

A young child with brown hair, wearing a blue and white striped long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, is captured mid-jump on a sandy beach. The child is holding a string of colorful balloons (pink, blue, green, orange) that are floating in the air. The background shows a soft, hazy sunset or sunrise over the ocean. The overall mood is joyful and hopeful.

THE WAY

forward

FAMILY SERVICES OF THE NORTH SHORE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028



There are two questions I'm asked most often when I meet with our long-term supporters and government partners: "What are the biggest issues facing our community now? And what, specifically, do you need funding for?" This plan answers those questions and charts the way forward.

- Julia Staub-French, Executive Director

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we write to you, the World Health Organization has just declared the Covid-19 global emergency over. When we look back at the past several years, we see dark days threaded with bright silver linings. The pandemic also brought many essential lessons.

Here at the Agency, we immediately felt a deep, unwavering commitment from our incredible staff, volunteers, donors, partners, and community.

Our values held.

Our teams stepped up to help exactly how and where they were needed. Their care and dedication fills us with a level of pride that's nearly impossible to express.

The pandemic also delivered a critical and potent reminder that hard times don't affect people equally. If you don't have enough to eat, you're struggling to support your kids on your own, or you're not safe at home, a new crisis can be the breaking point.

We're reflecting on the past because these turbulent years coincided with our previous Strategic Plan. We charted an intentional path that led us through the storm. Now, we're creating a next-level plan that builds on the foundation we set in 2018. We understand our community even better – and we know where we can have the deepest impact.

Our Agency is focusing on systemic inequities, mental health, and the challenges facing families of all shapes and sizes. When we help parents, for example, we can

change a child's life forever. When we support people experiencing racism or transphobia, we can help to minimize the harm they endure every single day.

Everyone in our community matters. Everyone deserves to live a full and meaningful life. Supporting people upstream sets off positive changes that flow through generations. We want to address trauma, abuse, loneliness, and mental health issues right when the pain sets in to prevent addiction, violence, poverty, and other struggles later on. When people get support they need to heal, families and communities also get stronger.

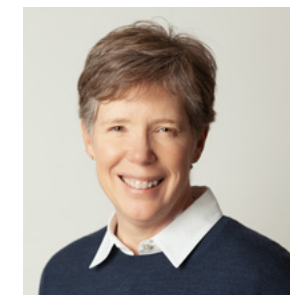
Our staff and volunteers have never been more committed, or more confident. We have the people, the skills, and the understanding to dramatically increase our impact – and we are moving forward together.

This is our plan.



Nancy Adie-MacKay
Board President

Nancy Adie-MacKay



Julia Staub-French
Executive Director

Julia Staub-French



THE WAY *forward*

Who we are

Family Services of the North Shore is a non-profit, community-based agency. For over 60 years, we have been committed to making a deep and lasting impact across the North Shore. We offer counselling, support, education, and volunteer engagement opportunities to help people reach their full potential, throughout their lives.

Deeper impact. Focused priorities

Over the past year, we spent many hours assessing our efforts, while looking ahead to the future. The Agency is growing quickly to meet the needs of our community. Yet, our goal is to have a bigger impact – not simply to get bigger.

Our previous Strategic Plan set us on the right track. It was a clear guide through a challenging period. Now, we've created a refined plan for the next five years. We're focusing on systemic inequities, mental health, and the challenges facing families of all shapes and sizes. When we help parents, for example, we can change their children's lives forever.

To be clear, our programs and services are for everyone – and when we help our most vulnerable neighbours, it strengthens our entire community.

This is the way forward.



Our strategic approach

Support when it matters most

We focus on supporting people when their challenges and struggles begin. This is the time when a little help can make all the difference.

Support for those who care for others and those whose lives are most at risk

We focus on people who are responsible for others and whose lives directly affect others, such as parents and caregivers. We also focus on people affected by systemic inequities, trauma, and abuse. We care about all people equally, but our time, energy, and resources aren't unlimited. Our efforts need to ripple out and shape as many lives as possible.

Our strategic priorities

When we understand what this approach looks like, in our Agency and across the community, it sharpens our focus. We've distilled our strategy into five concrete priorities that guide our work and our decisions, each and every day.

1. Facilitate strong, caring, and meaningful connections between people throughout our community

We all have a fundamental, human need to belong. We all need to be connected to others and to be part of a welcoming community. Together, we aim to foster healthy, meaningful, safe, and vibrant connections between people.

2. Create new and timely ways of responding to the needs of children, youth, and families

People are often most vulnerable when challenges first set in. This is when we want to help families, especially those who are isolated, marginalized, or who have experienced trauma.

