

# ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024



Oak Centre

Child and Youth Advocacy

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A scenic landscape featuring a calm lake in the middle ground, with rolling hills and mountains in the background under a cloudy sky. In the foreground, there are green grasses and several bright yellow flowers, possibly Black-eyed Susans, some in sharp focus and others blurred. The overall tone is peaceful and natural.

# Land Acknowledgement

Oak Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (Oak Centre) acknowledges that our work takes place within the northern part of the unceded traditional territory of the Syilx First Nation and that many descendants of the Suqnaquinx (Suk-anok-can) still live here.

# Introduction

Oak Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (Oak Centre) is a welcoming, child-friendly environment where children and youth who have experienced abuse or violence can share their experience with police and social workers. Oak Centre works in partnership with other local agencies to make sure a child's experience is as comfortable as possible, and that the child and their families are supported on an ongoing basis.

Fiscal year 2023-2024 was the third complete year of Oak Centre aligning data collection with the BC Network of Child and Youth Advocacy Centre's (BC CYAC) evaluation process. This evaluation process involves two primary components:

1. **Evaluation data:** collection of case characteristics, processes, and services provided by Oak Centre; and
2. **Feedback** on services and processes using anonymous surveys:
  - a. *Multidisciplinary team (MDT) brief feedback*
  - b. *MDT in-depth feedback*

Caregiver and child surveys were not provided this fiscal year.

In addition to the data reported in detail in this report,  
**Oak Centre also hosted 43 Partner Clients** for interviews.

It is critical to note that although this report aims to capture the scope of work that took place at Oak Centre in 2023-2024, the cases are highly complex, often unpredictable in scope, and can span multiple years. For example, as of April 1, 2023 Oak Centre had 123 open and ongoing files<sup>2</sup> from previous fiscal years, where service continued to be provided in 2023-2024. In addition to the direct services provided to new clients described in this report, and the many meetings and consultations that are evident in the feedback responses, there is substantial time spent providing information to community members (21.42 hours), responding to requests for service (38.75 hours), and supporting Partner Client interviews (39.42 hours).

This report undoubtedly underrepresents the wide range of activities undertaken by Oak Centre staff.



<sup>1</sup> Partner Clients are those that do not require a multidisciplinary team response. Clients are brought to Oak Centre by partner agencies to use the facilities for interviews and meetings without engaging Oak Centre staff for follow up.

<sup>2</sup> Children or youth with existing files were not counted in this report, unless otherwise noted.

# Child and Family Characteristics

The multidisciplinary team of Oak Centre served **57 new clients<sup>3</sup>** during the fiscal year. Children were primarily from Vernon (N = 32), with the remaining children from other North Okanagan communities of Armstrong, Coldstream, Enderby, Lumby, and Okanagan Indian Band. 4 children were from outside the North Okanagan and served on a courtesy basis. Children were 3-to-19 years of age, primarily female, white or Indigenous, and all spoke English as a primary language.

