

French-language Services Plan

2020–2021

Community Services



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French-language Services Plan
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Message from the Deputy Minister

Bonjour!

On behalf of Nova Scotia's Department of Community Services and the NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women, I am pleased to present our department's French-language Services (FLS) Progress Report and Plan for 2020-2021.

In collaboration with other designated public institutions, we are committed to enhancing and promoting access to French-language Services for all Nova Scotians. We hope that our efforts will make it easier for the Acadian and francophone community to access our services and programs in the language of their choice. We plan to continue to focus on actively offering French-language services in those areas where it will have the most impact. Offices and staff with the capacity to provide services in French have been using the government Visual Identification Program "Bonjour!" to indicate availability of services - please look for their *Bonjour!* signs when accessing our programs and services. Offices without internal capacity can still access interpretation services through our partnership with the Language Line, allowing us to provide service in over 200 languages, or can consult our internal French Speaking Directory to connect with staff members who have French-language skills. The tools and resources available to our staff are significantly improving our capacity to serve clients in their language of choice.

The following plan sets out our goals for 2020-2021 and identifies the achievements made over the past year. In addition to the targets identified in this plan, we will also have additional opportunities to deliver services including printed materials and consultations in French when required. We recognize that the Acadian and francophone community plays a vital role in the cultural richness of our province. I am proud to be contributing with some of my Deputy colleagues on the Deputy Minister committee on French-language Services.

It is our commitment to support the growth of the Acadian and francophone population in the province by making measurable and sustainable progress and reaching above and beyond our goals to improve our programs and services.

I invite you to visit our website for more information about the services available in French:
<http://gov.ns.ca/coms/fr/index.html>.

Merci beaucoup,
Tracey Taweel
Deputy Minister
Department of Community Services

What we're doing to contribute to the growth of the Acadian and francophone community

We recognize the importance of French-language services and we endeavour to fulfil our responsibilities under the *French-language Services Act* and Regulations. We believe Nova Scotians should have access to quality government services in French, and this plan demonstrates our commitment to ensuring our programmes, policies and services address the priorities expressed by the Acadian and francophone community. To achieve this aim, we collaborate with other designated public institutions across government – including the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie – through the French-language Services Coordinating Committee. We greatly value this partnership, which ensures a continued understanding of the unique needs of our province's Acadian and francophone community.

We encourage Nova Scotians to request services from government in French. We also encourage Acadians and francophones to have their voices heard by participating on agencies, boards and commissions, which are regularly advertised by the Executive Council Office. As we continue to maintain and improve our French-language services, we welcome feedback on our progress and we invite you to share with us your comments or questions by contacting our French-language services coordinator. If you wish to make a formal complaint regarding French-language services, please contact the Office of the Ombudsman.

French-language Services Coordinators

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Services we offer in French

Listed below is a general overview of programs and services that we offer in French:

Printed and digital materials

- Documents were produced and translated for the Alternative Family Care program including FAQ sheets for caregivers.
- Foster Care marketing materials for 2016-17 including a poster, French foster care brochures, bookmarks and a French/English language parade banner.
- The "What You Need to Know..." booklet was updated to reflect the amendments to the *Children and Family Services Act* and is available in French.
- The Income Assistance application form is available in French.
- Licensing Services forms.
- Child Abuse Registry forms.
- Standard Household Rate brochure, poster and fact sheet.
- Poverty Reduction Building Vibrant Communities Grants.
- Changer pour le mieux – a publication for women experiencing/who have experienced abuse, and those looking for ways to better support them – Produced by the NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Community Services website

- Communications Nova Scotia is currently overseeing major changes to the Community Services website. Expected completion in fiscal 2020-21
- The Sexual Violence Strategy created grant reporting templates, newsletters, a web strategy and a website in French (except videos). (<http://breakthesilencens.ca/fr/>)
- [Adoption Records Consultation website page.](#)
- [Online Survey Now Open for Adoption Records](#)
- Changes to the *Children and Family Services Act* web content: <https://novascotia.ca/coms/families/changestoCFSA/index-fr.html>
- Prevention and Early Intervention web content: <https://novascotia.ca/coms/families/prevention-and-early-intervention/index-fr.html>
- CYFS Connection Stakeholder Newsletter: [https://novascotia.ca/coms/transformation/docs/CYFS Connection - Stakeholder Newsletter French E03.pdf](https://novascotia.ca/coms/transformation/docs/CYFS_Connection_-_Stakeholder_Newsletter_French_E03.pdf)
- [Child Abuse Register Registry for Search form](#)

