





Acknowledgement

This Strategic Plan is the product of deep collaboration, shared responsibility, and a collective belief in the possibility of transformation. Northstar extends sincere gratitude to the many organizations across Durham Region that support justice-involved youth and families. These include the courts, probation services, community mental health providers, child welfare partners, school boards, prevention and outreach organizations, and community-based agencies committed to safety, accountability, and healing. This plan was strengthened by the vocal and candid contributions of community members, court staff, and probation professionals, whose lived experience and frontline expertise grounded our thinking in practical reality and moral clarity.

We also acknowledge the subtle but meaningful contributions of elected officials, the Durham Regional Police Service, and provincial Ministry staff, whose thoughtful feedback, policy insight, and systems-level perspective helped shape a plan that is both aspirational and implementable. Their engagement, often quiet, always constructive, ensured that this document reflects not only community need, but shared accountability across institutions responsible for youth justice, community safety, and well-being.

Finally, we thank the staff and Board of Directors of Northstar, whose commitment, professional insight, and courage to challenge assumptions brought depth, integrity, and ambition to this plan. Their collective wisdom is embedded in every priority and every measure of success outlined in the pages that follow. As we look ahead to the next five years, we do so with confidence, guided by shared values, strengthened by partnership, and inspired by the belief that when we invest in young people, we shape safer, healthier, and more hopeful communities for generations to come.



Northstar 2026–2030 Strategic Plan



Durham Connect
Information Session



Community
Safety and
Well-being

I. Executive Summary

Northstar, formerly known as Durham Family Court Clinic from 1980 to 2025, stands as a cornerstone in the Durham Region, dedicated to guiding, supporting, and empowering youth and families navigating the complexities of the justice system.

For the period 2026–2030, Northstar envisions itself as a beacon of transformative change, fostering safe, supportive environments where young individuals and their families can thrive, free from systemic barriers. This strategic plan outlines a comprehensive roadmap to achieve this vision, building upon five foundational pillars:

- *Service Excellence*
- *Staff Development*
- *Operational Improvements*
- *Amplified Advocacy*
- *Commitment to Collaboration*

These pillars are designed to collectively enhance Northstar’s capacity, deepen its impact, and solidify its role as a vital partner in community safety and well-being. The strategic imperatives articulated within this plan aim to elevate the quality and accessibility of services, cultivate a highly skilled and resilient workforce, optimize internal processes for greater efficiency, amplify Northstar’s standing in policy discourse, and strengthen inter-agency partnerships.

Each action item is grounded in measurable and equitable outcomes, supported by existing plans, reports, studies and initiatives across the province, ensuring that Northstar’s growth and impact are not only aspirational but also quantified, demonstrating tangible improvements in youth outcomes and fostering a brighter future for the Durham Region.



From this review, we chart a clear new mission forward and concisely declare Northstar's purpose:

Our New Vision:

To create a future where justice-involved youth and families are supported, empowered, and able to thrive.

Our New Mission:

Northstar walks alongside justice-involved youth as they navigate complex life challenges, offering pathways to pro-social opportunities, higher education, and personal growth rooted in dignity, accountability, and connection.



II. Introduction:

Northstar's Foundation, Impact and Strategic Position in Durham Region:

Northstar's core identity is deeply rooted in its mission to guide, support, and empower youth and families, particularly those in conflict with the law. The organization provides essential mental health and education services through diverse programs, including counseling, outreach initiatives, classroom support, and violence prevention efforts. We pride ourselves on being leaders in gang research, working with gang involved youth and finding solutions to the rise in gangs in Durham Region. At its heart, Northstar operates on the conviction that enduring change originates at the community level. The organization is committed to creating secure and nurturing environments where young individuals and their families can flourish, actively working to dismantle systemic obstacles and pave the way for more promising futures.

Current Impact

Northstar applies the Risk–Need–Responsivity (RNR) model to ensure that interventions are tailored to each youth's needs. This evidence–based approach addresses core drivers of reoffending, resulting in measurable reductions in recidivism. By focusing on individualized treatment plans, Northstar promotes behavioural change and long–term stability, reinforcing its commitment to effective rehabilitation. As a trusted partner to Durham courts, Northstar offers a robust alternative–to–custody option that aligns with the rehabilitative principles of the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA). This approach prevents the harmful effects of institutionalization and supports youth in community–based settings where they can access education, counseling, and skill–building opportunities. By diverting youth from incarceration, Northstar helps preserve family and community connections while reducing systemic harm.