3. Expand our range of approaches to counselling and trauma-informed services

Mental health issues tend to flow outward. They affect the person experiencing these challenges, those in their care, and those whose lives they influence. We will focus on people experiencing abuse and trauma.

4. Deepen our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and reconciliation

We will focus on serving people having negative racialized experiences and expand our ability to serve LGBTQ2S+ communities. We'll do both internal and external work on anti-racism, inclusion, equity, and reconciliation.

5. Strengthen the care, support, and development of our staff and volunteers

We are deeply invested in our staff, and their health and development. We will nurture a culture of wellness for staff and volunteers by providing a safe, inclusive workplace where people can use their voice, power, aptitudes, and leadership.

When people get support, communities are *stronger*

We listen closely when people tell us how they feel.
We feel their pain. We witness their struggles and challenges.
We know that you care, too. **Here are their stories.**

“ I feel so alone as a new mom without family close by.

“ I can't afford diapers, food, or formula this month.

“ My husband is abusive but I'm too scared to leave.

“ I don't know how to tell my parents who I really am.

“ My child hates her body and won't eat.

“ I don't have anyone to call for help and feel totally alone.

“ I am the only caretaker for my mom and am exhausted.

“ I am so sad after losing my partner to cancer.

These are your friends. Your co-workers.
Your children's classmates and their parents.
Your dentist and barista and the woman at the bus stop.

These are your neighbours – and many of them are struggling.

Maybe you recognize yourself in these stories, too.



We listen closely

when people tell us how it feels, and we've created our programs and services to respond to their needs.

Thrive

Thrive supports parents who feel isolated and alone. We offer resources, education, and a safe place to connect with people who understand the highs and lows of parenthood.

Counselling and Support Services

Many parents can't afford counselling for their families. We eliminate that barrier by providing low- and no-cost counselling for all North Shore residents, based on income.

Community Hub

Neighbours care for neighbours at the Community Hub. Our dedicated volunteers come together to support thousands of individuals, seniors, and families who need a helping hand.

PROUD2BE

PROUD2BE gives parents, family members, and LGBTQ2S+ children and youth a safe place to talk about their feelings and experiences.

Jessie's Legacy

Jessie's Legacy gives parents and professionals the tools they need to help kids at risk of disordered eating before they develop a diagnosed eating disorder.

Seniors and Caregivers Connect

We support seniors and caregivers who are struggling with isolation, anxiety, depression, loss, life transitions, or abuse.



Together

we can re-write these stories. Learn how we're growing to support people when they need us most – and how you can join us.



“ My child is stressed and anxious and I can't afford counselling.

Strong, caring families
are the foundation
of our *community*

We meet local families where
they are and provide the resources
they need to thrive.

Thrive Family Centres offer free drop-in
programs where families can play, learn,
and connect with their children. Our
experienced staff provide support,
resources, and referrals to help parents
give their children a healthy start in life.

Thrive services must
remain free to help
families affected by
trauma, abuse, and
systemic inequities.

Thrive Family Programs

The first years of parenthood can be lonely and isolating.

When parents struggle, their babies feel it,
too. Thrive Family Programs give parents the
support, connections, and confidence they
need to raise strong and resilient kids.

Unfortunately, the demand for our programs is
so high that we often have to limit attendance
and even turn families away. This hurts our
community – especially low-income and
equity-denied families.

The early days of
parenting can be
hard for everyone,
regardless of age,
experience, income,
and family size.

New and expecting
parents need our
help to navigate
one of the hardest
times of their lives.

Thrive programs
are at capacity. We
often have to limit
attendance and
turn families away.

Families at our Thrive
Maplewood location.

Thrive Family Centres:

- **Maplewood**
399 Seymour River Place,
North Vancouver
- **West Vancouver
Community Centre**
2121 Marine Drive,
West Vancouver

How we need to *grow*

Thrive needs a new space to support more parents and children. To fully serve our community, we need to open another location in the mid-to-upper Lonsdale corridor or at our Community Hub at Capilano Mall.

Result: Parents learn how to care for and bond with their children in a safe and supportive environment that's close to home.

Families who visit **Thrive Family Centres** can find free food, clothing, diapers, and other essentials they need to care for their children. As our community grows, we need to ensure these items are always available for families that need them.

Result: Parents can always get free supplies from Alexa's Exchange Room at Thrive.

Some families face more challenges than others. Our staff are uniquely able to notice when parents are struggling, and to connect them with the help they need. The earlier we can help these families, the healthier they will be – now and for years to come.

Result: Staff and volunteers can identify families who are struggling, and provide the support and resources they need.

Families at our Thrive Maplewood location.