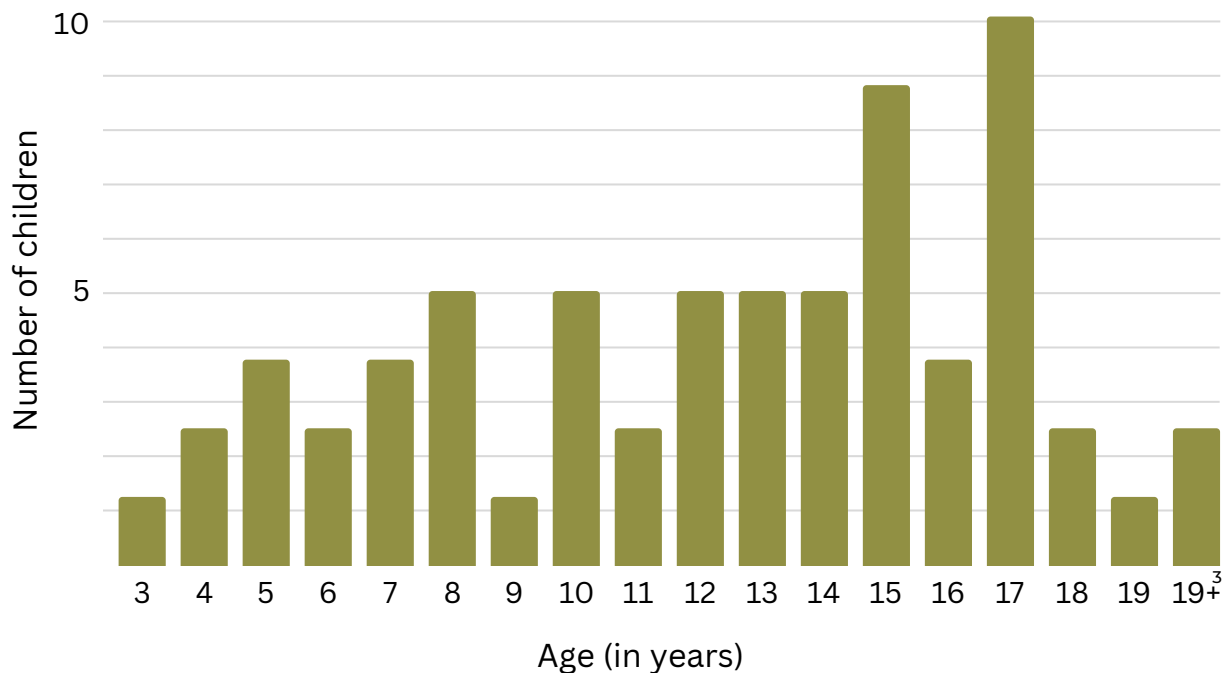
Average Age: **12.04 years**



**73.7% Female**  
**21.0% Male**  
**1.8% Transgender**  
**3.5% Other**



White (63%)  
Indigenous (33%)  
Other (4%)

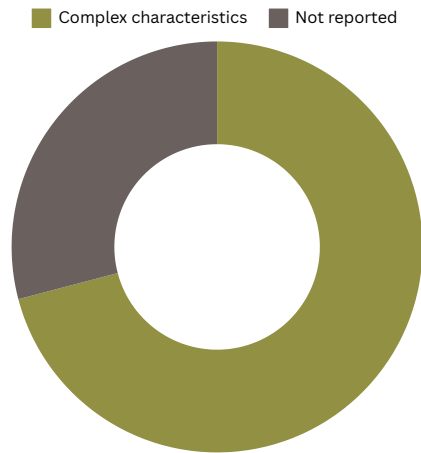


<sup>3</sup> Not all cases have data for all variables.

<sup>4</sup> Oak Centre will occasionally serve young people over the age of majority if their abuse occurred while they were under 19 years of age, or there is a particular vulnerability that makes Oak Centre the most appropriate service for that young person.



# Child and Family Characteristics



39 children or youth reported one or more complex characteristics, such as **anxiety**, **attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)**, **depression**, **suicidal ideation and attempts**, **developmental delays**, and **others**.

The complexities that children are facing highlight the importance of coordinated service where all required professionals work together to create and monitor a comprehensive plan for service.

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Ten children had been served by Oak Centre in the past.



# Nature of the Allegations

Most children or youth who attended a CYAC reported a single instance of abuse, with the most common forms being sexual (65%) and physical (23%).

Twelve children reported repeated abuse.

Type of Abuse	Instances
Sexual Abuse:	37
Physical Abuse:	13
Sexual & Physical Abuse:	2
Internet child exploitation:	1
Other:	4

Note: Types of abuse were recorded at time of intake.

Sexual offenses remain the most reported reason for referral to Oak Centre.