Northstar's specialized teams provide immediate, expert mental health care for high–needs youth. Using tools such as the MAYSI–2 and YLS/CMI 2.0 screening, these programs stabilize individuals presenting with complex, concurrent disorders that traditional justice systems often struggle to manage. This integrated clinical response ensures that mental health needs are addressed alongside legal and social challenges, fostering holistic well–being and reducing barriers to successful reintegration.

Approach to Youth Justice – Situationism over Dispositionalism

Northstar's commitment to equity and accountability requires a deliberate shift toward situationism in understanding youth behaviour. Unlike dispositionalism, which attributes harmful actions to fixed personal traits, situationism recognizes the profound influence of systemic barriers, poverty, racism, and community conditions on decision–making.

For marginalized youth, this perspective transforms accountability from punitive measures into restorative practices that repair harm and dismantle structural inequities. Over the next five years, Northstar will integrate this approach across programs and partnerships, ensuring culturally grounded, trauma–informed interventions that foster dignity, resilience, and long–term reintegration.

This philosophical congruence ensures that Northstar is not merely reacting to youth justice issues but is actively integrated into the broader community safety agenda, enhancing its relevance and potential for collaborative endeavours.

Northstar currently stands as a leader in evidence–based youth justice intervention in the Durham Region. Our primary impact lies in effectively managing the most complex, high–risk youth (those assessed as likely candidates for custody) through community–based, clinical programs, the Intensive Support and Supervision Program (ISSP), Community Support Team (CST), the Care and Treatment Education Program (CTEP), the Violence Prevention Program (VPP) and the Enhanced Youth Outreach Worker (EYOW) Program. This work translates directly into substantial taxpayer savings and improved public safety outcomes.



Fiscal Impact: Cost Avoidance for Taxpayers

Our operation of the ISSP provides direct fiscal relief by diverting youth from expensive custodial sanctions, which is the most compelling argument for government funding.

Cost Metric	Annual Taxpayer Cost (Per Youth)	Northstar's Value Proposition
Secure Custody (Average)	+\$266,715	This is the cost avoided when one youth is diverted to a community program.
ISSP/CST/CTEP Treatment (Average)	-\$25,000	This is the average cost to deliver Northstar's high-intensity, clinical intervention.
Direct Annual Savings (Per Youth)	=\$241,715	Every single successful community placement saves taxpayers close to a quarter-million dollars annually, validating Northstar's mission as a crucial financial steward.

Looking forward, the organization will continue to explicitly advocate for an “upstream approach,” prioritizing early interventions and preventative services to mitigate challenges before they escalate into more significant problems. This proactive stance in addressing root causes and building community capacity aligns seamlessly with numerous regional, provincial and federal strategies, positioning the organization as an indispensable and forward-thinking contributor to the overall well-being of youth in Ontario and the Durham Region.

This foundational belief in fostering change by challenging systemic barriers and creating supportive environments resonates profoundly with the strategic direction of a number of studies, reports and plans, regionally, provincially and federally. This is explored below.





III. The Youth Justice Landscape

A Review of Reviews

Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA)

The Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) serves as the legal bedrock for Canada’s youth justice system, governing young persons aged 12 to 17 who encounter the law. A central tenet of the YCJA is its emphasis on a fair and effective system that prioritizes rehabilitation and reintegration over punitive measures. Section 34 of the Act, for instance, empowers youth justice courts to mandate medical, psychological, or psychiatric assessments for young individuals. This provision is particularly relevant when there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a young person may be grappling with physical or mental illnesses, learning-disabilities, or emotional disturbances, or in cases involving a history of repeated findings of guilt or serious violent offenses. These assessments are not merely diagnostic; they are pivotal for informing critical decisions pertaining to a youth’s release, sentencing, and the imposition of conditional supervision.

Furthermore, the YCJA framework actively promotes “community-based” facilities and programs, defining them as accessible open group homes or supervision programs situated near a youth’s home or family. The Act broadly interprets “treatment” to encompass a wide array of services, including medical, educational, special education, social, psychological, and vocational support. It also introduces the concept of “graduated sanctions,” which integrate incentives, treatment, and services, all within the guiding principle of the “least restrictive environment”.