Employee resources

- Over-the-phone interpreter services through the Language Line.
- French Speaking Directory (directory of employees who can speak French).
- French-language Services toolkit for employees which includes an infographic on how to respond to verbal and written requests/communications in French and an infographic that explains what Active Offer is.
- Intranet section on French-language Services.
- "Bonjour" visual identification program.
- French-language training.

How we communicate with the public in French

In accordance with the *FLS Act* and *Regulations*, as well as our own French-language Services guidelines, all verbal and written correspondence received in French was responded to in French with the help of CNS Translation Services and/or our FLS Coordinator. We do our best to have staff available onsite that can answer inquiries in French. When someone is not available to handle requests, staff can access interpretation services through our Language Line or through our directory of French-speaking employees. Both resources are available on our intranet site. French Written Correspondence and Verbal Communication Guidelines and posters are also available to staff to help them when responding to requests in French.

A French-language services toolkit is also available on our departmental intranet site to provide guidance and support to employees for active offer, translation, verbal and written communications in French. We also strongly recommend to French training participants to actively offer French-language services when possible.

Public Consultations

In accordance to the *FLS Act* and *Regulations*, as well as our own French-language Services guidelines, if a public consultation is planned, we will include options for members of the Acadian and francophone community to participate in French in the public consultation process. Our goal is to provide members of the Acadian and francophone community with the opportunity to participate in the public consultation process when possible.

In 2019-2020, the department did not undertake province-wide consultations. However, the Department conducted stakeholder consultations in several areas in support of transformation projects. In 2019, the department conducted an online survey in both languages to ask Nova Scotians what they think about open adoption records.

PROGRESS REPORT: What we did to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2019–20

Strategic Objective 1 – Leadership and policy direction

Strengthen internal operational structures including policy, legislative and administrative frameworks

Senior leaders and staff

- ✓ The Deputy Minister and Senior Management Team have supported the FLS Coordinator's continued participation on the Provincial FLS Coordinators Committee and its applicable sub-committees.
- ✓ The FLS coordinator participated in the strategic planning sessions with the Office of Acadian Affairs and la Francophonie. The coordinator actively participated in two sub-committees focused on increasing Active Offer/Bonjour program and the *French-language Services Act* review.
- ✓ The FLSC presented to multiple groups including Regional Management Tables, the Senior Management Team and the Deputy Minister about employee engagement while promoting the role of the FLSC.
- ✓ The FLSC sent promotional items and information packages to all managers for National Acadian Day and the Internal Communications & Engagement unit hosted a social event that day at an office in Central Region.
- ✓ For National Acadian Day, an online quiz was organized to promote our FLS section on our departmental intranet site.
- ✓ Information was shared with staff for International Francophonie Day to increase awareness about French-languages services.
- ✓ The FLSC continued to build relationships with senior leaders and to share information about the *FLS Act* and regulations.
- ✓ The Internal Communications & Engagement Director actively promoted French-language services and resources as part of a series of presentations delivered to staff in three offices in the North/Eastern Region during 2019.
- ✓ The FLSC promoted the French Written and Verbal Correspondence guideline and prepared an online and printable toolkit for staff use. This toolkit was distributed to all service delivery managers across the province. The French-language Services toolkit for employees includes an infographic on how to respond to verbal and written requests/communications in French and an infographic that explains what Active Offer is.
- ✓ The Internal Communications and Engagement unit continued to promote the DCS orientation and onboarding program for new employees including a module about FLS regulations and obligations. The new orientation guides employees through multiple tasks including reviewing the DCS intranet page on FLS.
- ✓ The FLSC actively promoted:
 - The French-language Speaking Hiring Panel Roster to hiring managers.
 - The new French-language hiring panel pool to encourage staff to submit their names.
 - The use of Language Line and the French-language Speakers Directory amongst staff and senior leaders.
 - The French-language Services Human Resources Guidelines.
 - The DCS French-language Toolkit for employees.