Result: All families feel welcome, respected, and comfortable asking for help or referrals.

We need to support parents **before** their babies are born, so families are ready when parenting gets hard. From staff education to prenatal classes, we need additional funding to make this happen.

Result: All North Shore families can get free information, support, and education – even before their babies arrive.

Families come in many different shapes and sizes. Thrive Family Programs welcome and celebrate people of all ages, cultures, orientations, genders, and income levels. We need more funding to hire additional multilingual staff so everyone feels at home.

What we need to fund:

- **New pre- and post-natal family programs**
- **Hiring two new counsellors** with experience in pre-birth to postnatal mental health and couples' relationships
- **Hiring three new staff** to run new drop-in programs at our Community Hub
- **Additional food and meals** for families and new parents
- **Growing costs** across Thrive Family Programs, driven by higher demand and attendance



Parents and *children* who are struggling need immediate support

Children's experiences matter deeply. When parents and kids get expert help at the moment they're most vulnerable, it can shape their lives for decades to come.

We are here to support parents, families, and those who have experienced all forms of trauma. Our highly trained counsellors help people through conflict, depression, anxiety, divorce, abuse, grief, and all that life puts in our way. The sliding fee scale ensures no one in our community is left out.

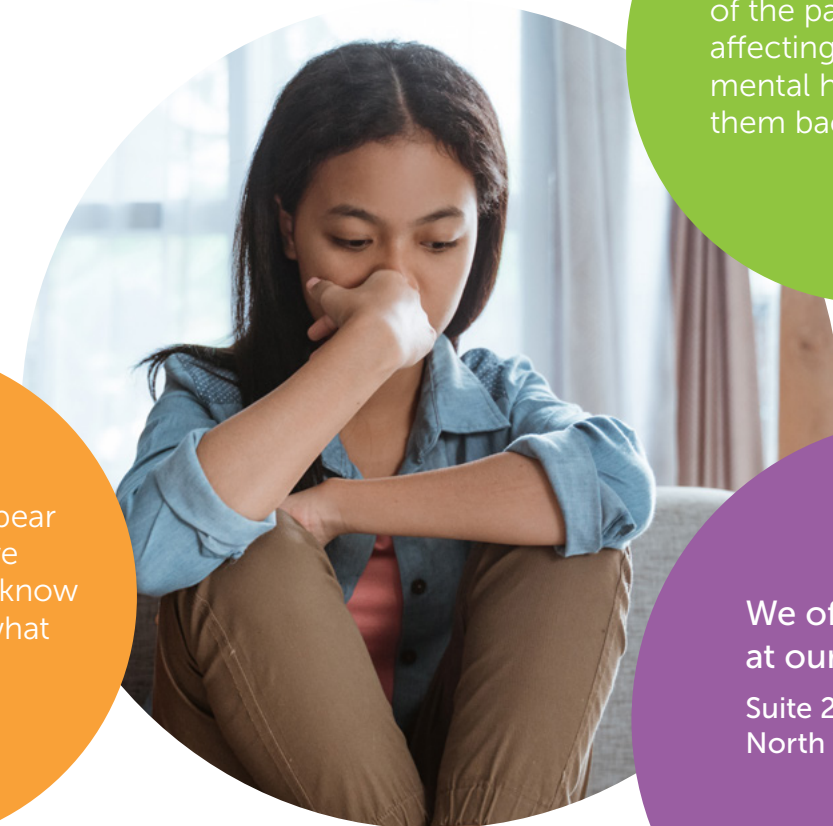
Most single moms can't afford \$175 / hour for a private practice counsellor.

Counselling and Support

What if your child reached out for help and you couldn't *afford it?*

We never want to turn away children, parents, families, and individuals who need expert counselling.

The demand for counselling grows every day – and so do our wait lists. A healthy, caring community ensures everyone can get the help they need, regardless of their age, income, gender, background, or family circumstances.



LGBTQ2S+ youth who are supported by their families have better mental health and self-esteem.

The long-term effects of the pandemic are still affecting youth and their mental health. Let's get them back on track.

Abused children appear angry and aggressive because they don't know how to talk about what happened to them.

We offer counselling at our main office:

Suite 203 - 1111 Lonsdale Ave.
North Vancouver

How we need to grow

Many families are reaching out to us about increased family conflict and concerns for their children's mental health, including kids who talk about suicide and refuse to go to school. We need more resources to keep these youth safe and get them back on track.

Result: All families can access no-cost or low-cost counselling services when they need them.

Result: Women and children in our community don't have to wait for support or safety.

