

French-language Services Plan

2023–2024

Community Services



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French-language Services Plan
Department of Community Services
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Nova Scotia Department of Community Services and Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Ce document est également disponible en français sous le titre : « Plan de services en français 2023-2024 »

Message from the deputy head

Bonjour!

On behalf of Nova Scotia's Department of Community Services, I am pleased to present our department's French-language Services (FLS) Progress Report and Plan for 2023-24.

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.

The following plan sets out our goals for 2023-24 and identifies the achievements made over the past year. In addition to the targets identified in this plan, we may 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.

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 coordinator:

Grace Dean (Grace.Dean@novascotia.ca, 902-233-4195)

Services we offer in French

Printed and digital materials

- Various sections on the Community Services website describing programs and services and access to French forms, brochures, and reports
- Contract through 211 and Canadian Red Cross to provide access to COVID-19 related supports and resources in French
- Tip sheets on communicating remotely with children and teens for professionals, parents, and caregivers
- Booklet and form to request and administrative review or appeal of a decision
- FAQ for caregivers and other documents for the Alternative Family Care program
- Foster Care marketing materials such as a poster, French foster care brochures, bookmarks, and a French/English language parade banner
- Booklet "What You Need to Know..." explaining amendments to the *Children and Family Services Act*
- Forms such as the Income Assistance application, Child Abuse Registry form, and licensing forms
- Standard Household Rate brochure, poster, and fact sheet
- Information on accessing Poverty Reduction Building Vibrant Communities Grants

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 Active Offer
- French-language Services section on Pulse, our Intranet

- “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 immediately 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 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.

In accordance with 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.

What we did to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2022–23

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.
- We promoted National Acadian Day, through the DCS intranet site: Pulse.
- The FLSC promoted the French Written and Verbal Correspondence guideline and online toolkit for staff use. This toolkit includes an infographic on how to respond to verbal and written requests/communications in French and an infographic that explains Active Offer.
- Enlisted the help of the FLSC to develop engagement sessions surrounding the creation of a Nova Scotia Child Youth Commission in French.
- The following have been shared:
 - The French-language Speaking Hiring Panel Roster to hiring managers.
 - The use of Language Line and the French-language Speakers Directory among staff and senior leaders.
 - The French-language Services Human Resources Guidelines.
 - The DCS French-language Toolkit for employees.

Collaboration between the FLSC and CNS

- The FLSC maintained regular contact with CNS's communication officer to share information on upcoming projects.
- The FLSC offered advice on how French-languages 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 Department continues to promote and encourage the participation of its employees in French-language training through DCS Pulse and emails sent to employees.
- The French-language Speakers Directory was updated on a bi-annual basis. There are currently 40 employees on the directory who have agreed to provide FLS services when needed.
- DCS staff also have 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 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.
- The FLSC makes "Bonjour" materials available to all DCS offices.

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.
- Materials supporting consultations and proposed changes to adoption records were translated.
- The Department continues its effort in recruiting foster/adoptive parents in both French and English.

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.
- New translations:
 - Adoption marketing and research materials.
 - Foster Care Redesign and Recruitment materials.
 - Child and Youth Commission materials (video and survey) seeking feedback for the creation of a Nova Scotia Child Youth Commission and shared these with the public to ensure French speaking Nova Scotians were captured in the data collected.
 - The Status of Women Office, in collaboration with *fédération des femmes acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse*, has produced a French version of the 2022 version of Status of Women's Guide for Girls. The publication is available on the Status of Women website.
 - In 2022, the Status of Women Office had three Neighbours, Friends, and Families brochures translated into French: *Safety planning for women who are abused; How to help someone who has an abusive partner; and How to talk to someone who is abusive.*
 - *Fédération des femmes acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse* reached out to the Status of Women Office regarding an opportunity to translate Status of Women's Campaign School toolkit. The French version of the toolkit is now available on Status of Women website.

How we plan to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2023–24

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.

Objective 1: Strengthen internal operational structures including policy, legislative and administrative frameworks

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

- The FLSC will continue to represent the Department on the French-language Services Coordinating Committee and on FLS subcommittees.
- The FLSC will continue to promote awareness and use of a French Written and Verbal Correspondence guideline 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 between and within 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 share information about CNS translation services.
- 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 visit 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.

Objective 2: Develop and deliver quality French-language services and programmes 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 resources like the Language Line, 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.
- Child and Youth Caring Facilities will promote increased employee participation in FLS training in order to enhance service delivery and promote cultural connections for youth in care.

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.
- Develop and post English and French signage in public spaces in all DCS offices to communicate safe and respectful office protocols.

2.4 Support staff learnings and development regarding FLS.

- Continue efforts to increase employee engagement.
- 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.

2.6 Status of Women will translate its most requested publications, making them more accessible to Acadian and francophone communities.

- Translation of *Making Changes* is planned for 2023/24.
- Continue to collaborate with Fédération des femmes acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse to explore translation of publications they feel are most useful to the French-speaking population in Nova Scotia.

Objective 3: Maintain ongoing 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.

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 collaborate where possible with other departments and community organizations to plan annual celebrations (National Acadian Day, August 15th, International Francophonie Day, March 20th).