French-language services plan and consideration for FLS initiatives/projects

- ✓ The FLCS provided advice on implementation of FLS in current programs and services as well as new programs that were planned and designed during the year.

Collaboration between the FLSC and CNS

- ✓ The FLSC maintained bi-monthly meetings with CNS's communication officer to share information on upcoming projects.
- ✓ The FLSC offered advice on how French-language services can be integrated into current and new initiatives carried out by CNS.

Strategic Objective 2 – Quality and Availability of French-language services

Develop and deliver quality French-language services and programmes to the public

Staff knowledge and French-language skills

- ✓ The language line was promoted on our intranet site; contact information is available on the DCS intranet directly on the FLS page and on the main menu for Forms, Policies and Procedures.
- ✓ French-language training offered by Université Sainte-Anne was promoted through emails sent to employees.
- ✓ The new Acadie at a Glance training was delivered to our Inclusion and diversity committee.
- ✓ DCS partnered with other departments and community organizations to plan annual celebrations (National Acadian Day, August 15th, International Francophonie Day, March 20th). Five events took place across the province in DCS offices, and one larger event occurred in HRM in partnership with the community.
- ✓ The Department continues to promote and encourage the participation of its employees in French-language training. During the year more than 50 employees completed French-language training courses offered by the University Sainte-Anne.
- ✓ The French-language Speakers Directory was updated on a bi-annual basis. There are currently 45 employees on the directory who have agreed to provide FLS services when needed.
- ✓ DCS staff also has access to interpretation services through the Language line, which enhances our capacity to offer FLS to the community.

Visibility and accessibility of FLS

- ✓ The FLS Plan was published on our internet and intranet sites in English and French.
- ✓ DCS continued to be represented at Acadian and francophone community organizations and 3rd party service providers' AGMs ie. Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE), Réseau Santé, etc.
- ✓ DCS continued to be represented on Réseau Santé along with Acadian Affairs, Department of Health and Wellness and numerous groups representing Acadian and francophone organizations.
- ✓ The FLSC distributed "Bonjour" materials to all 23 Service Delivery managers for National Acadian Day. Staff can request additional material any time.

Strategic Objective 3 – Community engagement and outreach

Maintain ongoing dialogue and consultation with the Acadian and francophone community

Community engagement and outreach

- ✓ DCS responded in French to all verbal and written correspondence received in French.
- ✓ Consultations were held regarding adoption and they involved translating the consultation presentation into French.
- ✓ In 2019, the department conducted an online survey in both languages to ask Nova Scotians what they think about open adoption records.
- ✓ The Department continues its effort in recruiting foster/adoptive parents in both French and English. In 2017, the Department targeted Acadian families in both print and digital media. A new campaign was launched in 2019.
- ✓ DCS continued to be represented at Acadian and francophone community organizations and 3rd party service providers' AGMs i.e. Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE), Réseau Santé, etc.
- ✓ DCS continued to be represented on Réseau Santé along with Acadian Affairs, Department of Health and Wellness and numerous groups representing Acadian and francophone organizations.
- ✓ DCS partnered with other departments and community organizations to plan annual celebrations (National Acadian Day, August 15th, International Francophonie Day, March 20th).

