Endo Talk by Cairista MacIsaac



Allison pictured with the Endometriosis Support Group and their collaborative group artwork, now on display at the Centre.

HEALTH & WELLNESS COORDINATOR

SUBMITTED BY ALLISON GRADY



FOOT CLINICS

MONTH	LOCATION	# OF PARTICIPANTS
April 30, 2025	Guysborough	17
May 7, 2025	Sonora	11
May 9, 2025	Antigonish	13
May 27, 2025	Sherbrooke	12
June 20, 2025	Antigonish	13
June 25, 2025	Guysborough	16
July 8, 2025	Sonora	8
September 2, 2025	Guysborough	16
September 23, 2025	Antigonish	13
September 24, 2025	Sonora	10
October 8, 2025	Sherbrooke	15
December 10, 2025	Guysborough	18
December 12, 2025	Antigonish	13
December 15, 2025	Sherbrooke	17
January 15, 2026	Sherbrooke	17
January 28, 2026	Sonora	11
February 13, 2026	Antigonish	13
February 18, 2026	Guysborough	15
March 11, 2026	Sonora	9
March 20, 2026	Guysborough	16
Total		269

HEALTH & WELLNESS COORDINATOR

SUBMITTED BY ALLISON GRADY



EXERCISE CLASSES (MELROSE, SHERBROOKE, & COUNTRY HARBOUR)

Date	Attendance
April 2025	51
May 2025	112
June 2025	159
July 2025	77
August 2025	No Classes This Month
September 2025	138
October 2025	66
November 2025	132
December 2025	128
January 2026	150
February 2026	125
March 2026	97
Total	1235

This yoga class has helped immensely after surgery. I have had to rebuild muscles and strength. It has helped me in so many other ways as well.



It keeps me going and gives me something to look forward to.

I so look forward to this weekly practice. It helps with mental health, plus flexibility and movement.



I enjoy yoga so much! The social and physical benefits are wonderful. I now enjoy walking each day and I am going to try snowshoeing and will hopefully be enjoyable. Thanks again!

A MESSAGE FROM THE FINANCE OFFICE

SUBMITTED BY JACKIE JACQUES AND CINDY DOIRON



2025-2026 FINANCIAL REPORT

The finance department's responsibilities include meeting all funders' reporting requirements and reporting to the Executive Director and Board of Directors as requested. We keep all accounting records up to date and work with staff on their individual budgets.

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women is the core funder of AWRC and several of our projects. Other funders for AWRC include Nova Scotia Health Authority which funds one of our Women's Support Workers and Lindsay's Health Centre. The Lindsay's Health Centre includes a Health and Wellness Coordinator whose position is funded by the Nova Scotia Association of Community Health Centres. Nova Scotia Health Authority fully funds our SANE program.

The five remaining projects run in 2025 - 2026 were Trauma Therapy, Justice Matters for Women, Antigonish/Guysborough Immigrant Support Program, Healthy Relationships for Youth, and Circles of Support and Change. Trauma Therapy was funded by the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre. Justice Matters for Women is our outreach program and is funded by the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia. The Antigonish/Guysborough Immigrant Support Program provides supports to newcomers and is funded by Nova Scotia Office of Immigration and Population Growth. The Circles of Support and Change is funded by the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The Healthy Relationships for Youth is funded by the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Jackie Jacques, Bookkeeper, and Cindy Doiron, Finance Manager

A MESSAGE FROM THE FINANCE OFFICE

SUBMITTED BY JACKIE JACQUES AND CINDY DOIRON



AWRCSASA Funding Support

The work we do at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association would not be possible without the support of our community, foundations, government departments and private donors.

DIRECT SERVICES ARE FUNDED BY:

- Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
- Nova Scotia Health Authority
- Nova Scotia Association of Community Health Care Centres
- Community Donations

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM IS FUNDED BY:

- Nova Scotia Health Authority

JUSTICE MATTERS FOR WOMEN IS FUNDED BY:

- Law Foundation of Nova Scotia

TRAUMA THERAPY IS FUNDED BY:

- Avalon Sexual Assault Centre

ANTIGONISH/GUYSBOROUGH IMMIGRANT SUPPORT PROGRAM IS FUNDED BY:

- Nova Scotia Office of Immigration and Population Growth

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS ARE FUNDED BY:

- Public Health Agency of Canada
- NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women

CIRCLES OF SUPPORT AND CHANGE IS FUNDED BY:

- Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

SUMMER STUDENT POSITION IS FUNDED BY:

- Nova Scotia Labour, Skills and Immigration

We would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to all individuals, organizations and businesses who value and support our work. Thank you to all who contributed. Special thanks to the following:

• Every Individual Donor

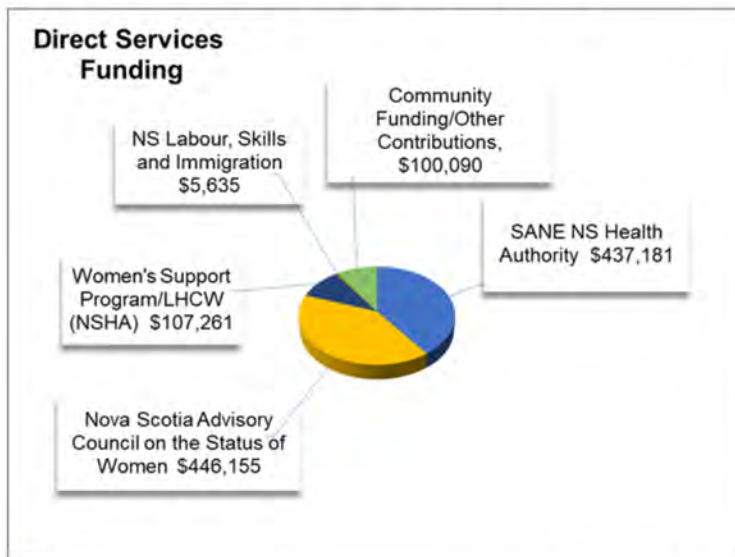
- Sisters of St. Martha
- Antigonish Kinsmen Club
- IWK Baby Gate Program Funding
- Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia
- Green Shield Medical Coverage
- Unifor Social Justice Fund
- East Coast Credit Union
- 100 Women Who Care
- Robotnik Solutions
- Shoppers Foundation Women's Health

A MESSAGE FROM THE FINANCE OFFICE

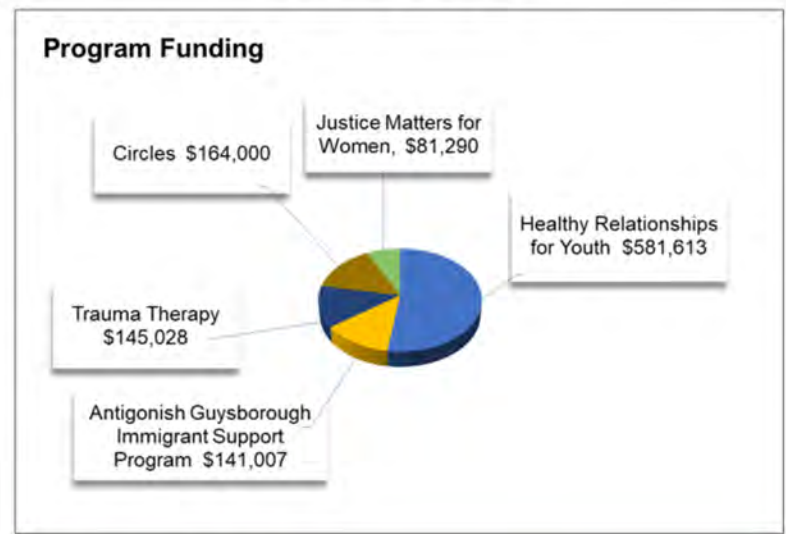
SUBMITTED BY JACKIE JACQUES AND CINDY DOIRON



**\$1,096,322: DIRECT SERVICE
FUNDING FOR 25/26**



**\$1,112,938: PROGRAM FUNDING
FOR 25/26**



Retirement Recognition

Following this year's Annual General Meeting, we will be saying farewell to our Financial Administrator, Cindy Doiron, as she begins her well-earned retirement.

For more than four years, Cindy has been an invaluable member of our team. Her dedication, professionalism, and commitment to excellence have played an important role in the success of the Centre. Through her exceptional organization, attention to detail, and strong financial stewardship, she has helped ensure that our operations ran smoothly and efficiently.