# Alleged Offenders

## Gender Identity of Alleged Offender(s)



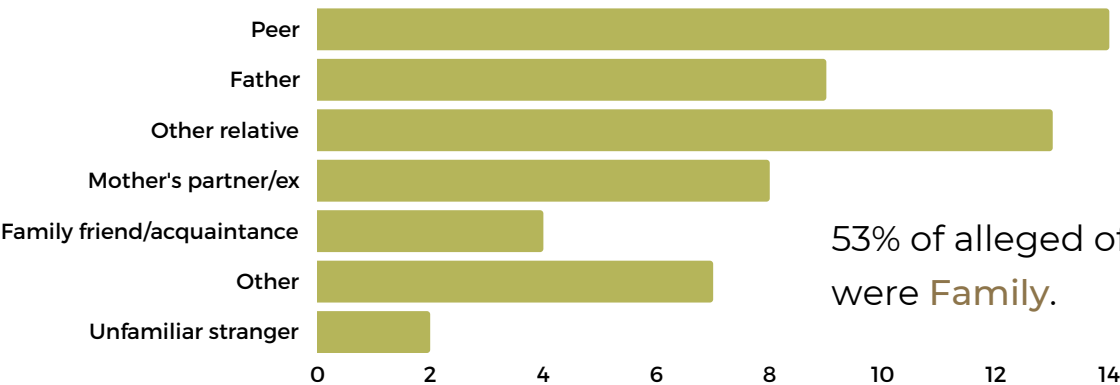
79% Male  
16% Female  
5% Unknown

## Age of Alleged Offender(s)



16 alleged offenders were youth.

## Alleged offender's relationship to victim



53% of alleged offenders were Family.

# The CYAC Experience

Forty-six interviews were conducted, most by skilled interviewers. Thirty-nine interviews took place at Oak Centre and 7 interviews were conducted at a police detachment or other locations.<sup>5</sup>

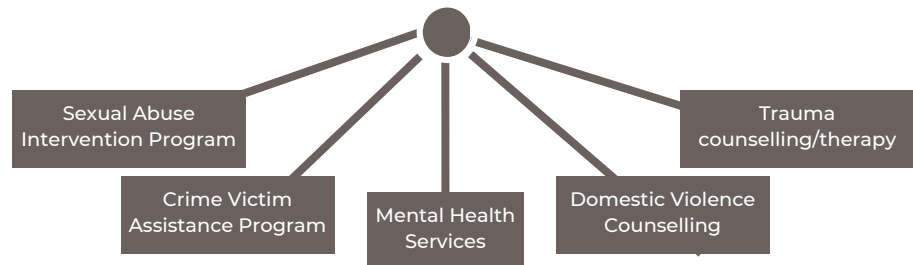
## Skilled Interviewer

=  
recognized training  
+ recent experience  
+ demonstrated competency



of children were connected to support services.

Some children are already well connected when they start service at Oak Centre.



Connecting children to **medical care** and liaising with medical professionals is a growing area of the Oak Centre service.

6 formal health assessments, 10 wellness/general health exams and 5 forensic medical exams were conducted for new Oak Centre clients in 2023-24.



Court preparation and accompaniment is a large part of the Advocate's victim service role. Most clients of Oak Centre do not engage in court processes the same year that they are taken into service, it is more common that they are involved months or years after disclosing their abuse.

In 2023-24 our Advocate assisted active Oak Centre clients with a variety of criminal justice experiences.

## Court Experience

Children testified:	9
Child received court preparation:	14
Child received court accompaniment:	11
Child was assisted with Victim Impact Statement:	3
Court accommodations provided:	16

Note: Court statistics include all prior and new clients that attended a court process in 2023-2024.

<sup>5</sup> Other locations may be a factor of cases starting in another jurisdiction.



# The CYAC Experience

One of the most special elements of the Oak Centre's service, is team member Cirque.

Cirque is an **Accredited Facility Dog** from PADS and was bred and raised specifically to work in a facility such as Oak Centre.

Cirque brings a unique presence to the CYAC, she fosters calmness and trust and helps children reach a physical and emotional state where they feel safe to share their experience of abuse with the professionals ready to help them.



In 2023-2024, Cirque:



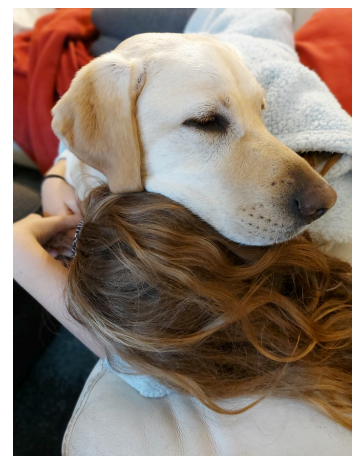
Accompanied 30 children/youth during their police statement.



Accompanied 11 clients during court appearances.