External communications

- ✓ Multiple offices display publications about programs and services in both languages.
- ✓ DCS has worked with the Executive Council Office to advertise opportunities in both French and English to become a member of government agencies, boards and commissions.
The FLS coordinator is maintaining a positive and active relationship with Communications NS, and leaders across the department to provide advice and support on decisions around making materials available in French.
- ✓ DCS ensured relevant information and material are made available in French.
- ✓ New translations:
 - Applications for the Poverty Reduction Building Vibrant Communities Grants were available in French through our partnership with the department of Communities Culture and Heritage.
 - In 2019, we provided Standard Household Rate communications materials in French to clients and offices. A brochure was mailed to ESIA and DSP clients in English and French. The poster and fact sheet were also supplied to offices in French and English.
 - Adoption Record Consultation website page.
 - Alternative Family Care Fact sheet.
- ✓ News releases published in both languages:
 - Online Survey Now Open for Adoption Records
 - Locations and Dates Announced for Consultations on Open Adoption Records
 - Online Survey on Adoption Records Still Open
 - Sexual Violence Prevention Innovation Grant Applications Open

FLS PLAN: How we plan to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2020–21

Objectives, goals and planned measures (2020-2021)

DCS continues to build on the policy direction identified in the Acadian Affairs Strategic Plan for FLS, 2019 to 2024. The plan outlines corporate objectives that focuses on three key areas: leadership and policy direction, availability and accessibility; and community engagement and outreach.

Strategic Objective 1 – Leadership and policy direction

Strengthen internal operational structures including policy, legislative and administration frameworks.

1.1 The French-language Services Coordinator (FLSC) provides advice and recommendations to senior leaders.

- The French-Language Services Coordinator will continue to represent the Department on the French-language Services Coordinating Committee and on FLS subcommittees.
- The FLSC will continue to work on the implementation of a French Written and Verbal Correspondence guideline or policy to support staff in responding to requests in French.
- The FLSC will support and promote the use of the French-language Speaking Hiring Panel Roster by hiring managers when possible.

1.2 The FLSC builds and maintains relationships inter and intra departments.

- The FLSC will continue to build relationships with senior leaders and to share information about *FLS Act* and regulations.
- The FLSC will continue to meet with senior leaders to identify the needs for specific French-language services.
- The FLSC will maintain bi-monthly or monthly meetings with CNS to share information on upcoming projects.
- The FLSC will share information about CNS translation services with Directors.
- The FLSC will promote the use of Language Line and the French-language Speakers Directory amongst staff and senior leaders.

1.3 The Deputy Minister champions and encourages French-language services through:

- the continuous work of the French-language Services Coordinator.
 - the consideration of French-language services into the department's policies, programs and services.
 - staff actively championing and offering French-language services.
 - the promotion and use of CNS translation services.
- Senior leaders will encourage all staff to champion French-language services to help support and grow our French-language services.
 - Senior leaders will encourage and promote active offer of French-language Services in areas where we offer front-line services.

1.4 The Deputy Minister is a member of the Committee of Deputy Ministers on FLS.

- The Deputy Minister will continue to be an active member of the Committee of Deputy Ministers on FLS.

→ The FLSC will provide advice and recommendations when required.

1.5 DCS educates and promotes awareness of its obligations relating to French-language services and strives to fulfill those obligations in accordance with *French-language Services Act* and Regulations.

→ The FLSC will be travelling across the province to specific offices to share information and increase awareness about the *French-language Services Act* and Regulations as well as the resources that are available to staff.

→ DCS will publish a French-language services Plan and contribute to the Government's annual progress report on French-language Services.

1.6 The NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women will continue to promote participation in leadership roles.

→ The NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women will continue to encourage women in all their diversity, including Acadian and Francophone women, to participate in leadership roles. We acknowledge the benefits and value of diversity, including diversity in languages, in leadership roles and at all levels of government.

Strategic Objective 2 – Quality and Availability of French-language services

Develop and deliver quality French-language services and programs to the public.

2.1 Increase staff awareness on the *French Language Services Act* and Regulations to improve their understanding of our obligations and how to comply with the Act and Regulations in the delivery of programs and services.

→ The FLSC will offer advice on how French-language services can be integrated into current and new initiatives carried out by CNS.

→ Promote the language line; contact information is available on the DCS intranet directly on the FLS page and on the main menu for Forms, Policies and Procedures.

→ Promote the FLS Speaker directory and online toolkit for employees.

→ Increase and promote the use of the *Bonjour!* logo/visual signs within DCS offices to increase active offer.

→ Increase staff understanding of active offer regarding FLS.

