



# Annual Report

## 2024 – 2025



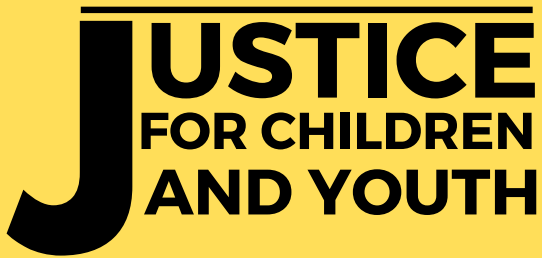
JFCY provides legal services to  
children and young people in Ontario

# DONORS AND SUPPORTS

As a charitable foundation and organization with a challenging mandate that struggles to meet the complex demands for our services with inadequate funding, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our members, the individual donors and granting foundations who support JFCY.

**A special note of thanks for unique and significant contributions to:**

- **Legal Aid Ontario** – our core funder
- **Department of Justice Canada** – Your Way Forward program
- **Ministry of the Attorney General for Ontario** - Education Support program
- **Bulmash-Siegel Foundation**, Laurence and Judy Siegel – Case Manager
- **Law Foundation of Ontario, Catalyst Program** – CASA program
- **Ontario Trillium Foundation, Systems Innovation Fund** – Borderless Access to Education project
- **La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso** – CASA clients' immigration application fees and associated expenses
- **Court Challenges Program / Programme de contestation judiciaire** - Voting Age Challenge
- **Jonathan Kahn and Anne Irwin** – for a significant personal donation through the United Way
- **Bonnie Goldberg and Friends of CASA** – for generous donations and ongoing support to CASA



We specialize in protecting the rights, interests, and dignity of young people within the legal, education, social service or mental health systems.

**VISION:** Advance and protect the legal rights and dignity of children and youth.

**MISSION:** Provide child-centred legal services that enhance justice and support inclusion for vulnerable children and youth through:

- Specialized legal expertise and representation
- Leadership on systemic law reform and advocacy
- Legal education and outreach

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Emma Katz, Chair and President  
Tamara Nachmani, Vice-Chair and Vice-President  
Angela Reid, Treasurer  
Dr. Barbara Fallon, Secretary  
Anne Irwin, Past President  
Joe Louch  
Dr. Lance McCready  
Falguni Patel  
Roma Shah  
Tim Welsh





# OUR TEAM

Alicia Lam, Education Navigator, TNW Justice Centre

Alisha Riley, Case Manager

Allie McMillan, Intake Lawyer

Allison Williams, Lawyer

Candice Suter, Lawyer

Claire Millgate, Street Youth Legal Services Lawyer

Dennique Lavia, Project Assistant, CASA

Gab Gagnon, Law Clerk

Gnanu Krishnapillai, Education & Outreach Manager, CASA

Jane Spencer, Reception

Jane Stewart, Lawyer

Jin Chien, Lawyer

Kaffie Abdirashid, Education Advocate Lawyer, TNW Justice Centre

Karien Gibson, Operations Manager

Katherine Long, Lawyer

Lisa Salenga, Human Resources and Finance Assistant

Mary Birdsell, Executive Director

Miriam Roger, Program Lead, Your Way Forward

Samantha McDonald, Legal Assistant

Samira Ahmed, Lawyer

Sarah Pole, Program Director, CASA

Stephanie Giannandrea, Lawyer

Talayeh Shomali, Project Director, Borderless Access to Education

## On leave:

Athena Caldarola, Communications and Outreach Coordinator

Emily Chan, Community Development Lawyer

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**This report covers the time period: August 1, 2024 to July 31, 2025.  
Our fiscal year is: April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025.**

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In our 47th year, Justice for Children and Youth (“JFCY”) continued to provide leadership and excellence in the representation of young people, and in protecting and advancing their rights and dignity.

The essence of our work is a whole-client approach. We are intentional, trauma- and violence-informed, anti-oppression focused, and strengths-based, allowing us to support clients facing incredible adversity – to navigate not only our legal systems, but also the broader social and institutional barriers that shape their lives. Too often, young people are underserved, excluded, and not treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. We work to build bridges to community resources while challenging the systems that diminish their rights.

As you will see in more detail in the body of this Annual Report, the young people who come to JFCY represent some of the most marginalized people in our communities. Our direct service is expertly provided to meet their unique needs. At the same time, JFCY advances systemic change through test case litigation, including at the highest courts in the country. This unique combination – direct, client-centered service and national impact advocacy – defines our work and amplifies our reach.

We are deeply grateful for the support of Legal Aid Ontario, Canada’s Department of Justice, Ontario’s Ministry of the Attorney General, the Law Foundation of Ontario, foundations, and individual donors. Despite this diversification, our funding remains precarious and insufficient to meet the growing demand and complexity of young people’s needs. With stable, long-term resources, we can serve more children and youth, and we invite all of our partners and supporters to join us in making that possible.

We want to take this opportunity to extend our deepest thanks to long-serving Board member Anne Irwin. For 13 years, Anne has given her time, wisdom, and boundless energy to JFCY. Her tireless dedication, deep compassion, and unwavering commitment to children’s rights have left an indelible mark on our people and our organization. Her leadership has strengthened JFCY in countless ways, and her contributions will continue to shape our work for years to come. We are profoundly grateful.

Finally, to our staff, students, volunteers, and Board – thank you for your extraordinary commitment. The achievements you will read about in this report are possible only because of their skill, compassion, and dedication. Together, we look ahead with determination and commitment to another year of defending and advancing the rights of children and youth.