Attended 72 meetings.



# Feedback from Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)

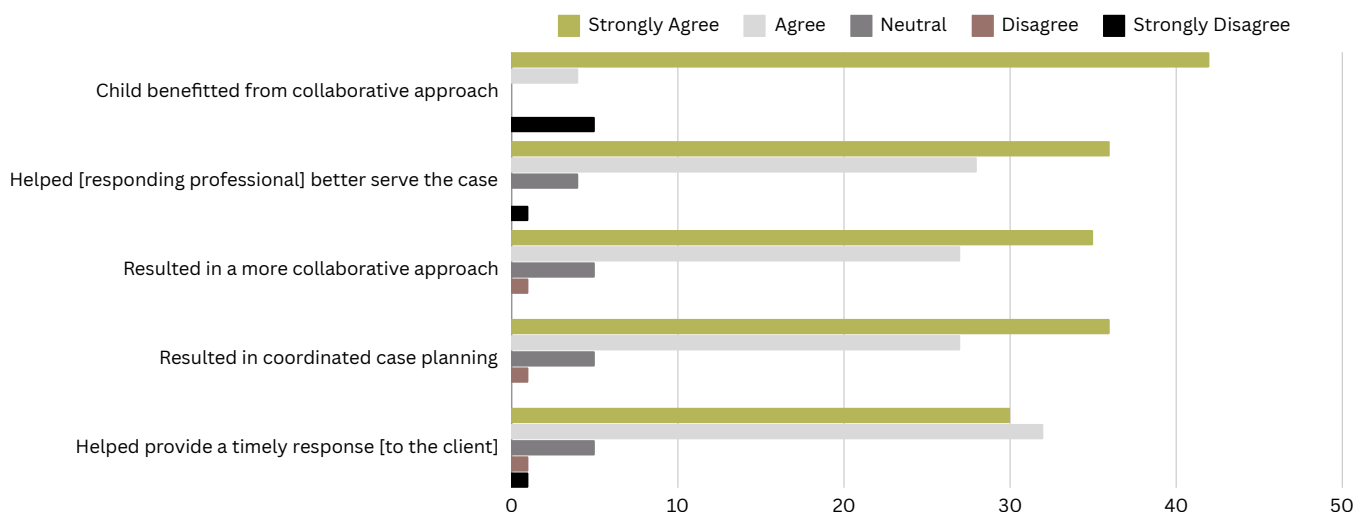
## Brief survey

The MDT are frontline staff representatives of each of the organizations named in the Oak Centre Partnership Agreement, who work to provide a collaborative and integrated response to children and their families, and are employed by and report to their home agency.

After each interview conducted at Oak Centre, members of the MDT complete the brief survey form anonymously, using an on-site tablet and survey link. 70 brief surveys were completed, a significant increase from last year. Note that not all respondents answered every question.

Respondents reported **highly effective** working relationships with MDT members. Survey results also indicated that the CYAC model has a **strongly positive impact** on most cases.

What impact did the CYAC Model have on the case?



[Police] interviewer slowed down the process for the family and presented as calm and very confident.

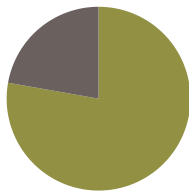


# Feedback from Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)

## In-depth survey

Oak Centre staff sent a link for an in-depth case specific survey for every third case, and to all MDT members involved in those cases, at least 2 months following intake. 29 surveys were completed, an increase from the previous year.

Communication and working relationships among the MDT were mostly rated as **highly effective**.



**78%** of MDT members who answered the case-specific survey reported participating in case review meetings.

The value of monthly case review meetings was consistently rated positively. Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the case review meetings were a **benefit** to the overall case, worth their time to attend, **relevant** to their agency's work and were **useful** in development of the case.

Most respondents **strongly agreed** or **agreed** that the CYAC model had the following impacts:

- Client benefitted from the collaborative approach
- Resulted in coordinated planning
- Helped better serve the client(s) and case
- Helped provide a timely response
- Resulted in a more collaborative approach



[Case review meetings were] helpful to understand where the youth is at in terms of emotional capacity when it comes to offering services.