Beyond her official responsibilities, Cindy has been a constant source of support for staff, always willing to lend a hand, answer questions, and help keep everyone on track. Her reliability, patience, and positive attitude have made a lasting impact on our workplace and on the people fortunate enough to work alongside her.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, and clients, we extend our sincere gratitude for her contributions and dedication to the Centre. We wish her every happiness, good health, and many exciting adventures in retirement. She will be greatly missed and fondly remembered.



SUPPORT WORKER

SUBMITTED BY GISELE CARPENTER



Individual
Clients

Contacts

138

493

Gisele was able to provide eight Nursing Tours for students throughout this fiscal year. During the tours discussions took place regarding the rising costs of living, such as housing, food, and heating costs. This allowed the students to reflect on how the social determinants of health can impact physical and mental health in women and their families. Allowing the students to learn about the low Income Assistance rates in Nova Scotia and how this directly impacts daily living in a person's life is important to understanding in health care.

Throughout the year 2025-2026 Gisele Carpenter and Alison Grady were able to continue collaborating with Paqtnkek's Women's Support Group in community on a monthly basis. The program topics included self care, mental health, and supporting each other. In addition, in May 2025 Gisele and Allison were able to provide forty five hygiene bags for youth in the Paqtnkek community. These bags included shampoo, conditioner, body wash and a \$25.00 gift card to Shoppers Drug Mart.

On April 29th Gisele Carpenter hosted a

vision board workshop where women were able to come together and create vision boards on canvases. The program was a success with eight participants in attendance.



In May 2025 three staff (Gisele Carpenter, Mica Francis, and Natalie Sangster) were able to attend a one day training to be certified to facilitate the Neighbours, Friends and Family program to community. Since this training the program has been offered to community in Guysborough and Antigonish.

On September 18th and 19th 2025, Gisele attended a two day event in Port Hawkesbury held by the Native Women's Association in regards to Family and Sexualized Violence Prevention. This two day event allowed the audience to hear first voice experiences of generational trauma.

On November 5th, 2025 support workers Gisele Carpenter and Marcia Connolly hosted "A Caregiver's Story of Dementia, Love and Resilience" with presenter Ursula Ryan. This event was held in the community of Havre Boucher with 31 individuals in attendance.

SUPPORT WORKER

SUBMITTED BY MICA FRANCIS



Month	Individuals	Contacts
Apr 2025	16	34
May 2025	16	42
Jun 2025	11	17
Jul 2025	19	27
Aug 2025	18	26
Sep 2025	22	33
Oct 2025	21	40
Nov 2025	24	33
Dec 2025	15	17
Jan 2026	20	26
Feb 2026	22	34
Mar 2026	10	10
Total	214	339

Highlights

In June 2025 Marcia and I began job-sharing our support worker position, and it has been running smoothly and seamlessly. I have been enjoying and am very grateful for the work-life balance this has allowed.

Collaboration has been another highlight of the work this year. Having other organizations to work with and wrap around women whose needs require the supports and services of a number of organizations has proven effective and efficient (i.e. our in-house services including LHCW, ISP and Trauma Therapy, and also our community partners including A Roof Over Your Head, Naomi Society, Kids



First, Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund to name a few).

Challenges

The lack of affordable, accessible and sound housing is a major challenge for our community members.

The consistently rising costs of living and little to no change in people's income, especially those receiving government benefits (i.e. ESIA, CPP Disability, etc).

System navigation is becoming more challenging for individuals and advocates alike. It is increasingly difficult to be able to connect with representatives by phone or to ask questions on an individual's behalf due to confidentiality policies/barriers. People who do not use the internet or who don't have access to the internet are often at a loss when trying to access supports and programs.

Hopes

It would be great to develop some connections with older high school and university aged cohorts of young women.

SUPPORT WORKER

SUBMITTED BY MARCIA CONNOLLY



MONTH	INDIVIDUALS	CONTACTS
Apr 2025	Vacation	Vacation
May 2025	13 (3 new)	21
Jun 2025	17 (8 new)	33
Jul 2025	20 (15 new)	27
Aug 2025	18 (10 new)	24
Sep 2025	12 (6 new)	18
Oct 2025	21 (13 new)	42
Nov 2025	15 (6 new)	20
Dec 2025	19 (6 new)	30
Jan 2026	14 (8 new)	18
Feb 2026	16 (9 new)	40
Mar 2026	21 (5 new)	37



Marcia Connolly, support worker transitioned from the Justice Matters: Outreach for Rural Women program into a job-sharing position on June 1st, 2025. Marcia continues to support, advocate and assist women to navigate services from our Antigonish office. Marcia has supported 99 individuals with 186 individual appointments and 310 contacts; including government agencies, community supports, and referrals.

The outreach worker was on vacation May 9th-May 20th. The outreach worker organized a legal information event for the staff of the AWRC on May 28th, 2025. Emily Tallon, Project Coordinator with Access to Justice & Law Reform Institute, spoke to our organization about Addressing Family Violence in the Family Justice System.

On June 12th, Marcia attended the board meeting for Nova Scotia Works.

Marcia hosted the STFX nursing tour on October 6th. She discussed the services and programs offered at the AWRC to eleven individuals.

SUPPORT WORKER

SUBMITTED BY MARCIA CONNOLLY



On November 5th support workers Gisele Carpenter and Marcia Connolly hosted a "A Caregiver's Story of Dementia, Love and Resilience" with presenter Ursula Ryan. This event was held in the community of Havre Boucher with 31 individuals in attendance.

January 29th, 2026 Gisele & Marcia joined virtually the SGBV Referral Agency Engagement program review meeting.

On February 23rd Marcia attended virtually the Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty meeting. Thirteen members were in attendance. Issues discussed were: Social Assistance rates, Guaranteed Liveable Basic Income, Generating Rural Opportunities for Wellbeing (GROW) funding, Community Fridge and Pantries.

Marcia attended a board meeting for Nova Scotia Works on March 12th. Marcia attended the Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty meeting on March 30th.

"A Caregiver's Story of Dementia"

Two of our Women's Support Workers, Marcia Connolly & Gisele Carpenter facilitated a group session, on November 5th at the Havre Boucher Community Centre.

At this wonderful event, special guest speaker Ursula Ryan spoke to the 31 attendees about her personal experience caring for a loved one with dementia!



GIRLS SUPPORTING GIRLS CAMP



The Girls Supporting Girls Camp was a week-long program held at the AWRC during the summer of 2025. The camp targeted female identifying youth and was run by student counsellor, Kelly Shaw and HRY Regional Coordinator, Olivia Hart. The camp hosted three youth ranging in age from 13-16. The camp was held each afternoon and consisted of a movie and activity with a specific theme each day. The themes included self-esteem, self-regulation, and self-empowerment!

SUPPORT WORKERS

SUBMITTED BY GISELE CARPENTER, MICA FRANCIS, MARCIA CONNOLLY & NATALIE SANGSTER



AWRCSASA-ADMINISTERED PROGRAMS AND FUNDS

SISTERS OF SAINT MARTHA POVERTY RELIEF FUND

Once again The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre was gifted \$15,000 from The Sisters of Saint Martha's for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. This fund is used for poverty relief for women and their families throughout the year. Without this fund we would be unable to support the families through financial hardship and offer emergency support. The entire team is incredibly grateful for this donation which allows the team to address the many barriers women and families are experiencing. Below is an outline on how the money was distributed from April 2025-March 2026.

- In total one hundred and twenty six (126) women received support from the fund this year.
- Seventeen (17) women received support with medical prescriptions and medical travel.
- Eleven (11) women received support with rental arrears or damage deposit.
- Seventeen (17) women received support with heat (oil or power).
- One (1) women received support with an emergency phone for safety.
- Sixty Five (65) received support with food insecurity.
- Six (6) women received support with emergency clothing.
- One (1) person received support with glasses.
- Eight (8) women received support through discretionary funding for miscellaneous items (legal, vital statistics, and taxes.)

In addition to the one hundred and twenty six (126) women who received support from the emergency funds, the support workers were able to use some funds for the Holidays to support women who may be feeling isolated.

It is apparent that poverty continues to exist within the Antigonish Community. This is apparent in the rising costs of groceries and heating bills throughout the winter. Once again we are grateful for this fund to help alleviate some of the poverty within our community.