These detailed provisions collectively underscore a clear legislative preference for rehabilitative, individualized, and holistic interventions delivered within the community. Northstar’s diverse service offerings, such as counseling, outreach, classroom support, and violence prevention programs, directly embody these principles. This deep alignment positions Northstar not just as a compliant service provider but as a direct operationalization of the YCJA’s core rehabilitative intent, making it a key partner in realizing the vision of Canada’s youth justice system.

Indigenous Justice Strategy

The Indigenous Justice Strategy (IJS) emphasizes systemic reform, cultural revitalization, and community-led solutions to reduce the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the justice system. Its priorities focus on supporting Indigenous legal traditions, implementing restorative justice models, and embedding trauma-informed, culturally grounded practices. These are mirrored in Northstar’s commitment to reconciliation and equity. Northstar’s strategic pillars align with the IJS vision by promoting programs that integrate traditional healing, ceremonies, and Indigenous knowledge systems. Both frameworks recognize that justice must move beyond punitive measures toward holistic approaches that foster wellness, dignity, and community connection.

For Northstar, this alignment means embedding Indigenous-led engagement and co-design into all service areas. It calls for expanding partnerships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis organizations, ensuring youth have access to culturally relevant wraparound supports, and prioritizing staff training in anti-Indigenous racism and anti-colonial practices. By adopting the IJS principles, Northstar can strengthen diversion programs, advocate for legislative reforms, and implement restorative practices that reduce systemic harm.



Section 19 of the Youth Criminal Justice Act

A look at the use of conferences across Canada

This Justice Canada report reviews the use and effectiveness of Section 19 (s. 19) Youth Justice Conferences under the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA), which are formal, non-judicial forums used to develop sentence recommendations or address sentencing conditions. The core finding is that s. 19 conferences are a powerful, but severely underutilized, mechanism for embodying the rehabilitative and restorative principles of the YCJA. They significantly enhance the involvement of key stakeholders, including victims, community service providers, and families, to craft holistic, individualized plans tailored to the youth's specific needs (consistent with the RNR model and Northstar's focus on the youth's situation). This highly individualized planning contrasts sharply with standard court orders and is shown to improve the engagement and accountability of the youth. This report concludes that wider and more consistent use of s. 19 conferences is critical to advancing the YCJA's objectives, particularly for youth with complex needs.

The report presents clear implications for Northstar's 5-year strategic plan, particularly for the Intensive Support and Supervision Program (ISSP). The s. 19 mechanism, when properly utilized, is the formal procedural avenue that justifies and legitimizes a high-intensity alternative-to-custody sentence like ISSP. It means Northstar should strategically position itself as the essential community partner for all youth justice conferences in its region that involve high-risk, high-needs youth. The strategic goal should be to standardize the inclusion of Northstar's clinical staff and program proposal (the ISSP) in every relevant s. 19 conference recommendation, making the organization indispensable to the court's sentencing options. This aligns Northstar directly with the federal mandate for individualized, community-led rehabilitation.

One of the most glaring challenges identified in the report is the lack of awareness of s. 19 conferences among historically marginalized groups, directly impacting their lack of participation. This under-use is especially pronounced among Indigenous and racialized youth. Northstar can directly address these operational gaps by encouraging parents and caregivers to ask directly for a Section 19 conference, this approach supports parents to share any known underlying needs, diagnoses, or existing conditions with defence counsel or duty counsel as early as possible.

Ensuring this information is accurately documented in the youth's file creates the strongest foundation for informed decision-making across the system.