Mary Birdsell,  
Executive Director



Emma Katz,  
Board Chair

# OUR APPROACH TO CLIENTS



In providing services to our clients we take the time to understand what the breadth of their lived experiences look like, sound like, and feel like – we meet them where they are, follow what they identify as their priorities and concerns, and begin our work there. We know that our clients are underserved – we seek to build bridges, and to help our clients access the community, institutional, and organizational services they need, while fighting systems that diminish and devalue their dignity and rights.

## Whole client approach

- Intentional recognition of the client and their circumstances
- Trauma-informed and strengths-based
- Multi-disciplinary problem solving
- Following client-identified needs

## Complex case selection

- Provide our most comprehensive services to young people facing complex personal, social, and legal issues
- Address situations that create overlapping vulnerabilities

## Systemic impact\*

- Engage in test case litigation
- Specialized programs for young people whose vulnerabilities intersect with systemic discrimination and social exclusion

\*see following pages

## CLIENT STORY

JFCY received a referral from the Crown regarding a criminal prosecution of a case involving extreme violence against two young people who were siblings. JFCY worked on a very tight deadline to introduce and explain the legal issues to our client, ensure that they understood the meaning of all the legal and personal issues, to negotiate the protection of the young people's privacy and dignity in a "third-party records application", and to make submissions to the Court to ensure these protections.