SUPPORT WORKERS

SUBMITTED BY GISELE CARPENTER, MICA FRANCIS, MARCIA
CONNOLLY & NATALIE SANGSTER



AWRCSASA-ADMINISTERED PROGRAMS AND FUNDS

Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund: 2025-2026 Season

The Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund (AEFF) provided emergency support for people unable to afford to heat their homes. Funding for the AEFF 2025-2026 season was provided through generous donations coming from the Sisters of St. Martha, the Town and County Councils, East Coast Credit Union, and other businesses and people in the community. The Fuel Fund application forms were made available through the AWRCSASA as well as A Roof Over Your Head, the Library and Town and County Council offices.

The AWRCSASA accepted and reviewed applications from November 1st 2025 to April 30th 2026 and on behalf of the AEFF board made recommendations for approval of emergency help. For the November 2025 - April 2026 season the Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund assisted 221 families with over \$100,000 in home heating assistance. The vast majority of these families received \$400.00 in power, oil or propane, pellets or two cord of wood. A handful of families were able to receive a little more in order to bring any outstanding arrears to a zero balance where they could start fresh and budget accordingly. There were 136 families from the county who received heating assistance and 85 from the town. In the county 64 families were assisted with oil, 44 with electric heat, 26 with wood and one with wood pellets. In Antigonish town, the AEFF assisted 22 with oil, 60 with electric heat, two with propane and one with wood.

Many people were referred to government and non-government programs for further assistance. Some points of interest with respect to the socioeconomics and demographics of the AEFF families include (these are approximations):

- 40% rely on Income Assistance or Disability pension as their source of income
- 26% are single parent families
- 20% are seniors
- 42% are families with children
- 34% have either part-time or full-time employment, or are receiving EI
- It is notable that a significant number of applicants are living with chronic illness that prevents them from gainful employment

SUPPORT WORKERS

SUBMITTED BY GISELE CARPENTER, MICA FRANCIS, MARCIA
CONNOLLY & NATALIE SANGSTER



AWRCSASA-ADMINISTERED PROGRAMS AND FUNDS

Kinsmen Fund: April 2025–March 2026

The Kinsmen Fund is made available to the AWRCSASA to help women in emergency financial situations. Through the Kinsmen's generous donation of \$1000 each month women (and their families) are able to receive financial assistance toward an emergency bill payment (i.e. emergency heat, prevention of power disconnection and rent arrears), medical necessity or food security.

Throughout the 2025-2026 fiscal year we administered \$9,131.09 on behalf of the Kinsmen. This year thirty (30) women received assistance through the Kinsmen fund with the following emergency financial help:

- 15 emergency heat/power arrears/disconnection prevention
- 6 medication/medical supplies
- 6 rent arrears/eviction prevention
- 2 phone/internet arrears
- 1 medical travel

We are so grateful to have access to this fund; financial assistance is a significant part of our work with women living in poverty, and every dollar truly helps relieve a piece of the financial burden women face when trying to make ends meet for their families.

COMMITTEE WORK-ANTIGONISH COALITION TO END POVERTY (ACEP)

Mica and Marcia share time representing AWRCSASA with ACEP. They meet once a month, typically virtually, and over the past year have advocated for adopting Guaranteed Basic Income and increasing Income Assistance rates with provincial government. They also created meaningful short videos highlighting and creating awareness around the experience of poverty in our region. Community Fridges/Panties, Community Gardens and food security are further ACEP endeavours.

JUSTICE MATTERS FOR WOMEN

RURAL OUTREACH IN ANTIGONISH AND GUYSBOROUGH COUNTIES
SUBMITTED BY NATALIE SANGSTER



The Justice Matters for Women Program continues to be regarded as an essential service that provides women and gender diverse individuals in rural communities with critical access to law-related information that supports and empowers them by helping them understand their rights and provides them with the support to pursue their needs.

This program holds particular importance for individuals in Guysborough and Antigonish Counties, where the erosion of government services, coupled with poverty and rural isolation, severely limits access to resources and support.

This report provides an in-depth review of the program's operations and impact during the period from April 1 2025 to March 31, 2026.



Program Objectives

The Justice Matters for Women program is a valued extension of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association; providing vital services to the rural communities of Guysborough and Antigonish counties. Rural communities face many challenges and disparities, and this compounds the challenges women face in navigating complex systems, often leaving women and adolescent girls in vulnerable positions.

The outreach worker provides access to information, support, and advocacy that empowers individuals to make informed decisions that impact their lives. Acting as a key liaison, the outreach worker connects clients with critical services such as Victims Services, Nova Scotia Legal Aid, Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA), Dalhousie Legal Aid, the Residential Tenancy Board and other community and provincial support services that assist in meeting their needs.

The Justice Matters for Women outreach worker is also committed to building and strengthening relationships with community organizations, educational centers, and agencies throughout Canso, Guysborough, Sherbrooke, and Antigonish. By collaborating with community partners, the program ensures the delivery of crucial law-related information, resources, and advocacy to rural residents. These partnerships benefit all rural residents of Guysborough County, as community stakeholders frequently refer women who have limited options in regards to law-related resources and services.

JUSTICE MATTERS FOR WOMEN

RURAL OUTREACH IN ANTIGONISH AND GUYSBOROUGH COUNTIES
SUBMITTED BY NATALIE SANGSTER



Program Structure and Overview

Throughout the period covered in this report, the Justice Matters for Women program has consistently provided weekly services to adolescent girls, women and gender diverse individuals in Guysborough, Canso, Goshen and Sherbrooke. The outreach worker also is available for phone and virtual support and advocacy when necessary.

Space has been established for client appointments in Guysborough at the Chedabucto Mall where a satellite office has been opened, Canso at the hospital and in Sherbrooke at the municipal building.

Guysborough: Thursdays, Office in Chedabucto Mall
Antigonish: Tuesdays, Antigonish Women's Resource Center
Canso: Wednesdays, Canso Memorial Hospital
Sherbrooke: Monday afternoons, Municipal Building
Goshen: Monday mornings, Goshen Community Hall

Legal/Law-Related Information Dissemination and Community Workshops

Over the last year the Law Foundation Funding has supported the outreach worker in continuing to support individuals in rural areas of Guysborough and Antigonish Counties through appointments and workshops that have increased the number of clients accessing services.

Some workshops that have been developed and offered are:

- Internet Safety 101 which provides information to groups that help them navigate consistently occurring and harmful scams related to internet use. This workshop is a collaboration with the RCMP, Service Canada and Guysborough County Adult Learning Association.
- The Estate Navigation program that is supported by LISNS which helps people use program apps to create their wills, power of attorney and personal directives.
- The Outreach worker also presents Neighbours, Friends and Family program, which is focused on bystander interventions to safely support those living with intimate partner violence.

JUSTICE MATTERS FOR WOMEN

RURAL OUTREACH IN ANTIGONISH AND GUYSBOROUGH COUNTIES

SUBMITTED BY NATALIE SANGSTER



The Outreach Worker had 315 individual contacts through group presentations and workshop delivery activities over the year in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties. These activities focused on legal information sharing, food security, housing and gender based violence support at community levels.

LEGAL INFORMATION SESSIONS AND COMMUNITY INFORMATION EVENTS:

April 3, 2025 Community Partners Workshop in Boylston Topic: Information session Attendance: 31	April 16, 2025 Presentation in Canso Topic: Food Sustainability Attendance: 20	May 5, 2025 Information session in Sherbrooke with RCMP & GALA Topic: Internet Safety & Fraud Attendance: 28
May 26, 2025 Workshop for Grade 12 students at Guysborough Academy Topic: Vision Boards Attendance: 7	June 4, 2025 Workshop for Grade 12 students at Canso Academy Topic: Vision Boards Attendance: 10	June 9, 2025 Information session in Goshen Topic: Internet Safety & Fraud Attendance: 30
June 11, 2025 Workshop in Canso Topic: Garden Box Food Security Attendance: 20	June 16, 2025 Goshen Coffee & Connections Topic: Rural Women's needs and Program Planning Attendance: 12	June 30, 2025 Goshen Coffee & Connections Topic: Programming & Information Sharing Attendance: 15
July 14, 2025 Workshop in Sherbrooke Topic: Garden Box Food Security Attendance: 20	July 18, 2025 Benefit Event Country Harbour Topic: AWRCSASA Services for women in Guysborough County Attendance: 180	August 11, 2025 Goshen Coffee and Connections Topic: Information Sharing Attendance: 15
August 25, 2025 Goshen Coffee and Connections Topic: Information Sharing Attendance: 15	December 9, 10 & 11, 2025 Presentation for 3 grade 12 classes in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties Topic: Housing and the Tenancy Act Attendance: 30	January 22, 2026 Presentation in Guysborough Topic: Neighbours, Friends & Family Attendance: 10
February 9, 2026 Workshop in Sherbrooke Topic: Food Security Attendance: 10	February 25, 2026 Presentation in Canso Topic: Neighbours, Friends & Family Attendance: 15	February 26, 2026 Presentation in Guysborough Topic: Neighbours, Friends & Family Attendance: 7