2.2 Provide learning and development opportunities for staff and promote the French-language courses offered by Université Sainte-Anne.

→ Promote French-language training according to the Université Sainte-Anne schedule of courses.

→ Promote participation of employees in the Acadie at a Glance training.

→ Encourage staff to request resources for French-language skills development, maintenance, and growth.

2.3 Ensure critical public information related to health safety and security is available to citizens in the language of their choice.

→ Support the translation of web content, forms, brochures, manuals and other publications as opportunities become available.

→ Promote the availability of French-language services to the public through the use of the Government Visual Identification Program “Bonjour” and by actively offering bilingual services.

- Communications Nova Scotia will work collaboratively with the French-language Services Coordinator to build the French content for the new beta website for government.
- Develop and post English and French signage in public spaces in all DCS offices to communicate safe and respectful office protocols.

The NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women updated and published an electronic version of *Changer pour le mieux (2019)*, a resource for women living in an abusive relationship, and for individuals who want to better understand how to support women experiencing, or having experienced violence. This document is the French translation of our most frequently requested publication *Making Changes: A Book for Women in Abusive Relationships*.

2.4 Support staff learnings and development in regard to FLS.

- Continue efforts to increase employee engagement as we strive to make DCS a great place to work.
- Increase the number of staff participating in French -language training and cultural awareness training.
- Promote the Acadie at a Glance training.

2.5 Support managers in hiring bilingual staff.

- Inform and advise hiring managers of the availability of the PSC French-Language Services Human Resource Guidelines and the French-language Hiring Panel Pool to support them in hiring bilingual staff.
- Consider including bilingual ability/language skills as an asset in postings for new hires in regions where it makes most sense.
- Increase awareness about the benefit of having bilingual staff in all divisions and all levels.

Strategic Objective 3 – Community engagement and outreach

Maintain on-going dialogue and consultation with the Acadian and francophone community.

3.1 In accordance with the *French-language Services Act* and Regulations, DCS will provide, when possible, option for the community to participate in French (i.e. online surveys, consultation, engagement sessions).

- Provide opportunities for the Acadian and Francophone community to participate in province wide consultations, surveys, focus groups, or other engagement activities in the language of their choice.
- Consultation or engagement session may be required for transformation projects. Opportunities for French components will be considered as per the French-language Communications Guideline.

3.2 Continue to build external relationships with the Acadian and francophone community and share information about services available in French. Improve and increase external communications in French with the Acadian and Francophone community.

- DCS shall continue to work with the Executive Council Office, who has the primary responsibility for recruiting members of the public to government agencies, boards, and commissions, and

regularly advertises opportunities in both French and English. For more information, please visit www.gov.ns.ca/exec_council/abc

- DCS will continue to be represented at Acadian and francophone community organizations and 3rd party service providers' AGMs, i.e., Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE), Réseau Santé, etc.
- Track and ensure timely responses to requests from external and internal audiences received through the website, phone calls, emails, or written correspondence.
- The FLSC will work with other departments and community organizations to plan annual celebrations (National Acadian Day, August 15th, International Francophonie Day, March 20th).
- The department will be translating the appeal brochures & forms that apply to Employment Support and Income Assistance and the Disability Support Program.
- Our new employability assessment tools will be available in English and French.

Our Commitment to the Acadian and Francophone Community

The Nova Scotia's Department of Community Services is committed to providing access to government information, programs and services to Nova Scotians in French.

Community Services is developing new programs and services that are simple to understand, easy to access, and put our clients at the center of everything we do. Our vision is to provide better services, so people can have better lives. This approach, focused on our clients' needs and potential, is applied in many ways, including by providing access and services in a person's first language or language of choice.

As part of the redesign project for the government website, content currently available in French will be revised, and further translation will be made to increase the amount of information accessible to the community. The Acadian and francophone community will also be consulted as part of all provincial consultations that are held to support transformation projects and initiatives at DCS.

We continue to encourage the Acadian and francophone community to provide us with feedback on our services and to indicate areas or programs where we could implement new French-language services to better suit the needs of community.