~MDT Member

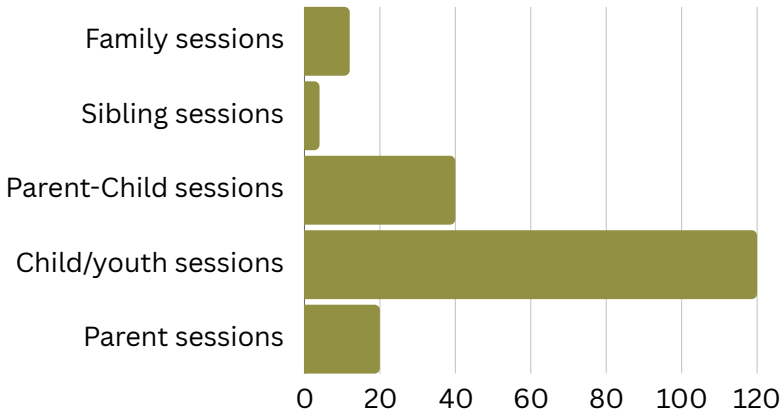
Working relationships with the Centre's Advocates were rated as **very effective** or **effective** by all survey respondents.

# Family Therapy Program

Oak Centre’s Family Therapy program (FTP) was designed to support families where one or more child members have experienced trauma. The aim of the program is to assist families to regain a sense of safety within their relationships with one another, and their surrounding support systems or environment. Presenting concerns can be in the form of attachment issues between parent and child, lack of trust between family members, and difficulty communicating in healthy ways. FTP is an intensive service offering, with sessions for families, parent-child or parent-parent, and individuals, all with the goal of healthy family functioning.

This year we saw a trend develop where children, particularly youth, had a higher need for stabilization before attending family sessions, thus the number of individual child/youth sessions increased over last year.

Total number of client sessions



Total number of families



Total number of Individuals



Total number of clinical consultations

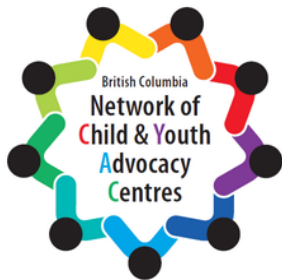


Clinical consultations are sessions held between the Family Therapist and centre staff or other service providers, to assess family need and create service plans.



# Looking Forward

Oak Child and Youth Advocacy Centre continues to develop services and refine the response model to children and youth who have experienced abuse.



We participate as an active member of the BC Network of Child and Youth Advocacy Centres who leads provincial initiatives to guide wise practices and increase the knowledge and skills of multidisciplinary teams.

Locally, we are working to:

- implement remote testimony from our new accommodation room so that children can testify from the safe and familiar space of Oak Centre.
- enhance our partnerships with medical professionals in order to streamline health exams for children who have experienced abuse.
- provide more outreach into rural areas, working from satellite office spaces where available to become more familiar to community members.
- create educational opportunities for our partners and other community service providers with the goal of increased awareness and knowledge of emerging and growing issues such as online sexual exploitation and sextortion.
- provide more resources for parents and caregivers of children who have experienced trauma; giving those caregivers the opportunity to best support the kids in their care.

Oak Centre will continue to enhance programming to ensure that all children that have experienced abuse and violence have all the resources and opportunities they need to heal.



# Thank you

Oak Child and Youth Advocacy Centre is doing incredible work in the North Okanagan. In the over 8 years of service, we have had the privilege of working alongside some of the most inspiring children, youth and families in our region. Every day we are amazed by the resilience of children who have been hurt by ones they love.

The success that we see in this work, especially in the positive outcomes in the children we serve, is due to those in the Oak Centre partnership, from the frontline service providers and responders, their leadership and the support staff. The people that are called to work in response to children who have experienced abuse and violence go above and beyond to ensure that those children have what they need to heal and prosper. Thank you to each and every one of you who have made a positive impact on the children, youth and families in our community.

We could not do what we do without the support of our community. Oak Centre is not a government contracted program and relies on grants and fundraising to lead this coordinated service. Thank you to the community members, family foundations and committed organizations who believe in this work and support us to help keep children safe.





[www.oakcentrevnon.ca](http://www.oakcentrevnon.ca)  
@oakcentrevnon

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