Ongoing: Biweekly meetings in Goshen

Topic: Connect and Create Programs (ie: developing a local directory of service providers)

Attendance: 17

JUSTICE MATTERS FOR WOMEN

RURAL OUTREACH IN ANTIGONISH AND GUYSBOROUGH COUNTIES
SUBMITTED BY NATALIE SANGSTER



- The outreach worker participated in the planning of the Guysborough County Early Years Expo (being held in September) from May to August 2025. This event is being organized to bring service providers who work with young families together for the community information session.
- On May 20th 2025- the outreach worker attended a community conference on Intimate Partner Violence along with several partnering agencies in Heatheron, NS.
- On May 28th the outreach worker attended a legal presentation by Emily Tallon highlighting family law procedures.
- On May 29th 2025 the outreach worker attended a Train the Trainer certification for Neighbors, Friends and Family program. This program highlights the bystander and how they can help women in unsafe relationships and situations safely.
- June 19th 2025 the outreach worker attended a presentation hosted by the Leaside Men's Society introducing the Men's Support Workers and the program details.
- June 25 2025th the outreach worker completed the Estate Navigator and LISNS Bystander training.
- August 13th 2025 the outreach worker completed a training for Understanding the Barriers to Bystander Intervention through the Center for Research and Education Against Women and Children (CREVAC).
- September 23th, 2025 the outreach worker attended a Victim Services Independent Legal Advice presentation.

Outcomes & Impact

Collectively the outreach worker currently supports 31 clients through weekly and biweekly individual appointments in Guysborough and Antigonish counties. The primary issues are gender based violence and family justice as well as safety and housing. Through partnerships, advocacy and programs the outreach worker has noticed some improvements in legal and health services access for women leaving domestic violence situations.

Community response to law related presentations and workshops has increased and participant engagement is on average 20 people per event. Over the last year there have been 305 participants in presentations and workshops provided by the outreach worker.

All events end with a feedback survey and the collective results have been positive and have resulted in continued and newly developed activities for groups and communities.

JUSTICE MATTERS FOR WOMEN

RURAL OUTREACH IN ANTIGONISH AND GUYSBOROUGH COUNTIES

SUBMITTED BY NATALIE SANGSTER



Looking Ahead

The outreach work has proven to be a welcomed support to community members and partners who continue to collaborate and refer clients to services with the AWRCSASA. The continued interest and acknowledgment of gender based violence issues and the necessity of legal services will inspire the ongoing community presentations and workshops that increase understanding and safety to all members of the many communities that make up Guysborough and Antigonish counties. These are needs that are not going away, and the more awareness and supports that are attached to accessible services will continue to inform the work that the outreach worker does.



Internet Safety - May 2025
Sherbrooke, Guysborough County



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION & AWARENESS

SUBMITTED BY REAGHAN SYLVESTER



Program Overview

Throughout the past year, the GBV (Gender-Based Violence) Prevention & Awareness Program has acted as an ongoing community advocate for equity and equality of women's and human rights for those in the Antigonish and Guysborough counties with passion and dedication. I am more than happy with the community connections I was able to make with other support services that are available to our clients, as well as to work collaboratively to expand the reach of the programs and campaigns that we were offering.

Highlights

Throughout the 2025–2026 fiscal year, there have been many meaningful highlights within my position that reflected both community engagement and youth empowerment. Signature events such as the Say Yes to the Prom Dress event in March and the Oh, BINGO event in June brought community members together in positive and supportive ways. One of the most significant accomplishments this year was the AWRC successfully receiving the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia Grant, which provided the opportunity to deliver the INSPIRE Program to youth girls in the Paqtnkek community over the course of 20 weekly sessions. Working closely with our HRY (Healthy Relationships for Youth) team, the INSPIRE

Program created a safe and empowering space for participants to build confidence strengthen self-esteem, develop healthy relationship skills, and engage in meaningful conversations surrounding mental wellness and personal growth. Watching the participants grow, connect, and support one another throughout the program was incredibly rewarding and reinforced the importance of accessible, community-based programming for youth. This initiative not only strengthened community partnerships, but also highlighted the positive impact that consistent mentorship and empowerment-focused programming can have on young people.



Challenges

While this fiscal year brought many rewarding experiences, there were also challenges that provided valuable opportunities for growth and learning. Coordinating community events often required balancing multiple schedules, managing limited resources, and adapting plans to meet the needs and availability of participants and partners. At times, organizing programming within the community presented challenges related to communication, attendance, and logistics; however, these experiences strengthened my ability to remain flexible,

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION & AWARENESS

SUBMITTED BY REAGHAN SYLVESTER



patient, and solution-focused. Despite these obstacles, the continued support and collaboration from community members and partner organizations helped ensure that events and programs were successful and meaningful for those involved.

Hopes for the future

I hope to continue growing within my role while creating more opportunities for meaningful community involvement. Looking ahead, I hope to continue building strong relationships within the community and expanding opportunities for youth-focused programming that promotes empowerment, wellness, and connection. I would love to see the continued growth of initiatives such as the INSPIRE Program and explore additional partnerships and funding opportunities that would allow for more consistent and accessible support for youth and families. In the coming year, I also hope to further strengthen community engagement at events and programs by creating inclusive spaces where participants feel welcomed, supported, and encouraged to connect with one another. Overall, I am excited to continue learning within my role and contributing to meaningful programs and experiences that positively impact the community.

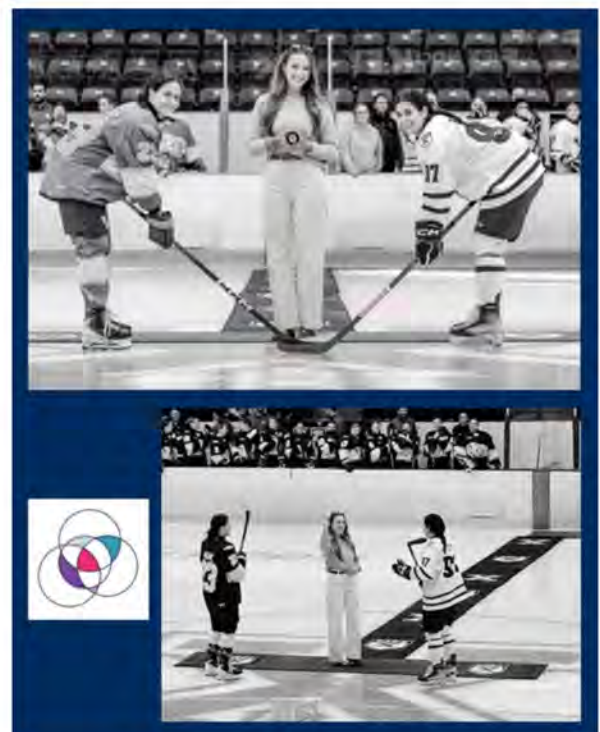


Take Back The Night



"Change doesn't come from one person or one organization, it comes from all of us, showing up in the ways we can. It comes from believing survivors & disrupting harmful behaviours when we see them. It comes from listening with empathy, creating safer spaces, & continuing to learn. Every act of care, every moment of solidarity, becomes part of a much larger ripple, one that says: violence is not normal, silence is not an option, and together, we are building something better." 