We have been training expert counsellors for decades, including five new interns each year. As the demand for mental health support grows, we need to expand our Clinical Training Centre from five to 20 interns per year, over the next five years. The Centre will enable us to add clinical services, cut wait times, and ensure we never have to turn away people who need our help.

When women are ready to leave an abusive situation and they call us for help, we want to help them and their children immediately. Yet, women often have to wait for a counselling spot to open up. We need more adult and child counsellors so we don't have to turn anyone away.

Result: We can train, recruit, and retain more high-quality therapists to serve our community.

We need to expand

our counselling services to ensure that everyone in our community has access to affordable counselling services. Parents and children shouldn't have to wait months for help when they're worried that things are getting worse.

Result: North Shore parents of children 2-18 have the help they need to raise safe and healthy young adults.

Result: All North Shore children and youth can get the counselling and support they need.

Many youth continue to be affected by the pandemic. They're struggling with anxiety, academic performance, and relationships – and those who were having a hard time before the pandemic are struggling even more. We need more child and youth counsellors to meet children where they are, which can include schools, homes, community spaces, and online.

What we need to fund:

- **Hiring four more counsellors** to reduce wait times and support our community
- **Creating a Clinical Training Centre** to recruit and train 20 counselling interns each year
- **Expanding counselling programs** to help women, children, and families – regardless of their age, income, background, gender identity, and family situation



We all struggle sometimes

A caring community provides safety and support for everyone, especially those who are struggling.

We all have a deep need to belong. Through our Community Hub, staff and volunteers deliver meals and groceries, make caring calls, and spend time with isolated seniors and families. Every winter, the Christmas Bureau ensures all of our neighbours can celebrate the holidays with their families.

Roughly 30% of seniors don't have anyone to call on for support, advice, or conversation.

Community HUB

At some point in life, we all need someone to *lean on*

Our staff and volunteers build trusting, connected relationships across our community, so people feel comfortable asking for help when they need it.

Yet, a growing number of our North Shore neighbours are lonely and distressed. There are seniors with no one to turn to. Single parents struggling to provide the basics for their kids. Vulnerable families getting left behind. We need the resources to listen and respond directly to their needs.

Strong, caring connections make our community safer and healthier for everyone.

As costs rise, many people have to choose between buying food, medication, and paying for their housing.

BC children who live in single-parent families are more than three times as likely to live in poverty than children in two-parent families.



Volunteers preparing groceries at the Community Hub.

Visit the Community Hub at Capilano Mall:

943 Marine Drive, P2,
North Vancouver

(Upper floor of the former
Sears department store)

How we need to grow

Result: Vulnerable people in our community have the food and resources they need.

Many people in our community can't get the food, supplies, and baby items they need every day.

From our free clothing exchange to grocery and meal delivery for seniors, we need more resources to ensure everyone has the

necessities of life.

When you live alone, with no one to help you, **a single phone call can change everything.** Our caring volunteers regularly check in on local seniors and individuals, and the demand is rising. We need to sustain our Community Hub to ensure all our neighbours feel safe and connected.

Result: Everyone in our community has someone they can count on.

Donated gift baskets for the Christmas Bureau at our Community Hub.

Our trained volunteers support many of our Agency programs at the Community Hub. As demand grows, we need this dedicated team more than ever before, to extend our reach across the community.

Result: Hundreds of engaged volunteers work together to help our most vulnerable neighbours.

When you don't have enough money for food and gifts, the holidays can be dark. The Christmas Bureau brightens the season for individuals and families who are struggling – and every year, we need more support. This annual event is also an important way for people to explore and access our programs and services.

Result: Everyone can celebrate the holidays with their families.

What we need to fund:

- **Toys, presents, gift baskets, and cash donations** for the Christmas Bureau
- **Additional funds** to support grocery and meal delivery, baby supplies, and basic necessities for our vulnerable neighbours
- **Used clothing, coats, shoes, and other items** to help with the high cost of these necessities
- **Volunteer training** to strengthen and expand our dedicated team





Talking to your parents isn't always easy

PROUD2BE gives LGBTQ2S+ children, youth, and their parents a safe space to learn and connect without judgement. Our annual gathering, events, and drop-in groups offer support and build community for families across BC.

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among Canadians aged 15-24.

LGBTQ2S+ youth often experience bullying and discrimination. These traumatic experiences can cause lasting harm. When parents are supportive, children feel better about themselves and do better in life. Unfortunately, BC doesn't have enough services for LGBTQ2S+ youth – and few programs involve the whole family. We need to scale up our PROUD2BE program to ensure everyone has the support they need.

PROUD2BE

How we need to grow



Result: LGBTQ2S+ youth and their families are healthier and more connected.