# CLIENT INTAKES

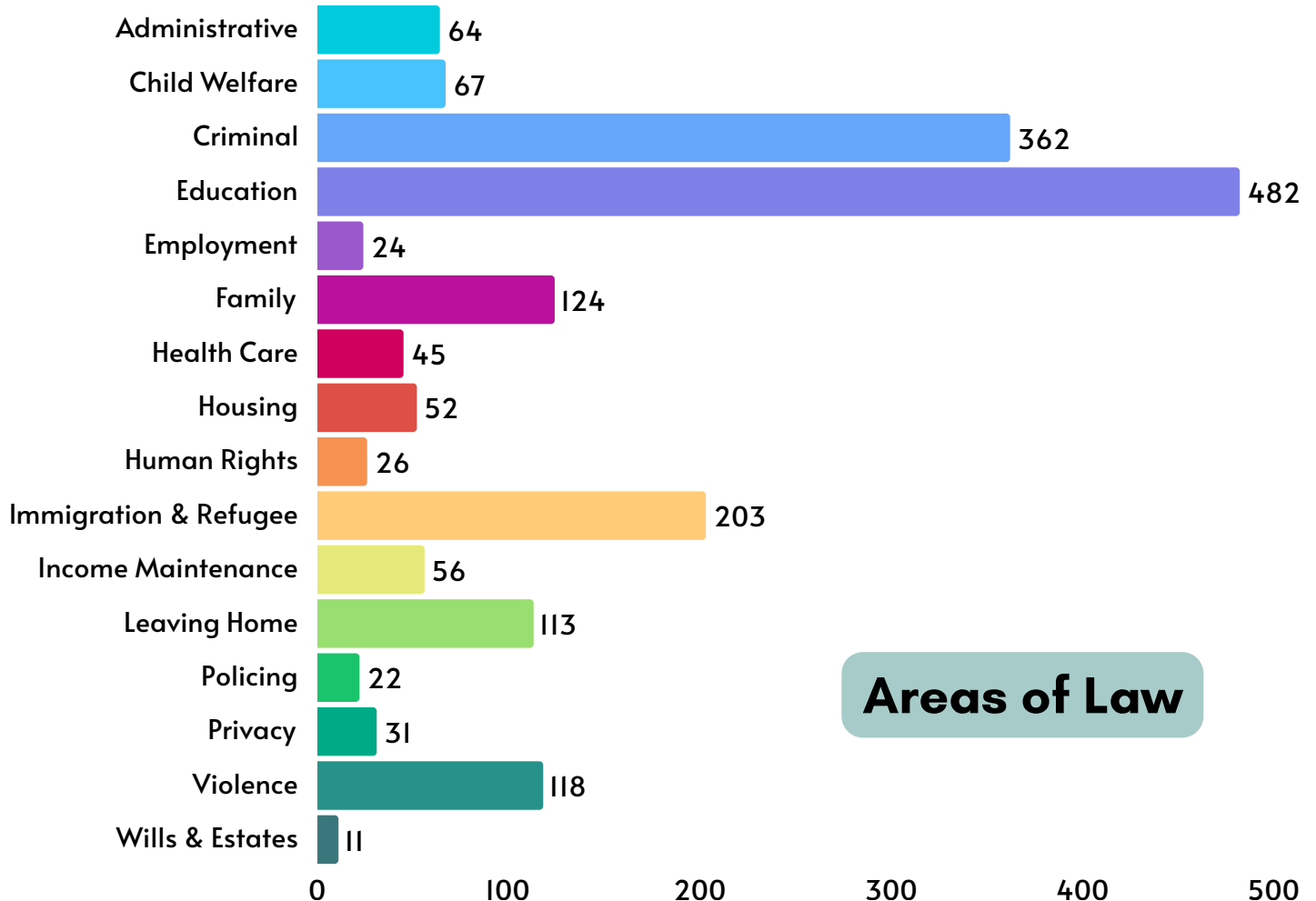
AUGUST 2024 - JULY 2025

**987**

**Individual young  
people provided  
legal services**

**1800**

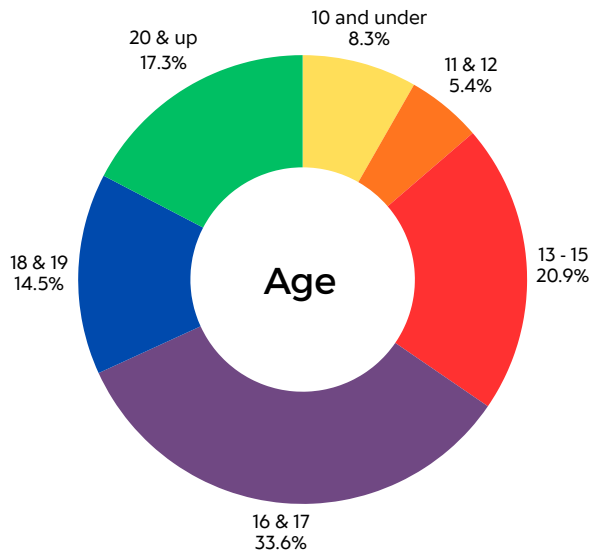
**Number of unique  
legal issues  
addressed**



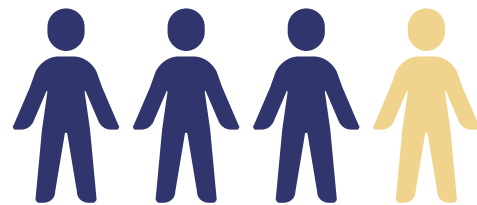


# CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

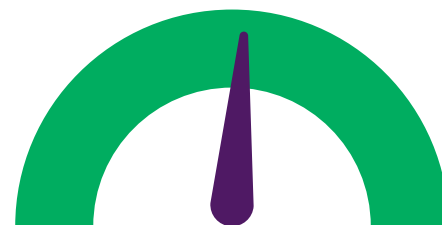
AUGUST 2024 - JULY 2025



30% are part of the queer community



74% identify as BIPOC



## CLIENT STORY

A 17 year old Indigenous client, who had been maintaining a household for their younger siblings without adult support, was facing possible eviction by the Landlord and Tenant Board. JFCY assisted with an emergency application, and eventual settlement - preventing the eviction and homelessness, and allowing time for an adult caregiver to make alternative housing arrangements. Our client is returning to complete their final high school credits this semester; and, our client and her younger siblings were able to stay connected to family and community.

# CASE MANAGER

FORMERLY CALLED CLIENT SUPPORT WORKER

Diverse themes arise in our work with young people. Some needs are unexpected, many are complex - all require supports that are nimble, creative, and responsive to issues as they arise. Our Case Manager is there to support those needs.



**174 unique  
support  
services  
provided to  
91 clients**



**Social and systems support and advocacy**



**Identify goals and address gaps in circle of care**



**Case management and crisis intervention**



**Assistance in accessing community-based supports and services**

**NEW!**

**Strengthening our social work student programming and training**

## CLIENT STORY

Children's Aid refused to support a 15-year old young person who was kicked out of her home and her town. The young person has grown up in Extended Society Care in another province and wanted to come back into care, as she had no parent or caregiver and was unsafe in her living situation. JFCY assisted the young person in successfully advocating to be brought into care and to obtain a supportive placement.

# TEST CASE LITIGATION



JFCY engages in systemic test case litigation where outcomes in the courts, tribunals, and with decision-makers will influence children's equity and rights beyond the individual case.

Tort of  
Domestic  
Violence  
or  
Coercive  
Control

## **Ahluwalia v Ahluwalia, Supreme Court of Canada, Case No 41061 (awaiting a decision)**

JFCY intervened before the Supreme Court of Canada in a case that could reshape how Canadian law acknowledges family violence. The Court has been asked to consider whether a recognition of the new torts of domestic violence or coercive control is necessary and appropriate to address the harms caused by patterns of coercion and control. JFCY argued that children's rights, views, and needs must be recognized and prioritized when addressing family violence. We await the Court's decision.

Imposing  
Adult  
Sentences  
in Youth  
Criminal  
Justice  
Cases

## **IM v R, 2025 SCC 23 and SB v R, 2025 SCC 2, Supreme Court of Canada**

JFCY intervened in two cases heard together - the Supreme Court of Canada was asked to interpret Section 72(1) of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, which sets out the test for when an adult sentence may be imposed on a young person. The Court affirmed that the seriousness of the offence is not relevant to rebutting the presumption of diminished moral blameworthiness. Instead, courts must examine the particular personal circumstances of the young person to determine if their developmental age is akin to an adult. To rebut the presumption, the Crown must prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, that although a young person's chronological age at the time of the offence was under 18, their developmental age was that of an adult. The Court adopted arguments advanced by JFCY.

Media  
must apply  
to Youth  
Court for  
access to  
Youth  
Court  
Records

## **R v Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Court of Appeal for Ontario, 2024 ONCA 765**

JFCY was retained by the lawyers for six of the eight young people charged with second-degree murder in relation to the death of a man in 2022. Media outlets sought access to the full, unredacted youth court files of the accused young people. The Court of Appeal found that the media does not have a presumptive right to special access to youth court records, and that the Youth Court applied the appropriate test in granting the media partial access to the records, (redacting some personal identifying information), and to allow ongoing coverage and accurate reporting of the case. The Court found that the privacy provisions in the YCJA govern, and are not ousted by the common law cases on media access to the open court. The appropriate test balances the unique privacy interests of young people, and the open court principle.