- Reagan Sylvester



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION & AWARENESS

SUBMITTED BY REAGHAN SYLVESTER



Month	Programs	# of Participants
May 2025	• GPV/IPV Awareness; QR Code sticker Campaign	• St. Martha's Hospital Staff
June 2025	• oh, BINGO, Pride Event	• 140
July 2025	• Highland Games; Street Fair • Highland Games: Parade • GBV Info Session	• 250-300 • 3500 • 30
September 2025	• St. FX Fall Services Fair • St. James Social Collective • NSCC Awareness Fair	• 35 • 17 • 50
October 2025	• Take Back the Night • X-Women Hockey Partnership • X-Men Hockey Partnership • GBV Housing Section	• 150 • 650+ • 1500+ • 30
November 2025	• St. FX AFP GBV Guest Panel	• 60
January 2026	• NS Health Mental Health & Addictions Presentation • INSPIRE Meet & Greet • INSPIRE Session #1	• 30 • 10 • 5
February 2026	• INSPIRE Session #2 • INSPIRE Session #3 • INSPIRE Session #4 • INSPIRE Session #5 • Dr. John Hugh Gillis Volunteer Fair • Say YES to the Prom Dress	• 5 • 5 • 6 • 6 • 500 • 60
March 2026	• INSPIRE Session #6 • INSPIRE Session #7 • International Women's Week Open House • St. Martha's: NFF	• 5 • 4 • 35 • 25

ANTIGONISH GUYSBOROUGH IMMIGRANT SUPPORT PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY SALUA MARUN, IRFANA SYED, AND WENDY HUGHES



ISP TEAM



SALUA MARUN



IRFANA SYED



WENDY HUGHES

Over the past year, the AGISP program continued to provide holistic settlement and integration support to newcomers and immigrant families across Antigonish and Guysborough Counties. Through individualized case management, community outreach, referrals, advocacy, and wellness-focused programming, the program remained committed to creating safer, more inclusive, and welcoming communities for newcomers navigating life in rural Nova Scotia.

Throughout the year, clients faced ongoing challenges related to housing insecurity, employment barriers, transportation limitations, language accessibility, social isolation, and the emotional impact of immigration policy changes. Many newcomers experienced uncertainty surrounding immigration pathways, work permits, permanent residency processes, and family reunification. In addition, the increasing cost of living and limited availability of affordable housing continued to place significant stress on newcomer families. Rural settlement also created barriers for clients who had limited access to services, childcare, or reliable transportation.

Despite these challenges, AGISP successfully expanded its support services and strengthened community connections. The program provided direct settlement assistance through information sessions, one-on-one appointments, referrals to local resources, and support with navigating healthcare, education, housing, employment, and government systems. Particular attention was given to supporting vulnerable populations, including women, families, LGBTQIA2S+ newcomers, and individuals experiencing isolation or gender-based violence concerns.

This year, AGISP also focused heavily on community-building and wellness initiatives. Programs and events were designed not only to share information, but to create spaces where newcomers felt welcomed, heard, and connected. Workshops centered on empowerment, mental wellness, parenting support, cultural inclusion, and community engagement

Con't

ANTIGONISH GUYSBOROUGH IMMIGRANT SUPPORT PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY SALUA MARUN, IRFANA SYED, AND WENDY HUGHES



helped foster a sense of belonging among participants. Collaborative partnerships with local organizations, employers, schools, and service providers continued to strengthen referral pathways and improve coordinated support for clients.

In addition to settlement support, AGISP continued assisting newcomer entrepreneurs and small business owners through business development guidance, referrals, networking opportunities, and promotional support. The program helped clients explore self-employment opportunities, connect with local business resources, and build confidence in navigating entrepreneurship within the local community. Supporting newcomer women entrepreneurs and highlighting their contributions also remained an important part of community engagement efforts throughout the year.

A major accomplishment this year was the continued trust and recognition AGISP has built within the community. Many newcomers increasingly viewed the Women's Centre as a safe and reliable hub where they could seek support without judgment. The growth in participation, outreach, and community engagement demonstrated the importance of culturally responsive and trauma-informed settlement services in rural communities.

The program also continued expanding outreach efforts beyond Antigonish into Guysborough County, ensuring that newcomers in smaller and underserved communities had greater access to services and support. Increased collaboration with community stakeholders helped improve awareness of newcomer experiences and encouraged more inclusive practices across sectors.

Overall, this year reflected both the resilience of newcomer communities and the importance of accessible, compassionate settlement support. AGISP remains committed to continuing its growth, strengthening partnerships, and responding to the evolving needs of newcomers through inclusive, community-centered programming and advocacy.

Here below is the LAMPSS list of clients we served in the financial year 2025-26.

Service Type Rollup		TOTAL VISITS (this period)	TOTAL UNIQUE Participants (this period)	TOTAL UNIQUE Participants (NEW this period)
Assessment		285	166	125
Service Type	Service Name	VISITS (this period)	UNIQUE Participants (this period)	UNIQUE Participants (NEW this period)
Assessment	Settlement Services	285	166	125

Note: This Report does not extensively cover all the participants to our program but we tried every measure to effectively capture into our database.

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY FELICIA FELIX-MACDONALD
SANE PROGRAM MANAGER



Introduction

Nova Scotia continues to experience persistently high rates of sexualized violence across our communities. In recent years, the province has faced a series of significant challenges, including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the aftermath of Canada's largest mass shooting and subsequent Mass Casualty Commission report, as well as continued incidents of domestic violence and femicide. Collectively, these events have contributed to elevated levels of stress, trauma, and hypervigilance among Nova Scotians. While it is recognized that many individuals who experience sexual violence do not access Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) services, efforts within our catchment area remain focused on strengthening community partnerships and fostering environments that are safe, supportive, and non-judgmental for those seeking care.

Nova Scotia's SANE program operates under a unique community-based model—the only one of its kind in Canada. This model emphasizes collaboration between Nova Scotia Health and five (5) regional service providers, including AWRCSSA. These partnerships support the delivery of care that is responsive to the specific needs of each community and integrated with local services such as trauma therapy and advocacy.

The SANE program continues to evolve in response at both the community and

provincial levels. Since the introduction of the current staffing model in 2017, which established the SANE Site Coordinator as a permanent position, program operations have become more sustainable. The most recent hire to this role occurred in February 2022. This model has reduced the degree of operational isolation previously experienced by the Program Manager, decreased overtime demands, and improved overall work-life balance. Additionally, the two-person leadership structure has enhanced the program's capacity to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of staff, patients, and the broader community.

Ongoing recruitment efforts have aimed to maintain adequate staffing levels; however, there can be workforce challenges such as leaves of absence or resignations due to personal reasons and/or other work commitments. Despite these challenges, the SANE program continues to support staff through access to professional development, continuing education, and professional memberships.

As COVID-19 recovery continues, the program remains actively engaged in rebuilding and strengthening partnerships. This is demonstrated through initiatives such as the re-establishment of the Antigonish Sexual Assault Response Team (ASART) in January 2024 and the expansion of stakeholder participation.

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY FELICIA FELIX-MACDONALD
SANE PROGRAM MANAGER



The program also demonstrated adaptability through the temporary expansion of services to include medical-forensic care for individuals experiencing domestic and intimate partner violence, although this component was discontinued in December 2025.

The SANE program continues to work closely with local, regional, and provincial stakeholders to enhance community capacity through education, collaboration, and outreach.

At the local level, the program participated in numerous awareness initiatives, presentations, and community events, while also expanding its online presence to improve accessibility and engagement.

At the provincial level, the SANE Program Manager contributed to the training of newly hired SANE nurses by supporting and facilitating provincial skills laboratories. Ongoing collaboration among SANE program managers has also supported efforts to inform and improve provincial policies, standards, and practices, with the goal of achieving greater consistency in care delivery across Nova Scotia.

Overview

The AWRCSSA SANE Program was established in 2007 as a community-based initiative of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services

Association (AWRCSSA). The program is delivered in partnership with Nova Scotia Health (NSH) and St. Francis Xavier University (StFX).

AWRCSSA adopted the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre SANE program model to guide service delivery, ensuring the effective provision of needs for those affected by sexual assault within the catchment areas of Pictou, Antigonish, Guysborough, and Richmond counties.

Within this model, specially trained registered nurses—Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs)—provide on-call, immediate medical-forensic care to individuals who have experienced sexual assault within the previous seven (7) days. AWRCSSA is responsible for the overall administration and coordination of the program.

The SANE Program follows a client-centered model of care, in which the victim/survivor directs all aspects of their care. Individuals are provided with medical and legal options, as well as follow-up supports. Specialized medical-forensic services are delivered in a safe, supportive, culturally appropriate, non-judgmental, and confidential environment for individuals of all genders who are post-pubescent (approximately 13 years of age and older).

