



Department of Community Services

Disclosure Program

Guide to information requests for former children in permanent care, and program eligibility verification for individuals formerly in care of who received youth services

April 2022

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Introduction

This guide will provide information about how the Disclosure Program services requests made by former children in care and individuals who received youth services.

Nova Scotia has changed the way former children in care can access information contained in their records and the process for verifying eligibility for services and supports offered to individuals with previous child welfare involvement, as may be requested by various external organizations. The Disclosure Program will process all information requests that are made by former children in care, and all eligibility verification requests.

The Disclosure Program, run by the Department of Community Services, can help :

- Those formerly in permanent care and custody get information about your time in care
- check eligibility for various supports available to those formerly in care or to individuals who received youth services

Former children in care who are 19 years or age or older and were subject to an order for Permanent Care and Custody in Nova Scotia and were not adopted, may apply for information contained in their child in care file. This may include information on foster parents, birth families, and other information contained in their child in care record.

There are a number of organizations that offer resources and supports for individuals with previous child welfare involvement. If you are a former child in care, or received Youth Services via signed agreement, you can apply for the Disclosure Program to request eligibility verification that may be required to access these resources and supports.

The Disclosure Program is committed to providing inclusive and culturally responsive services to our clients. While all of our team members are qualified to support you with your request, if you are interested in speaking with a team member who identifies as African Nova Scotian or Indigenous, please let us know.

Call: 902-424-2755 or 1-833-424-2755

Email: disclosureprogram@novascotia.ca

Key terms and what they mean

The following terms are used throughout this document. If you have any questions or need clarification about these terms, contact the Disclosure Program.

- **Former child in permanent care:** This is a person who is 19 years of age or older who was in permanent care and custody. Former children in permanent care can make a request for information disclosure and eligibility verification.
- **Former child in temporary care:** This is a person who was previously in temporary care and may be eligible for external support or services. These persons can request eligibility verification.
- **Youth Services:** This is a person who was in receipt of youth services via a Youth Services Agreement. These persons can request eligibility verification.

Parties related to a former child in care

- **Birth parent:** This is the biological parent of a former child in care, or a person who is identified as a parent on a birth registration, or by a court, or in any court record.
- **Birth sibling:** This is a person who is 19 years of age or older and is a biological brother or sister of a former child in care.
- **Third Party:** Parties related to the former child in care, other than birth parents and siblings are defined as third-party. This can include foster parents and other foster family members.
- **Representatives:** A representative is a person who has been authorized to act on another person's behalf if that person is unable to make decisions about their information by themselves.

The representative will need to provide a court order (ACDM order) granted under the [Adult Capacity and Decision-making Act \(PDF\)](#) to prove they are allowed to act as a representative for the other person. Contact the Disclosure Program (see page 4) for more information on the use of representatives.

NOTE: You can have a friend or family member support you when you are contacting or accessing services from the Disclosure Program, however, this person will **not** be considered your representative. You must provide written consent to the Disclosure Program if you want the program to provide information about you to your support person.

Information

- **Children in care records** generally include the following:
 - Information related to the former child in care's life prior to coming into care
 - Reasons why the former child in care was removed from their birth family
 - Birth family history, including names of birth family members
 - Summary of case notes compiled during the child's time in care
 - Placement history
- **Identifying information:** Any information that by itself or in combination with other information likely reveals the identity of a person to whom it relates, such as a person's name or home address.
- **Non-identifying information:** Any information that by itself or in combination with other information would **not** likely reveal the identity of a person to whom it relates. This may include medical, social, and cultural information about a person.

How the Disclosure Program serves you

Information Requests

Former Child in Care:

If you are a former child in permanent care, when you turn **19 years of age**, you can request information about your time in care contained in your child in care file.

If you are a former child in care who was adopted, please see the (Disclosure Program- Guide to Supports and Services) in order to access information from your records.

If you are a former child in temporary care and wish to access your child in care record, you may contact Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPOP).

For former children in care, birth family means members of the former child in care's immediate family, i.e., birth parents, and siblings. If information is requested about third parties, the Disclosure Program will contact them and ask for permission to share their identifying information. If the person does NOT give permission, the Disclosure Program will only share their non-identifying information.

The form to make an information request can be found [here](#). Where there is a concern that sharing information poses a risk to another person, the Minister has the right to withhold that information.

When you make an information request, the following available information will be provided to you (after redacting any third-party information for which consent has not been received):

- Information related to your life prior to coming into care
- Reasons why you were removed from your birth family
- Birth family history, including names of birth family members
- Summary of case notes compiled during your time in care
- Placement history

In addition to the above, a copy of the following documents will be provided, if available:

- Life Book
- Annual reviews or your plan of care
- Any reports prepared by professionals, i.e., medical, counselling summaries
- The written summary and any accompanying documents prepared for you at the time you exited care
- Any personal contents pertaining to you, including photographs, report cards, certificates of achievement, letters from family members or others addressed to you
- Identifying information about third parties named in the file if consent from them has been received

Representatives:

You may submit a request for information or records on behalf of a former child in permanent care if you have been appointed as a representative for that person under the Adult Capacity and Decision-making Act.

You must indicate on the request form that you are a representative and provide the Disclosure Program with a copy of your representation order before we release any information to you. You must also provide information about the person you are representing in the sections on the request forms.

If you have applied for a representation order under the Adult Capacity and Decision-making Act but you have not received it yet, you can submit proof to the Disclosure Program that you started an application. The request will not be processed until you provide the court order, but it will be on record that you submitted a request.

You will have one year from the date you submitted the request to provide the representation order, otherwise the request will be closed without being processed.

You must update the Disclosure Program on the status of the application every three months. If you do not do so, the request will be closed without being processed.

Visit the [Adult Capacity and Decision-making Act \(PDF\)](#) for more information.

If you have any questions about submitting a request as a representative, contact the Disclosure Program.

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Email: disclosureprogram@novascotia.ca

Eligibility Verification

If you are either of the below, , you can request eligibility verification of your status / time in care:

- Former child in care in Nova Scotia
- Received Youth Services via signed agreement, as defined by Section 19 of the Children & Family Services Act
- Were adopted and were a former child in care in Nova Scotia

There are specific external programs that above identified individuals with child welfare involvement are eligible to access, and their time / type of child welfare involvement needs to be verified to confirm eligibility. The Disclosure Program will support the verification of eligibility for former children in care, including an adopted person who was in care or for youth who were in receipt of Youth Services, who is interested in applying for any of these external programs. The form for Eligibility Verification can be found [here](#).

The Disclosure Program will check eligibility for the following programs and supports:

- Tuition Waiver
- Children's Aid Foundation of Nova Scotia
- Mobile Services (e.g., TELUS Mobility for Good Program)
- Any other program identified as requiring verification of past child welfare involvement

For those programs requiring written confirmation of eligibility, the Disclosure Program will provide the individual with a letter indicating whether they meet the eligibility requirements. This letter can then be used in their application to the program/support.