# TEST CASE LITIGATION

Charter  
Challenge  
by Media  
to the  
Youth  
Records  
Privacy  
Regime

## **CBC et al v Canada (Attorney General), Superior Court of Justice, Toronto Region, Case File No. CV-24-00732679-0000**

JFCY has been granted leave to intervene in this case where media outlets have brought a Charter challenge to some of the key privacy protections contained in the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA). The media are asking the Ontario Court to add “recognized news media” into section 119(1) of the YCJA as a class of persons presumptively entitled to access to youth court records. Alternatively, they seek a declaration that subsections 118(1) and 119(1)(s) of the YCJA are unconstitutional and should be struck down. The sections in question address access, disclosure, and use of records and information kept under the YCJA. The hearing is set to be heard on Feb 9-10, 2026.

Court  
Jurisdiction  
Regarding  
Students  
Under 16  
Using their  
Chosen  
Names  
and  
Pronouns

## **Saskatchewan (Minister of Education) v UR Pride Centre for Sexuality and Gender Diversity, Court of Appeal for Saskatchewan, 2025 SKCA 74**

JFCY was granted intervenor status in this case where UR Pride brought a constitutional challenge against a Saskatchewan law that requires schools to obtain parental permission before using chosen names and pronouns by students who are under age 16. UR Pride claimed that this law violated the Charter rights to equality (s. 15), security of the person (s. 7), and to be free from cruel and unusual treatment (s. 12), of vulnerable and marginalized students. The government argued that the use of the notwithstanding clause insulates the law from any judicial review. The Court of Appeal found that even when the government invokes the notwithstanding clause, the courts maintain the jurisdiction to determine violations of Charter rights. The Government is seeking leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Request for  
Township  
to Display  
LGBTQ2  
Flag



## **The Corporation of the Township of Emo et al v Borderland Pride et al, Superior Court of Justice, Thunder Bay, Court File No. DC-24-0016-00JR**

The Court is being asked whether the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario was correct in finding that the Township of Emo and its Mayor engaged in discrimination in 2020, when it denied the request of Borderland Pride for a proclamation that June be declared “Pride Month” by the Town, and that it display an LGBTQ2 rainbow flag for a week. As intervener, JFCY seeks to ensure that the rights and interests of young people, and 2SLGBTQIA+ children and young people in particular impacted by this decision are considered. The hearing date to be set.

# TEST CASE LITIGATION

Standard  
of  
Currently  
Being  
“Of Good  
Character”  
to  
Practice  
Law

## **Law Society of Ontario v AA, Court of Appeal for Ontario, Court File No. COA-25-CV-0462**

The Court of Appeal is being asked to consider whether the Law Society Tribunals were reasonable in finding that AA, who was diagnosed with pedophilia in remission, met the standard of “currently being of good character” and that he be issued a license to practice law, subject to a condition that he not meet with children unsupervised. As intervenor, JFCY submitted that the Law Society Tribunal decisions were unreasonable, arguing that they failed to adequately consider the interests of children as equity-seeking members of the public whose interests, dignity, and integrity must be a central and primary consideration. The hearing took place on Aug 29, 2025 and we await the decision.

Challenge  
to the  
Federal  
Voting  
Age of 18

LOWERING  
THE VOTING AGE



## **Penney- Crocker et al. v Canada, Superior Court of Justice, Court File No. CV-00673129-0000**

JFCY and the David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights is representing 12 young people, and JFCY is a public interest litigant, in a Charter challenge to the Canada Elections Act minimum voting age of 18. Our clients are 13 to 20 year olds who reside in various parts of Canada. They seek to have the voting age struck down as in violation of the Charter guarantee of the right to vote to all Canadian citizens (s. 3), and guarantees equality rights (s. 15). To date, the Court has dispensed with the need for litigation guardians; both sides have tendered most of their evidence; and cross-examinations are being held in the fall of 2025. Hearing date to be set.

Media  
Sought  
Access to  
Youth  
Court  
Records

## **IN THE MATTER OF an Application by the Toronto Star, the respondent in an application under Court File No. as enumerated:, for an Order, pursuant to the provisions of section 119 [now 123] of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, S.C. 2002, c.1, for the disclosure of certain records; Court File Nos., 24Y2310-748, 24Y2310-749, 24Y2310-759, 24Y2310-836, 24Y2310-861, 24Y2310-871, 24Y2310-912, 24Y2310-913, 24Y2310-928, 24Y2310-974, 24Y2310-971**

JFCY acted as amicus in an extensive application for access to Youth Court Records of a deceased young person.





**Assisted  
161 youth  
with 203  
legal  
issues**

The SYLS lawyer helps prevent youth homelessness through their role as advocate, problem solver, and systems navigator. They identify and help resolve legal issues that often precede homelessness, such as tenancy issues, disruptions to income, or family violence. They also help to remove barriers that interfere with young people's transition out of homelessness, such as immigration status precarity, criminal victimization, barriers to receiving health care and accessing employment, education and housing.