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY FELICIA FELIX-MACDONALD
SANE PROGRAM MANAGER



SANE EXAM SITES INCLUDE:

- **Lindsay's Health Centre (Antigonish)
- St. Martha's Regional Hospital (Antigonish)
- Strait Richmond Hospital (Evanston)
- **St. Francis Xavier Health Centre (Antigonish)
- Aberdeen Hospital (New Glasgow)
- Guysborough Memorial Hospital (Guysborough)

**The two community-based sites are currently paused pending NSH approval. AWRCSSA is awaiting updated contracts and further direction from NSH regarding community site requirements.

The SANE Program currently provides specialized services to survivors of sexual assault. Effective October 1, 2025, the program expanded to include services for individuals affected by domestic violence or intimate partner violence; however, this expansion was discontinued in December 2025.

This program provides:

- 24/7 emergent medical and forensic response at designated exam sites.
- Expert testimony in court proceedings.
- Secure storage of forensic evidence for a minimum of six months (or longer, as required).
- Supportive follow-up care for victims/survivors.

In addition to overseeing program delivery, the SANE Program Manager is responsible for the professional development of SANE nurses and for coordinating community awareness and education initiatives related to sexual assault and the SANE Program.

The part-time SANE Site Coordinator works collaboratively with the Program Manager to support program operations and service delivery. To promote sustainability, experienced SANEs are encouraged to participate in ongoing training and to contribute to community education by presenting at local events.

The SANE Program Manager also chairs the Antigonish Sexual Assault Response Team (ASART) and is a member of the Pictou Sexual Assault Response Team (PSART). These groups typically meet quarterly to enhance community awareness of sexualized violence, strengthen coordinated responses, and improve services for survivors.

In addition, the former AWRCSSA SANE Manager, Pam Reyes, has been actively involved at the national level as a member of the executive board of the Canadian Forensic Nurses Association.

AWRCSSA SANE Program Usage

The 2025–2026 fiscal year marks the eighteenth (18) year of the Antigonish SANE program. The program provided medical-

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY FELICIA FELIX-MACDONALD
SANE PROGRAM MANAGER



forensic care to 33 survivors, with 4 additional cases where services were initiated but not completed, resulting in a total of 37 responses.

Case Distribution by Month:

April: 3	October: 1
May: 2	November: 3
June: 1	December: 2
July: 6	January: 1
August: 5	February: 1
September: 6	March: 2

Summer months (July–September) accounted for the highest number of cases (17 total).

Demographics

- 32 individuals identified as female
- 1 individual identified as male

Age distribution:

13–16	7 cases (increase from 2 the previous year)
17–25	12 cases (largest group the last two years)
26–40	10 cases (increase from 9 the previous year)
41–65	4 cases (same as previous year)
65+	0 cases (decrease from 1 the previous year)

Timing of Assaults

- Majority occurred on weekends (Friday–Sunday: 20 cases)
- Sunday had the highest number (10 cases)

Location of Services

- Aberdeen Hospital: 16 cases
- St. Martha's Regional Hospital: 16 cases
- Strait Richmond Hospital: 1 case
- Guysborough Memorial Hospital: 0 cases

0 cases occurred at community sites due to closures.

Forensic Evidence and Reporting

- 29 sexual assault evidence kits collected
- 14 kits (48%) handed over to police

Reporting trends remain consistent with previous years.

In 18 cases, the assailant was known to the survivor for more than 24 hours; in 9 cases, known for less than 24 hours; and in 8 cases, unknown.

Other findings:

- 36% suspected drug-facilitated assault
- 15% involved strangulation
- 15% involved intimate partners

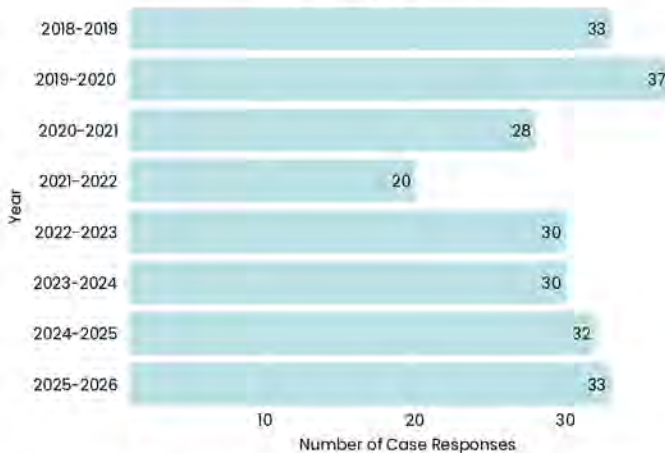
SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY FELICIA FELIX-MACDONALD
SANE PROGRAM MANAGER



A review of trends from previous years shows a slight increase in the overall number of cases responded to, compared to recent years. This may be due to the easing of pandemic restrictions and recovery from COVID-19. In both 2023–2024 and 2022–2023, SANE responded to 30 cases. This compares to 20 cases in 2021–2022, 28 cases in 2020–2021, 37 cases in 2019–2020, and 33 cases in 2018–2019. This year, an equal number of cases were seen at both Aberdeen and SMRH. Most cases were initiated through emergency departments. In some instances, contact was initiated by police, or directly by survivors or their supports through the 24/7 toll-free response line. The AWRCSSA SANE program continues to advocate for the reopening of previously operational community sites, as well as the addition of new locations, including Paqtnkek Health Centre and the Northeast Nova Correctional Facility, to improve access for marginalized populations.

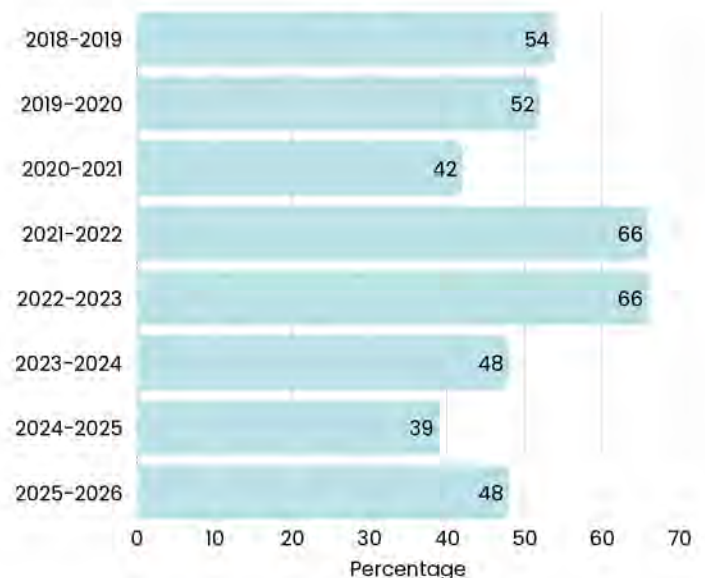
Total # Case Responses by Fiscal (Horizontal Bar Graph)



A total of twenty-nine (29) sexual assault examination kits (SAEKs) were collected. Of these, fourteen (14) kits or 48% were handed over to police. In comparison, in 2024–2025, 9 kits (39%) were handed over. Three (3) additional kits have been pending pick up, bringing the total to twelve (12) or 52%. In 2023–24, 11 of 23 kits collected (48%) were handed to police. Historically, 16 of 24 kits (66%) were handed over in 2022–23, 10 of 15 kits collected in 2021–22 were handed over (66%), 11 kits (42%) were handed over in 2020–21, 14 in 2019–2020, and 15 in 2018–19.

Overall, these trends suggest that handover rates have remained relatively stable over time with some fluctuation. Hopefully, continued partnership with community policing organizations may shift public perceptions.

(%) of Collected Kits Handed to Police by Fiscal



SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY FELICIA FELIX-MACDONALD
SANE PROGRAM MANAGER



Calls and Court Involvement

- 78 total calls received via toll free line
- 18 subpoenas issued
- 1 court case attended

The SANE program receives a variety of emails and phone calls from individuals, police and other community service providers regarding follow up information, kit handovers, services available, subpoenas, etc. The SANE program also receives a number of calls via the 24/7 toll free response line that may, or may not result in acute SANE services. In 2025-26, the toll-free line responded to a total of 78 calls, 37 of those resulted in a SANE response, 4 of which were declined or the client was not medically cleared on arrival. An additional 41 calls did not result in a SANE response at that time.