There are times when identifying as LGBTQ2S+ can be hard; our staff and volunteers want to ensure everyone feels fully at home in our community.

Open conversations reduce risk and strengthen families.

When parents can be supportive advocates, their LGBTQ2S+ youth are less likely to struggle with mental health issues. We need to expand our PROUD2BE program to help more parents, children, youth, and service providers to learn and connect without judgement.

What we need to fund:

- **More staff** to expand our PROUD2BE gatherings, support groups, workshops, and virtual events
- **Virtual and in-person retreats** to connect service providers, parents, and LGBTQ2S+ youth

98% of women and girls say they're unhappy with their bodies.

Disordered eating can include fasting, binging, restrictive dieting, over-exercising, abusing steroid drugs, and yo-yo dieting.

Is my body normal?

If your child has started dieting, focusing on their weight, or criticizing their body, it can be hard to know what to do. Jessie's Legacy equips BC parents and professionals with expert resources to support kids before they develop a diagnosed eating disorder.

The early warning signs of food and body image issues aren't always clear – and youth rarely ask for help. But when parents and professionals can spot the red flags and provide immediate support, fewer kids will develop clinical eating disorders. Jessie's Legacy is one of the only BC programs that works to prevent disordered eating. Expanding our services will help more parents, kids, and educators in our community and across the province.

jessie's legacy



How we need to grow

From movies to social media and online content, kids are constantly exposed to critical messages about their bodies.

Parents and professionals need increasingly more resources to help children and youth at risk of developing eating disorders. Jessie's Legacy is a trusted community resource. We need more funding to expand our research-backed education programs.

Nearly 10% of the population lives with an eating disorder.

Result: Parents and professionals know how to help kids *before* they develop an eating disorder.

What we need to fund:

- **New programs** to support parents whose kids have just developed eating and body image issues
- **More expert counsellors** trained to help parents, youth, and children

Seniors and caregivers

play a vital role in our families and our community

We all need to stay connected and give each other extra support when life gets challenging. These connections are essential when we're caring for a loved one as well. We provide counselling, weekly supportive phone calls, online support groups and workshops, and resources and referrals by phone or email.

Many seniors and caregivers suffer in silence. Whether they live alone or care for friends and family members in their homes, their struggles may go unnoticed. Our programs ensure everyone has someone to talk to – and a helping hand when they need it most. As our population ages, these services are more important than ever.

Covid-19 restrictions increased isolation for most seniors and negatively affected their coping and mental health. The impact has been greater on seniors living with disabilities or chronic health challenges who can't leave their homes, shop for food, or attend in-person programs.



SENIORS & CAREGIVERS connect

How we need to grow

As our North Shore community ages, more people need help to navigate loneliness, grief, chronic health issues, and the challenges of caring for friends and loved ones. Expanding our programs for seniors and caregivers will enable us to reach more of our neighbours in need.

Result: Seniors and their caregivers have essential care and support when they need it most.

Social connections are an important part of healthy and active aging.

Seniors make up over 20% of our North Shore population.

What we need to fund:

- **More training** to strengthen and expand our dedicated team of caring volunteers
- **More expert counsellors** trained in grief, loss, transitions, and caregiver stress
- **Additional funds** to provide grocery and meal delivery, everyday essentials, and holiday gift baskets



WE ARE CHANGING *lives together*

The world today can feel overwhelming. So many people are struggling, in so many different ways. And we all struggle sometimes.

We've weathered the trauma of a global pandemic. We now face a world where isolation has deepened mental health issues for people of all ages. Sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and all forms of systemic inequity persist in our community. Even inflation is making it harder for seniors, families, and individuals to afford food and basic resources.

We have so much to do, but we are not helpless.

This world is not too big or too much.



IF WE WORK TOGETHER WITH *care and intention*

we can make a deep and lasting impact in our North Shore community.

Shorter wait lists will keep at-risk kids, women, and families healthy. Expanded programs will support new parents who are isolated and overwhelmed. Expert staff and fully trained volunteers can give seniors and families a shoulder to lean on.

We are here for everyone. At the same time, we are prioritizing our most vulnerable neighbours to ensure they get the help they need – at a time when our support matters most. We have a clear and intentional plan, and we know the way forward.

But we need your help. We need your support, at every level.

Join us

There is so much we can do together.



Family Services of the North Shore acknowledges the contribution of the Government of Canada, the Province of British Columbia, the City of North Vancouver, District of North Vancouver, and the District of West Vancouver.



Family
Services
NORTH SHORE
Changing lives together

We respectfully acknowledge that the services we provide are on the traditional and unceded homelands of the Coast Salish peoples, including the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səɫilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

www.familyservices.bc.ca



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