**Access to Justice  
for youth  
experiencing  
or at risk of  
homelessness**

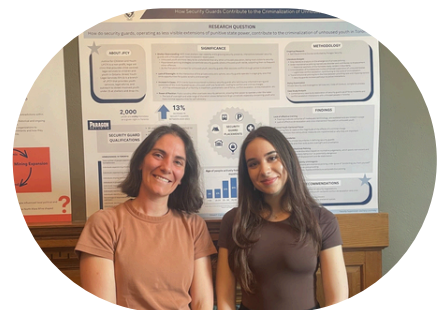
Connects with youth at regular drop-ins across the GTA to provide legal services

Provides legal rights education and resources for youth and service providers

Engages in community outreach and development, policy development and law reform activities\*\*

**\*\* Sample of activities:**

- Workshops through our community partners, including Covenant House, WoodGreen, YSM Evergreen, and Eva's Initiatives
- Outreach and education to organizations supporting survivors of human trafficking including Covenant House, Strides, and specific divisions within the Crown Attorney's office
- Participation in the Young Parents No Fixed Address Network
- Presentation for the Prevention Now! Series with lived expert and past client: <https://homelesshub.ca/blog/2024/from-vulnerability-to-stability-the-legal-path-to-preventing-youth-homelessness/>



Research on Security guard interactions with homeless youth, conducted by Celia Siripoulos (right), U of T Ethics, Society and the Law student; with Claire Millgate (left) - SYLS lawyer

# Education Support Program



Services  
92 young  
people on  
118 unique  
legal issues

Our ESP is part of a team of specialist justice partners situated within the Toronto Northwest Justice Center (TNWJC) to ensure that young people charged with criminal offences have direct access to expert education law supports and services. Young people at the intersection of youth criminal justice and education law face a range of complex legal, social, and personal issues that can directly or indirectly impact their schooling and can have long term consequences.

## Education Advocate (Lawyer) & Education Navigator (Social Worker)

Provide meaningful, timely, and robust expert services to ensure young people's access to education.

Address complex legal and non-legal issues that impact a young person's criminal justice and education needs.

Promotes rehabilitation and reintegration in ways that enhance community safety and well-being.



JFCY lawyers also provide additional legal services, support and advocacy to Justice Centre participants across myriad practice areas including: criminal justice, mental health, child protection, victimization, housing, and more.

Justice Centres were created by the Ministry of Attorney General in 2021 to move justice outside of traditional courtrooms and into the community to address the root causes of youth criminal activity.



YWF is generously funded by the  
Department of Justice Canada

YWF is in its fourth year! The funding for this program allows us to provide essential violence-informed legal services:

- provide access to justice for survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV), family violence, and sexual violence;
- maintain a level of service, although demand continues to outpace our resources;
- coordinate our collaborative structure with eight partner legal clinics.

JFCY staff  
provide holistic and  
expert services that  
are needed by clients  
facing the adversity  
that is wrought by  
violence.

Young people who have been victimized by violence have a wide range of legal needs. They require information to understand the legal, social, and personal implications of disclosing the violence.

We provide legal advice and representation to young people who are victim witnesses in criminal court, or who seek family justice remedies. They may also need legal services in relation to employment, housing, education, child protection, health care, and human rights.

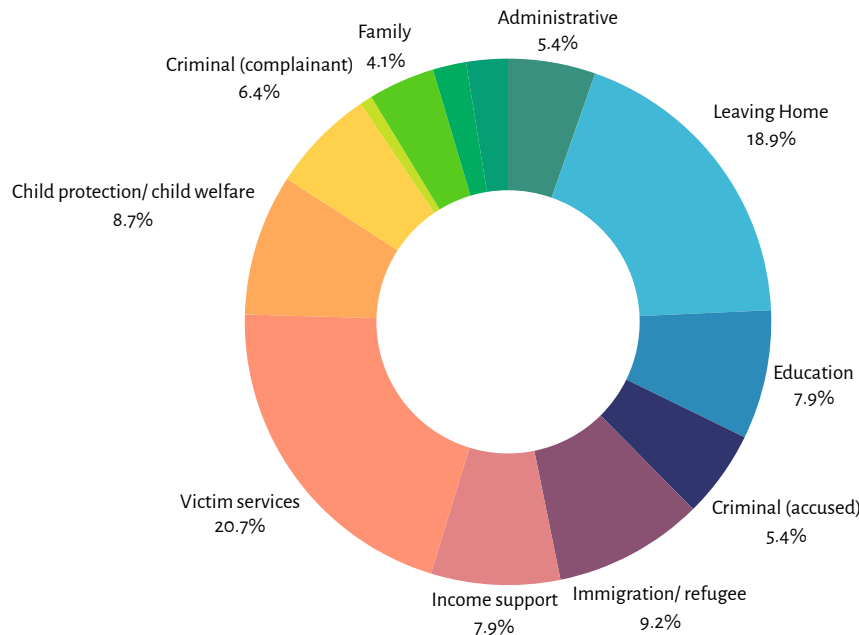
We advocate with criminal system actors, children's aid societies, schools, school boards, health care providers, and other community service providers like emergency homelessness shelters to ensure that young people are able to access the supports they need.

Our data shows the following about YWF clients:

- 3/4 identify as female or as gender-diverse
- More than 70% are facing housing insecurity
- Almost 60% have no access to any income
- Over half are involved with a children's aid society
- 3/4 have a history of trauma
- 62% are from a racialized background

**391**  
**cases**  
**related**  
**to family**  
**or sexual**  
**violence**

**Areas of Law Required by our YWF Clients**  
**August 1, 2024 - July 31, 2025**



**BY THE HOUR: JFCY provided the following to young survivors of GBV**  
(April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025)





**240** Conducted  
**240** YWF  
**240** workshops &  
**31** YWF  
community  
development  
meetings

## Community Engagement

JFCY continued to meet with various people, services, and organizations in the community, including - Victims Services organizations, Victim Witness Assistance Program management and staff, specialized Crown Attorneys, human trafficking support services providers - to encourage understanding of the complex legal needs of our clients, and the availability of JFCY services to support those clients. These efforts are essential to improve access to justice, to improve stability, safety, and security for young people who have been victimized by sexual and family violence, and to improve the experience of young people in the criminal and other legal systems.