In 2025-26, eighteen (18) subpoenas were received and one (1) court case was attended. In 2024-25, ten (10) subpoenas were received and two (2) court cases were attended. Although there was an increase in court subpoenas, there is a decrease from previous years in the number of SANE's being utilized in the courtrooms for testimony. In most cases, court had been adjourned and a new subpoena was issued to the SANE(s) for a later date, or court was vacated.

As an outside and objective service, the SANE program is not provided with information on the progress or outcome of case investigations.

SANE Program Evaluations

A self-addressed and stamped envelope containing an evaluation of SANE services form is given to each survivor after services have been provided. This year, one (1) evaluation was returned with positive feedback. Last year, no (0) evaluations were returned to the program.

Respondents are asked to rate the services based on several attributes on a scale from 1 to 4. 1 being unsatisfactory, not supported or unclear and 4 being very satisfied, well supported and very clear. Feedback provided this year included rankings of all 4's (out of 4). Comments were "both SANEs were very kind and caring, listened to everything I said. Let me take breaks when I needed. They took their time and made me feel comfortable"

One of the goals for the year 2025-26 was to improve accessibility and increase feedback response by implementing a digital option for individuals to provide anonymous feedback by scanning a QR code. This was implemented in October 2025, but there have been 0 responses to date with this option.

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY FELICIA FELIX-MACDONALD
SANE PROGRAM MANAGER



Although we get minimal feedback from program evaluations, we continue to do so informally from SANE clients, family/supports, other service providers and community organizations. The feedback is always positive and reinforces the value and importance of this service in our communities. Often, individuals share comments regarding the lack of awareness of the program and services that are provided by the SANE program. This further emphasizes the importance of the community outreach work, committees, and information sessions to increase awareness and understanding of the SANE program.

The AWRC program also participated in the provincial evaluation of SANE in 2024, as requested by NSH. Those results were released in February 2026. The overall findings concluded that all 10 of the mandatory service requirements have been met, and SANE programs effectively play a key role in intervention and response to sexualized violence in our communities. The evaluation also outlined areas of challenge and proposed recommendations.

Program Case Review Forms

In September, 2025, the program introduced quality Feedback/Case Review forms. The case files are reviewed by the SANE manager as they are received by the SANE nurses, and the form is completed. This has been helpful with maintaining accountability and consistency in SANE documentation and identifying any documentation and/or evidence collection learning needs or gaps to be addressed.

Underreporting

Sexual assault remains significantly underreported, with estimates suggesting that 9 in 10 assaults are not disclosed. Barriers include stigma, fear, systemic oppression, and lack of awareness. A key part of our mandate is informing the public and local agencies about sexualized violence, the SANE program and services.

Staffing

- 15 SANE nurses (including 3 support staff)
- 3 currently on leave for personal/work-related reasons
- No service gaps over the fiscal year

To maintain 24/7 on-call coverage with a 2 SANE response, a roster of at least 14 independently contracted SANE nurses is ideal. We currently are operating with 15 nurses (including 3 support nurses), 2 on personal leave and 1 on maternity leave. A “back up plan” policy is in place, outlining appropriate actions to take if there is not a secondary nurse

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY FELICIA FELIX-MACDONALD
SANE PROGRAM MANAGER



available or if the second nurse is unreachable. There were no gaps in staffing that affected SANE response in 2025-26.

Throughout the year, four (4) nurses took a leave of absence for personal/family reasons. One of the 4 nurses is now back on the schedule. The program also hired 2 nurses in Fall 2025 and 1 nurse in Winter 2026. Two of the 3 new hires are attending Spring training in April 2026.

Leadership changes have occurred during the fiscal year. Pamela Reyes, who was SANE manager since July 2020 transitioned to her new Nurse Practitioner role in Sept 2025. Interim manager, Felicia Felix-MacDonald is currently filling that position on a part-time basis. A permanent full-time hire is expected to start in June 2026. Karilee Chisholm-MacDonald works part-time as SANE Staff and Response Site coordinator since 2022. Karilee assists with maintaining the response sites, staff scheduling and supporting the SANE program as needed. Kyla Neary-Griffiths works in community outreach providing SANE education and SANE related resources within our catchment area.

Training and Professional Development

SANE education and debriefing sessions were held 9 months during the 2025-26-year. SANE nurses received the following education at monthly meetings:

- April-Strangulation Webinar: How to Conduct the Forensic Medical Exam for the Strangled Victim of Domestic Violence.
- May-CTRI Webinar: Understanding and Supporting Resilience.
- June-Wellness session where SANE's had the opportunity to create their own body butter and salt scrubs.
- September-Review of provincial program changes and updates, revised SANE protocol manual
- October-Skills, competencies, documentation reviews and annual evaluations.
- November- Nicole Mann from NAOMI Society in to discuss safety planning for survivors of DV/IPV.
- December- SANE holiday gathering- no formal meeting
- January-Webinar on Stalking, in honor of Stalking Awareness Month
- February- Policy and procedure updates/ reviews. Review updated provincial forms/paperwork.
- March-CFNA webinar on Court Prep and CV preparation. Handouts provided.

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY FELICIA FELIX-MACDONALD
SANE PROGRAM MANAGER



Other educational opportunities included:

- Various webinars, e-learning, and journal articles for review
- Academy of Forensic nursing webinars (virtual)
- International Association of Forensic Nursing webinars (virtual)
- Canadian Forensic Nurse's Association webinars (virtual)
- Provincial SANE Training (offered to new SANEs and current SANEs when spaces available)
- Wellness and mindfulness activities

In-person continuing education and networking opportunities for SANEs included Break the Silence Symposium, Pathways to Safety Symposium, Human Trafficking info sessions with RCMP, and DV/IPV education day.

When possible, the AWRCSSA SANE Program Manager and, or SANEs may attend relevant conferences. These conferences provide an opportunity to access new and innovative information, education and resources from world renowned experts and provides great networking opportunities.

EVAWI Conference

In April 2025, Pamela Reyes attended the EVAWI conference in Anaheim, California. Highlights included breakout sessions, case presentations, discussion panels, presentations on trauma, DV, assessment skills building, and collaborative networking with peers across USA, Canada and internationally.

CFNA Conference

In May 2025, the Canadian Forensic Nurses Association held their second annual symposium in Saskatoon, Sask. Pamela Reyes attended this conference and was provided the opportunity to engage in networking with other forensic nurses across Canada, learn about different care models and participate in learning and discussions on forensic practices, such as court testimony, injury documentation, clinical and research highlights and cultural safety.

Working with St. Francis Xavier University

Every September, approximately 4000-5000 young adults move to the Antigonish area to attend the university. Even though the SANE program has seen a reduction in the number of students seeking our services (three (3) in 2025-26), we also acknowledge there has been an increase in the number of historical disclosures from students reporting sexualized and dating violence. We continue to invite and engage with our partners at StFX to increase awareness of the SANE program. Examples include collaboration project meetings, StFX representation on ASART, attendance at various student events, and outreach work through presentations, displays, etc. It remains unclear how many cases may have been completed at community-based sites, such as StFX Health and Counselling Centre, and whether limited accessibility prevented students from seeking SANE services.

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY FELICIA FELIX-MACDONALD
SANE PROGRAM MANAGER



Community Engagement

In 2025-26, the SANE program delivered numerous presentations and outreach initiatives regarding consent, sexualized violence and SANE services at the Antigonish Public Library, StFX, to RCMP, NSH pharmacy, Municipal police, EHS, high school students, NSCC, hospital ED's, and local doctors offices. SANE also presented in local rural communities and maintains a presence at community events.

SANE Program information is located throughout our catchment area, such as doctors' offices, the Paqtnekek Health Centre, hospital emergency rooms, youth health centers, public health, Kids First, Leaside and Tearmann Transition Houses, Strait Area Women's Place, police, EHS and StFX Health and Counselling Centre. Information on how to access SANE services is also available online or by calling SANE toll-free at 1-877-880-7263, 811, 211 and Kids Help Line.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)

Every April is designated Sexual Assault Awareness Month. For 2025, SAAM events included a virtual presentation on SANE, infographics on consent and sexualized violence throughout the month, a movie screening, the teal ribbon campaign, staff participation in denim day, and various outreach events throughout the community.

