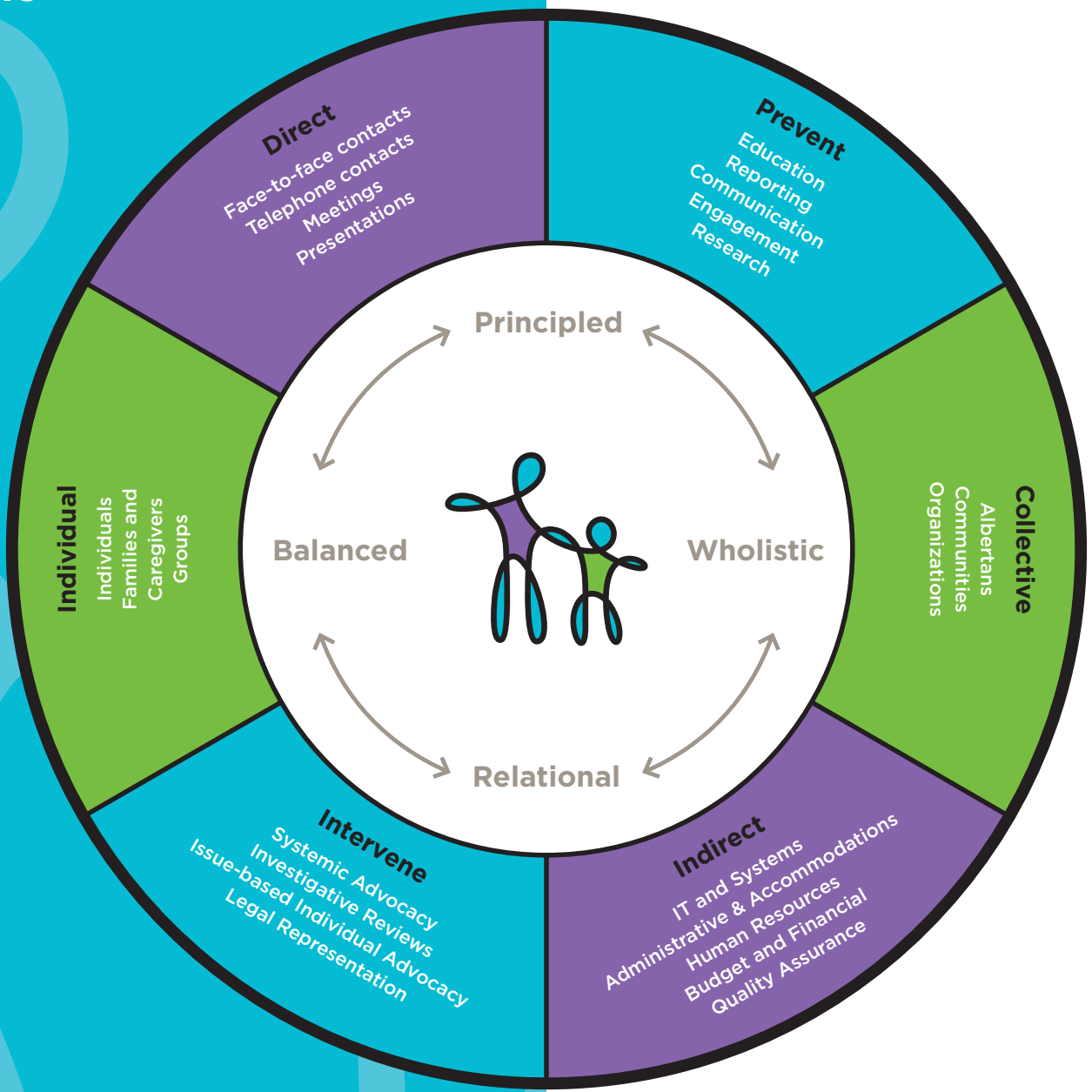
Advocacy Practice Framework
2019

OFFICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE ALBERTA



Our Vision

Young people in Alberta succeed in their lives and communities.

Our Mission

We stand up for young people.

Purpose

The Advocacy Practice Framework provides an overview of how the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA) develops, delivers and supports advocacy services for young people in Alberta under the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*. It is intended to assist our staff and stakeholders to have a shared understanding of our work. The role of the Advocate is to represent the rights, interests and viewpoints of young people.

Our Approach

Principled

The work we do is guided by these values:

Rights-Focused — We are guided by the rights of young people.
• These rights include those they hold as individuals (e.g., child rights) and those they hold as members of a group (e.g., Indigenous rights).

Accountability — We are responsible for our own actions and the actions of the OCYA.
• We are accountable for both successes and challenges.
• We accept feedback so we can continuously improve.

Respect — We value the feelings, wishes, rights and traditions of others.
• We create an environment where each individual is valued and treated with dignity.
• We respect other's opinions, experiences, knowledge, expertise and contributions.

Integrity — We do what we say we will do.
• We report on our activities, performance and outcomes.
• Whenever possible, we explain our decisions and our reasons for them.

We strive to understand who young people are, who the people they love and care about are, what is important to them and what makes them unique.

Wholistic

We work with young people within the context of their lives. We strive to understand who they are, who the people they love and care about are, what is important to them and what makes them unique. The physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of young people is important to us. We know that when families and communities are recognized and supported, children and youth thrive.

Relational

We value our relationships with young people, families, stakeholders and communities. Through reciprocity, we work hard to build and maintain these relationships. If a relationship is damaged, we work to repair and rebuild it.

We recognize the value of relationships for young people, particularly in times when they are away from their families and communities. We support young people to have strong relationships with people who are important to them and model how to maintain, build and repair relationships.

Balanced

We approach and respond to opportunities and challenges with balance. We continuously learn, both as individuals and as an organization. We strive to listen and respond in ways that ensure openness — both now and in the future. We ensure our work is balanced between these continuums:

Prevent - Intervene: The work we do assists young people now, and in the future. We raise awareness about the importance of the rights and interests of young people within their families and communities, and we assist young people during times when their rights and interests have not been considered or upheld.

Individual - Collective: We work to balance both individual and collective rights when working with young people, families and communities.

Direct - Indirect: We work collaboratively across our office. We recognize all our work, whether directly working with young people and communities, or indirectly supporting the work of the office, is important to our overall effectiveness.

We support young people to have strong relationships with people who are important to them and model how to maintain, build and repair relationships.

Key Messages

- Our work is to provide advocacy for vulnerable children and youth in Alberta.
- Every staff member of our office is involved in advocacy activities and the work of each staff member contributes to effective advocacy for young people.
- We strive to be principled, wholistic, relational and balanced with young people, stakeholders and each other.
- This framework is a tool which allows us to reflect on our current practices and provides us with direction for improvements and the development of new practices.

Our core work is:

- Advocating for individual young people receiving or seeking to receive designated services, so they have a voice in decisions that affect them and their rights and interests are acknowledged and acted upon.
- Conducting investigative reviews when young people are seriously injured or pass away while receiving child intervention services at the time of their death or within two years of their death, or while in the custody of youth justice services.
- Providing legal representation for children and youth receiving services under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* or the *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act*.
- Providing public education on the rights, interests and well-being of young people, and building capacity in our communities.
- Strengthening relationships with diverse communities, with particular attention to Indigenous communities. Engaging in reciprocal learning that improves the well-being of children, youth and their communities.
- Conducting research to improve services to young people.
- Reporting to Alberta's Legislature on any matter related to the rights, interests, and well-being of children involved with designated services.

ocya

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