## Data Collection

YWF continues to work with the Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children (CREVAWC) at Western University on our extensive project-wide data collection and program evaluation. We anticipate that the resulting reports will help to demonstrate the merit of having dedicated survivor-focused services in the clinic setting.

The data and research is already demonstrating the significant complexity of providing legal services to clients who have been victimized by sexual and family violence. It is additionally clear that the unique needs and vulnerabilities of child and adolescent clients requires specialized and expert services that JFCY is uniquely positioned to provide.

## CLIENT STORY

JFCY had a client who was a survivor of human sex trafficking. While being trafficked, exploited, and coercively controlled, she had several charges laid against her - with her identity being disclosed because of reporting in the media. We were successful in supporting her safety in escaping sexual exploitation, having her criminal charges withdrawn, media articles corrected, and helped her access counselling and parenting support services.



## Policy and Law Reform

JFCY worked alongside the YWF Collaborative on policy and law reform initiatives, including:

Submission of a report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) regarding access to legal aid in civil legal matters in Canada. We shared our observations on the state of access to justice for survivors in Ontario and why Ontario's legal clinic system's is well-positioned to provide trauma-informed accessible legal services to survivors, in Sept 2024.

### **"DECLARE INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AN EPIDEMIC"**



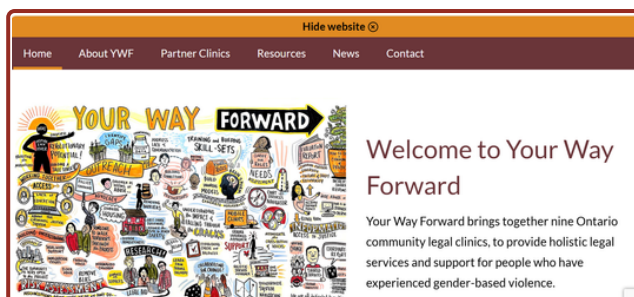
YWF and CLINIC COLLEAGUES at  
QUEEN'S PARK IN SUPPORT OF BILL-173  
November 2024

Presentation of a policy brief to MPP Kristyn Wong Tam on Bill 173: Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act, and its anticipated application in our legal advocacy, in Oct 2024.

MPP Wong Tam organized a press conference on Nov 25, 2025 (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) where YWF clinic and sister clinic staff, stood beside proponents of the Bill and urged the passing of this legislation. Two YWF staff lawyers, including JFCY lawyer Samira Ahmed, stated that such a declaration would support our advocacy and improve legal outcomes for survivors, ensuring that their safety and legal issues are dealt with appropriately, with greater awareness, sensitivity and urgency.

Submission made to the federal Finance Committee's Budget Consultation, Aug 2025. YWF recommendations included:

- Prioritize Sustainable, Ongoing Funding for Survivor-Centered Legal Services;
- Invest in System-Change Advocacy to Improve Institutional Responses to GBV; and
- Establish and Fund an Independent Gender-Based Violence Commissioner.



## YWF website

Sharing collaborative news and contact information for our partner clinics: [www.yourwayforward-on.ca](http://www.yourwayforward-on.ca)



CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS  
SUPPORT & ADVOCACY

Exciting news:  
CASA is evolving into  
a separate nonprofit  
organization!!  
visit [casacentre.ca](http://casacentre.ca)



197

Assisted  
197 young  
people  
with 277  
cases

200

Delivered  
approximately  
200  
workshops  
and trainings

### Supporting young people with precarious or no immigration status

Funding for CASA is generously supported by the Law Foundation of Ontario, as well as other funding supports.



Legal advice and information, and connecting to ongoing legal representation.



Navigation support during the preparation and processing of immigration applications, and assisting young people to access essential services such as education, financial supports, and healthcare.



Raise awareness about immigration precarity and the barriers it creates by delivering workshops in classrooms and youth serving agencies, and through trainings for youth-serving professionals.



Partner on research about the experiences of young people with no or precarious immigration status.



Engage in systems change advocacy to ensure young people's individual rights and interests are recognized and respected in immigration processes.

A focus for 2024/2025 was to reflect on and review CASA's successes and evolution over its five years at JFCY. We engaged in conversations with diverse CASA stakeholders including former clients, advocacy partners, members of the bar, service providers, teachers, funders, and our colleagues. The impact of CASA's work was clear throughout this process, particularly with regards to outreach, raising awareness, and providing deep client supports. The increasing demand for CASA's services was also apparent. These learnings helped chart an important transition for CASA – evolving into a separate nonprofit organization. It is bittersweet to be 'leaving home', CASA is so grateful for the supports, encouragement, and opportunity for growth the clinic has provided since 2020. JFCY and CASA look forward to a close association moving forward, and to partnering on client files and referrals, and on joint systemic advocacy and law reform efforts.

CASA's new name is the:

Childhood Arrivals Support and Advocacy Centre of Canada - [www.casacentre.ca](http://www.casacentre.ca).



## **Sarah Pole, Program Director of CASA, receiving the OJEN Chief Justices' Award**



The Ontario Justice Education Network award recognizes an individual who has made exceptional contribution in promoting public understanding, education and dialogue in support of a responsive and inclusive justice system.

## **JFCY at the David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

Mary Birdsell, JFCY's Executive Director, was selected as the Constitutional Litigator in Residence at the David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights for the Fall 2024 term. Mary co-taught the Centre's Clinic Course, which gives upper-year University of Toronto law students hands-on experience in Charter and constitutional litigation. Mary brought her deep expertise in constitutional and child rights advocacy, guiding students on cases such as a challenge to the voting age and the inaccessibility of MAiD for youth.