Provincial Collaboration

The SANE program works collaboratively with other SANE programs across Nova Scotia to promote consistency in policies and protocols, share resources, and support training. One focus from a provincial perspective was training of new SANEs. The didactic portion of the training was held in Truro NS, with the skills lab at Dalhousie University, Halifax. The SANE Professional Practice Leader, Carol Rock-Altenhof, coordinated and facilitated the didactic and skills training days. The next training dates commenced on Apr 13/26. NSH requests that all coordinators attend and support provincial training. Pamela attended both the Spring 2025 didactic training and skills sessions and presented on the following:

- (Lecture) Genital Exam – female, male, transgender and evidence collection
- (Lecture) Gender affirming care and exam
- (Lecture) Forensic Documentation
- (Lecture) Vicarious Trauma, Resilience, and wellness practices
- Skills demo
- Simulation supervision

Highlights of provincial coordination and SANE expansion:

The provincial SANE Professional Practice Leader holds monthly virtual meetings with all the SANE program coordinators/managers provincially. The meetings provide opportunities to discuss

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY FELICIA FELIX-MACDONALD
SANE PROGRAM MANAGER



challenges, successes and to provide program and provincial updates. In January 2020, NSH implemented a provincial standard operating procedure for emergency departments (ED's) with and without access to a SANE program. This policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of healthcare professionals when patients disclose recent sexual assault in the ED setting.

Goals for 2026–27

- Continue recruitment and retention efforts within the AWRC SANE program. This includes hiring new SANEs to maintain a roster of at least 14, and procurement of a full-time SANE program manager. This position, currently being held temporarily by Felicia Felix-MacDonald, was offered to a successful applicant, who will tentatively begin in June 2026.
- Connect with community partners/stakeholders to develop and promote collaborative partnerships with a focus on sexualized violence, IPV and human trafficking.
- Increase awareness of the SANE program and sexualized violence.
- Assist with facilitation of provincial SANE training.
- Work with NSH to re-open previously existing community response sites to increase survivor accessibility to SANE services.
- Review and develop SANE program policies, protocols, and continuing education through provincial collaboration and engagement.
- Review and develop improved evidence-based strategies to support delivery of trauma informed care.
- Engagement of team members as they develop their role as SANEs (i.e. SANE-A exam preparation, opportunities to assist with provincial training, conferences, webinars, etc.).

Conclusion

In the 2025–26 fiscal year, the AWRC Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program continued to demonstrate leadership in advocacy, education, and support across Northeastern Nova Scotia. These efforts focused on enhancing access to specialized services for individuals affected by sexual violence, while strengthening connections with community partners following the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the mass casualties in 2020.

Throughout the year, the program continued education and awareness initiatives that increased visibility and reinforced its service delivery model, fostering trust and awareness. This has been particularly important for our rural communities. Education and outreach were again prioritized following the announcement by Nova Scotia Health in December 2025 that domestic violence and intimate partner violence (DV/IPV) response would no longer be delivered by the SANE program.

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

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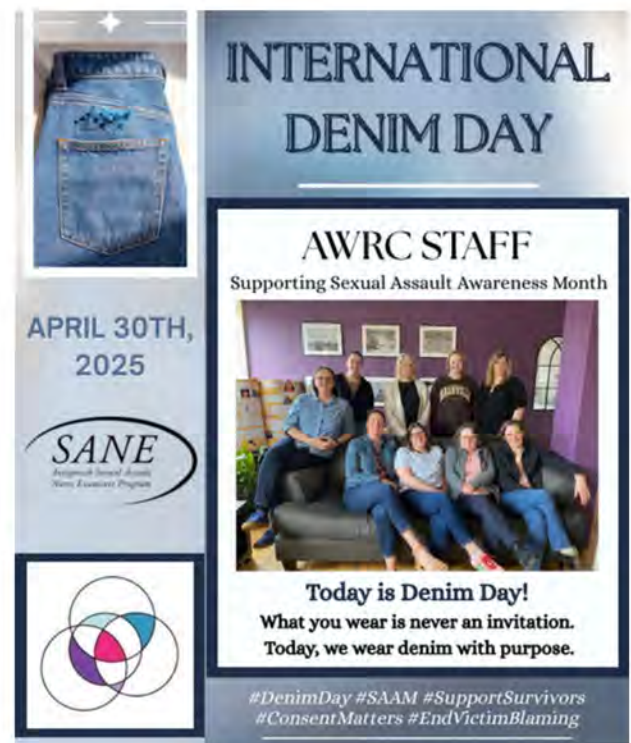


The announcement had caused some confusion regarding the program's scope and viability. In response, SANE increased its social media presence and continued targeted engagement with its partners to clarify its role and maintain strong collaborative relationships.

The SANE program continues to prioritize the delivery of consistent, high-quality care, supported by ongoing investment in the education and training of nurse examiners. This ensures individuals receive survivor-centered care from highly skilled professionals who are trauma- and violence-informed, culturally safe, and committed. In response, these efforts help ensure that Nova Scotians impacted by violence can access the support they need, fostering healing and recovery.



The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) team enjoying an evening of wellness.



TRAUMA THERAPY

SUBMITTED BY TERRI PITTS



TOTAL SESSIONS: 345

AGE RANGE OF CLIENTS: 22-70

NEW REFERRALS: 59



In 2025/2026, the trauma therapy program continued to offer a range of services and began offering therapy in the Guysborough office in July on a biweekly basis. The therapy program offered mostly in person sessions along with virtual, and a variety of community supports including the continuation of a wellness group at St. Francis Xavier University in both semesters to the 2SLGBTQIA+ students and co-facilitated by Aimee MacDonald, Gender and Sexual Diversity Advisor. Other community based offerings were a discussion on Gender Based Violence and the traumatic impacts with Terri Pitts, Trauma Therapist, Pam Reyes, SANE Coordinator and Olivia Hart, Regional Coordinator for Healthy Relationships for Youth at the Goshen Community Centre on April 15th, 2025, and on May 30, 2025, Terri Pitts met with a group of 12 women at the Health Centre in Paqtnekek to provide psychoeducation on emotional regulation, trauma responses and wellness.

In 2025, AWRC became an approved site for Yorkville University students to complete their practicum for their Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology Program under the supervision of Terri, who is an approved supervisor with both Yorkville and the Nova Scotia College of Counselling Therapists. Kelly Shaw began her practicum in May of 2025 and completed her requirements in December. Erika Savoie began her practicum in January 2026 and will complete her requirements in August 2026. Both students helped to support a number of clients with various mental health issues and were a great asset to the Centre.

Demand for trauma therapy has remained consistent over the year with most referrals coming from Mental Health and Addictions, other service providers in the community, AWRC staff, and self-referrals based on testimonials from previous and current clients. Unfortunately, the waitlist has continued to grow given that there is only one therapist in the role for the area.

TRAUMA THERAPY

SUBMITTED BY TERRI PITTS



However, a few clients had met their hopes for therapy and new clients began therapy this past year. We have continued to prioritize recent sexual trauma when possible. Although our program is open to all genders (anyone over 16 years of age) we have provided therapy mostly to women this year, along with a few men and some gender diverse folks.

Professional development has continued to be a priority for the trauma therapist. Terri continued to meet bi-weekly with other therapists for peer supervision meetings. Some training highlights include Pathways to Safety: Enhancing Support for Survivors of Sexual Violence hosted by the Pictou County Women's Resource Centre and a Gender Based Violence Summit at Oak Island Resort, both held in April. In July, she attended a week long Narrative Therapy training in July in Toronto, Ontario with the Narrative Therapy Centre, and in September, a Domestic Violence Symposium in Port Hawkesbrury, facilitated by the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association.

The courage, healing, and growth experienced by those attending trauma therapy sessions has been incredible to witness. Here are some of the experiences reported by survivors:

I finally feel like
a whole person.

I can't believe this is my
life after a year. Every-
thing looks so much
brighter.

I'm finally finding
myself and I like
her.

HOPES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD:

- To continue to accept counselling students in order to offer various therapeutic supports.
- To continue the wellness group with Aimee MacDonald and the 2SLGBTQIA+ students for the 2026/2027 school year.
- To continue to facilitate groups and educational trainings in the communities of Antigonish and Guysborough.

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Lindsay's Health Centre

Physician: Dr. Moira MacLean

Nurse Practitioner: Pam Reyes

Registered Social Worker: Cianna MacKeigan

Health Centre Coordinator: Denise McCarron-Hart

Healthy Relationships for Youth Program

Provincial Coordinators: Taeya Jones, Sarah Thomas

Regional Coordinators: Olivia Hart, Emily Trudeau, Catherine Boucher, Kayla Milley

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