The Borderless Access to Education project (BATE) generously funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation System Innovations Fund.

This is in collaboration between: JFCY, CASA (see previous page), the Sanctuary Students Solidarity and Support Collective (S4), and the Black Creek Youth Initiative (BCYI).

The project's goal is to enhance access to education for students with precarious or no immigration status in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) by addressing and changing attitudes, policies, and systems that restrict equitable access to education.

To have a better understanding of the challenges and barriers faced by students with precarious immigration status - barriers in their educational journeys - the team is transitioning from the data collection and research phase to the systems innovation phase of the project. This transition has been challenged by a dramatically shifting environment, where opportunities and an interest in supporting student access has given way to the creation of additional barriers, and limitations to access routes. Our collaborative maintains its dedication to addressing systemic barriers and improving education access.. We know that many people, including educators and administrators are committed to more inclusive and supportive classroom environments for students facing immigration challenges.

# LAW & POLICY REFORM



JFCY engages with law reform and policy-making activities as they impact the equity, rights, and dignity of young people in Ontario and across Canada. We also consult regularly with those who are interested in children's rights and equity issues: academics, lawyers, other professionals, governments, community organizations, schools and school boards, children's aid societies, service providers, and more.

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A selection of this years' activities include:

- Submissions to the UN committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the development of General Comment 27 on Access to Justice.
- Submission to the Safe and Healthy Schools Branch of the Ministry of Education on the Review and Update of the Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol.
- Submission to Child Welfare Secretariat and Child Welfare and Protection Division of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services on the VYSA Review – The Importance of Disaggregated Data Collection.
- Submission on Bill 33: “Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025”, an Act to amend various Acts in relation to child, youth and family services, education, and colleges and universities.
- Joint submission and presentation, with the Income Security Advocacy Centre, to the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services Legal Steering Committee on Social Assistance on the challenges of 16 and 17 year olds receiving Ontario Works and Emergency Assistance.
- Participation in the City Ombudsperson Investigation into the Special Priority Application Process for housing, on behalf of JFCY and the Young Parent's No Fixed Address Network.
- Consultation for the Systemic Investigation on Experiences of Survivors of Sexual Violence, being conducted by the Federal Ombudsman of Crime's office.
- Consultation with researchers regarding the consequences for children whose parents / guardians keep them from public school enrollment and participation.

# RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

JFCY is grateful for the opportunity to work with community partners and academics on a wide range of issues related to children's rights; and being study participants on justice related research.



Our current on-going involvement includes:

## **Inclusive Justice Collaborative**

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**Partner /  
Member**

- Focus on transforming how the youth justice system responds to Black and racialized youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Project will engage youth, caregivers, service providers, and systems leaders.
- Lead by Springboard and grounded in community partnerships made up of grassroots and institutional partners, youth advisors, and subject matter experts across the province.
- In year one of five; funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Youth Opportunities Fund.

## **Intellectual Disabilities in the Youth Criminal Justice System**

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**Community  
Partner**

- An investigation on the lived experience of young people with intellectual disabilities in the criminal justice system and the extent to which their rights are appropriately protected and advanced.
- Research includes studying the extent to which justice system professionals (defence lawyers, crown attorneys, probation officers, etc.) are aware of intellectual disabilities, and the extent to which they do, or are able, to address those concerns as part of the underlying issues that bring young people into contact with the youth criminal justice system.
- As a community partner JFCY assists in many ways; currently in setting up opportunities to present the research findings.
- Researchers: Professor Dr. Daniella Bendo, King's University, and Professor Dr. Christine Goodwin-De Faria, Trent University.

## **Border(ing) Practices: Systemic Racism, Immigration & Child Welfare**

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**Community  
Partner**

- Collaborative research project, in partnership with child welfare, immigration, and gender-based violence service providers and advocates in Ontario and British Columbia.
- JFCY is on the Research Advisory Committee and other sub-committees.
- Principal Investigators: Professors Dr. Rupaleem Bhuyan, University of Toronto, and Dr. Mandeep Kaur Muncina, University of Victoria
- Co-Investigators: Professors Dr. Bryn King, University of Toronto, and Dr. Rhonda Hackett, University of Victoria



# PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION

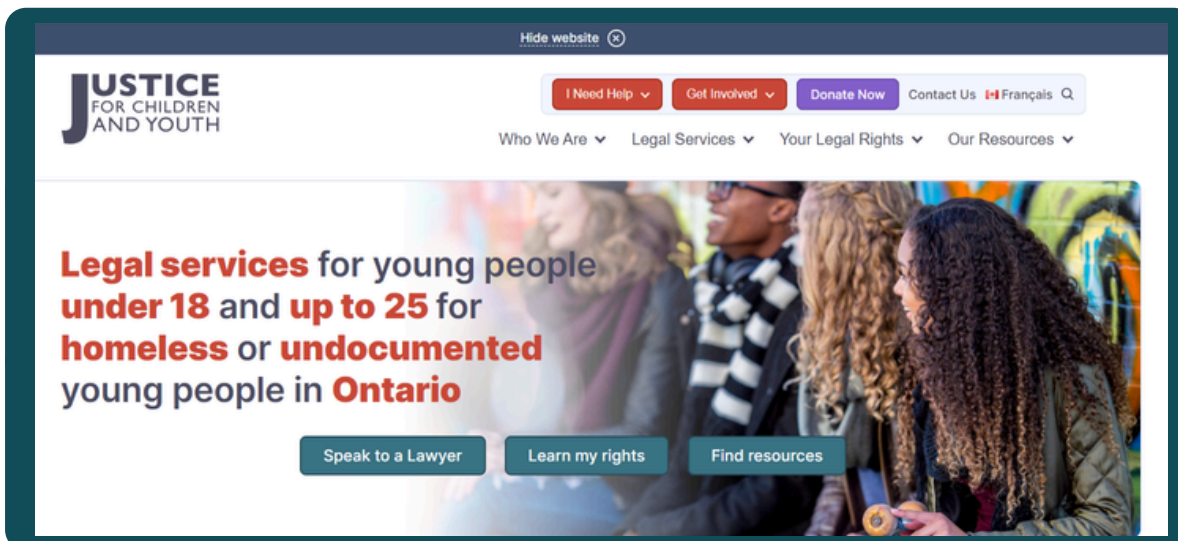
## Access to Justice requires Access to Knowledge

We create and maintain a wide range of free public legal education materials.

We provide workshops for young people, and training for adult supporters and professionals.

We increase awareness, knowledge and expertise about the legal issues impacting young people.

**230** workshops with over **6000** participants



**jfcy.org**

**50,000+** visits to Your Legal Rights Sections

Publications are free to download and distribute

# COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

As part of JFCY's vision and mandate, we are involved with a wide range of community, educational and professional organizations. Many are on-going partnerships and we are continuously engaging in new initiatives and consultations.



In addition to partnerships already mentioned in this report:

## Community

- Provincial Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee
- Sex Trafficking Advisory Committee of Covenant House
- Trans ID Clinic
- Unaccompanied and Separated Children Network
- Our System, Our Children, Our Responsibility: A Campaign Against the Deportation of Child Welfare Survivors Coalition
- Centre for Refugee Children

## Professional

- Ontario Bar Association's section Executive: Child and Youth Law; Constitutional, Civil Liberties and Human Rights; and Education Law
- Canadian Bar Association's Child and Youth Law section
- Children's Rights Academic Network (CRAN)
- Office of the Children's Lawyer
- Children and Youth Unit of Ontario Ombudsman

## Organizations

- Victim/Witness Assistance Program
- Various School Boards
- Native Child Resource Centre, Y-House, Central Toronto Youth Services
- Eva's Place, Friends of Ruby, Sojourn House, SKETCH Working Arts
- Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence (Peel CAS)
- Ontario Justice Education Network

## Boards

- Canadian Coalition on the Rights of the Children (and Treasurer)
- Canadian Association for the Practical Study of Law in Education
- A Way Home Canada

# MEDIA

JFCY responds to requests for interviews and consultations regarding our cases and expertise on issues that impact the equity, rights, and dignity of children and youth in Ontario and Canada.



A sample of when we have appeared in TV, radio and in print media this past year:

- Global News: “Not what you think they are”: Inside a teen facility facing years of red flags, mistreatment claims”
- Borders and Belonging Podcast: ‘The violence of uncertainty: Everyday impacts of precarious immigration status’
- Homeless Hub: “The Unique Role of Lawyers in Preventing and Ending Youth Homelessness”
- TVO Today: ‘Who gets to claim parental rights?’
- Toronto Star: ‘We’re hurting’: GTA parents and community groups call for action over missing Black boys”

# SOCIAL MEDIA

*Follow Us*



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# STUDENTS

Having students as part of the JFCY team makes it possible for us to meet more of the demand for our services than we would without them. We hope to enhance the academic experience that students have, and to educate and model for them the high standards we demand of ourselves and our work.

Thank you to the students who were part of our office - we are grateful for your work and dedication to JFCY and our clients - we offer our heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

Programs and law firm that have made this possible:

- Bachelor of Social Work, Toronto Metropolitan University
- Blakes LLP
- Community Research Partnerships in Ethics program, University of Toronto
- Faculty of Law, Western University
- Faculty of Law, University of Toronto
- Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa
- Lincoln Alexander School of Law, Toronto Metropolitan University
- Osgoode Hall Law School
- Pro Bono Students Canada
- Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University



**6500+** student hours

**19** student placements

**5** universities and **1** law firm

## CLIENT STORIES

JFCY assisted a 17-year-old who had been kicked out of her family home because of their queer identity - they were living in a shelter. At first, the Children's Aid Society (CAS) refused to grant them a Voluntary Youth Service Agreement (VYSA). With support from JFCY, we were able to provide them with options, legal advice, and advocated with the CAS to ensure the young person had the support they needed through a VYSA. We were also able to support with the legal process of getting enrolled in school.

JFCY received an urgent call from a 16-year-old victim of violence. Their perpetrator's criminal trial was quickly approaching and our client wanted to testify. We worked to ensure that their legal rights as a criminal court victim witness was respected and assisted the young person in preparing for trial from the victim perspective in a trauma informed way.

A decorative border made of white line art flowers and leaves, framing the 'IN MEMORIAM' section on the left and right sides.

## IN MEMORIAM

We pause to remember the lives of clients who are no longer with us. Each one brought their own bright light into this world. We stand with those who loved them – their family, friends and their community – in grief, remembrance, and working towards systemic change for young people.



To learn more about JFCY's work in protecting the rights of young people, visit: [jfcy.org](https://jfcy.org)

To make a donation that will have an immediate impact on children and youth, please visit [jfcy.org/about-us/donate/](https://jfcy.org/about-us/donate/)

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The Canadian Foundation for Children Youth and the Law was incorporated in 1978 as a Registered Charity. We operate as “Justice for Children and Youth” (JFCY), a specialty community legal aid clinic. Charitable Registration Number: 118831445 RR0001