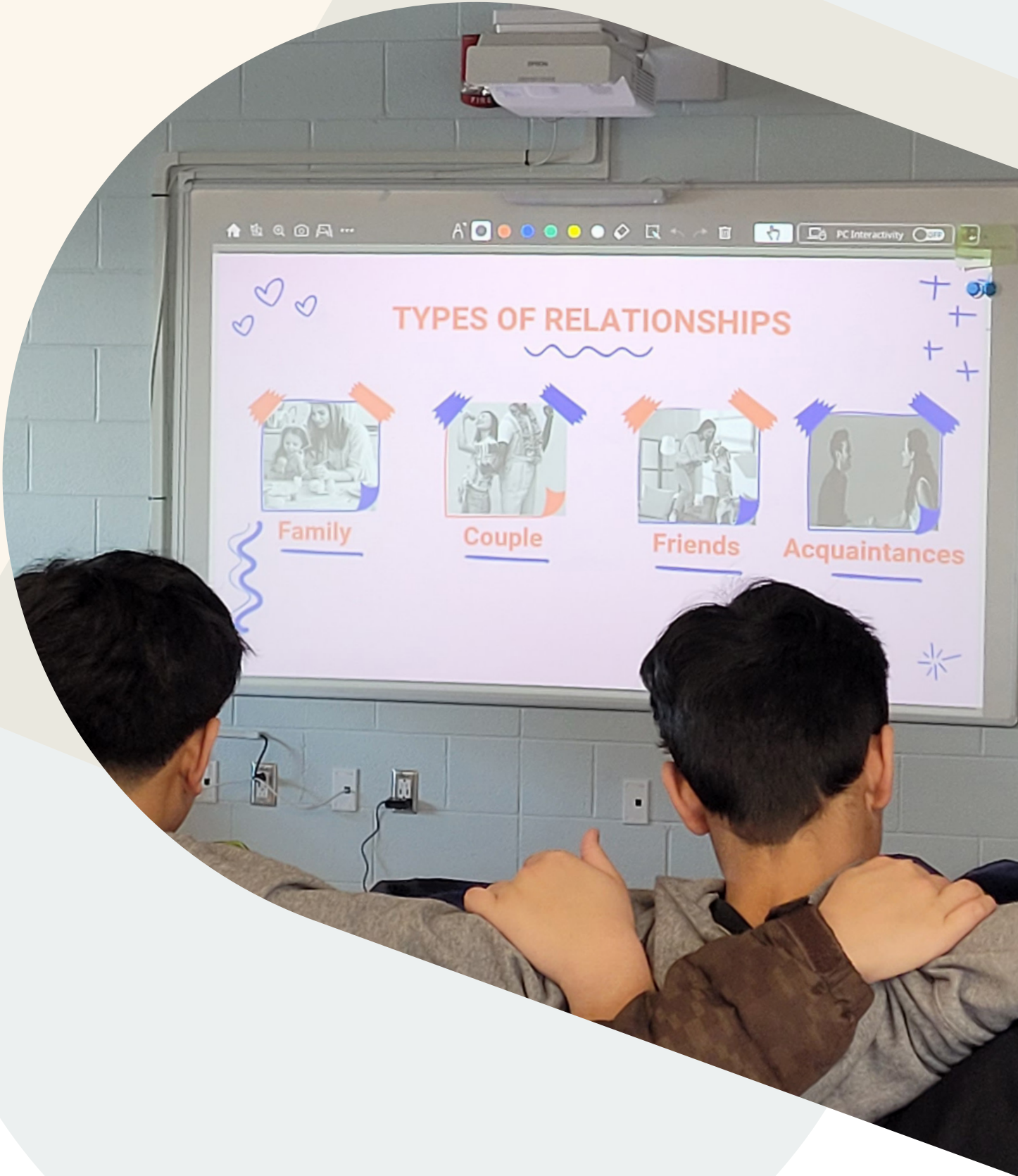
Toward Transformative Change:

An Implementation Plan for Canada's Black Justice Strategy

This plan, released in 2025, establishes a 10-year framework aimed at significantly reducing the overrepresentation of Black youth and adults in the criminal justice system, both as accused individuals and as victims of crime. The Plan is rooted in recognizing and addressing systemic anti-Black racism stemming from Canada's history of colonialism and slavery.

The plan is organized under five key pillars: Social Determinants of Justice, Policing, Courts and Legislation, Corrections, and Parole/Re-entry/Reintegration. A central focus is on decarceration, legislative changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act, and targeted resourcing for Black-specific programs. The overall approach is guided by principles like Africentrism, the Principle of Restraint (alternatives to incarceration), and Reparative Justice, demanding deep consultation and collaboration with Black communities to create policies that are responsive to their unique experiences. The Plan includes significant federal investments over the coming years to support these structural and community-based actions.

For Northstar, this means embedding equity and anti-racism across all pillars, expanding culturally responsive programming, integrating staff training, and deepening partnerships with agencies that address these determinants. By aligning advocacy and service delivery with these principles, Northstar can ensure its programs respond to the root causes of injustice rather than symptoms. Diversion programs, restorative justice practices, and community co-design are central to reducing harm and building trust. Northstar can scale up these initiatives while enhancing demographic data collection to measure progress and report outcomes transparently. Engaging Black-led organizations and marginalized communities in Durham Region will ensure programs reflect lived experiences and foster long-term reintegration.



TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS



Family



Couple



Friends



Acquaintances





Unjust Pathways for LGBTQ+ Youth

This U.S. based report documents the drastic overrepresentation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) youth in the juvenile justice system. While the quantitative figures in the report represent the reality in the United States, the qualitative narratives can easily be applied to a Canadian context.

In Canada, two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (2SLGBTQ+) youth are disproportionately pushed into the criminal justice system not because of higher criminality, but due to systemic failures and social trauma. Family rejection often leads to homelessness, forcing many into “survival crimes” such as shoplifting or sex work. Schools contribute through discriminatory discipline and bullying, creating a school-to-prison pipeline that accelerates justice involvement. Once in custody, these youth face heightened risks of abuse, bias in pre-trial decisions, and harmful placement practices, such as transgender girls being housed in male facilities. These challenges are compounded for racialized 2SLGBTQ+ youth, who represent the vast majority of incarcerated 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, underscoring the need for intersectional responses.

For Northstar, these realities demand intentional action. Our approach must prioritize prevention through family support programs, anti-bullying initiatives, and advocacy for inclusive school policies. We will expand culturally competent, trauma-informed services that address homelessness and reduce reliance on survival crimes. Within justice systems, Northstar can lead efforts to promote safe placements, equitable treatment, and diversion programs tailored to 2SLGBTQ+ youth. Embedding intersectionality into all five pillars will ensure that racialized 2SLGBTQ+ youth receive holistic support.

MCCSS Youth Justice Service Objectives

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) plays a pivotal role in defining the objectives for Youth Justice Services in Ontario. A significant component of these services falls under “Mental health/specialized programming,” which includes the Community Support Team (CST) and the Intensive Support and Supervision Program (ISSP). The Community Support Team (CST) is designed to provide comprehensive support for youth aged 12-17 involved in the criminal justice system, with overarching goals to reduce re-offences, offer alternatives to custody, and facilitate improved outcomes for these young individuals. CST services are multifaceted, encompassing care coordination, essential skills training, connecting youth and their families with vital community resources, diligently monitoring progress, and reporting outcomes to the court system. The program places a strong emphasis on linking youth with necessary support services to address underlying social, psychiatric, and substance-abuse issues, while simultaneously empowering them to cultivate self-responsibility. The Intensive Support and Supervision Program (ISSP) functions as a clinically focused, community-based alternative to traditional custody for young persons who have been found guilty of a criminal offense and have a diagnosed mental health disorder(s) or dual diagnoses. ISSP delivers individualized, comprehensive, and integrated treatment plans. These plans often include educational and vocational support, life skills development, independent living assistance, social and recreation support (including mentoring), family support, self-help strategies, and crucial service coordination and advocacy. Referrals to the ISSP are typically initiated by the youth’s Probation Officer.

Northstar’s existing services, which include counseling, outreach, classrooms, and violence prevention, demonstrate a direct and substantial alignment with the detailed service objectives outlined by MCCSS for both the CST and ISSP programs. The organization’s focus on mental health, legal, and education services, along with therapeutic camps, closely mirrors the mandated components of these provincial youth justice programs. This strong alignment indicates that Northstar is not merely a general service provider but an essential operational partner in the delivery of key provincial youth justice programs. This positions Northstar as a critical component of the provincial youth justice service delivery network, implying a degree of stability in funding and referrals, alongside a responsibility to adhere to MCCSS service standards and reporting requirements.

Durham Region's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

The Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan, formally adopted in 2021, represents a concerted effort to enhance the safety and sense of belonging among Durham residents. This comprehensive plan aims to address fundamental needs across various domains, including education, healthcare, food security, housing, income stability, and social and cultural expression. A core tenet of the CSWB Plan is its emphasis on a collaborative framework for integrated service delivery, actively promoting an “upstream approach” to proactively address priority risk factors before they escalate into more significant societal challenges.

The CSWB Plan identifies seven critical priority risk factors based on extensive data analysis, stakeholder feedback, and community engagement: Mental Health, Substance Use, Homelessness & Basic Needs, Criminal Involvement, Victimization, Social Isolation, and Experiences of Racism.

Northstar's core mission and existing services are directly responsive to all these identified priority risk factors. The organization's community-driven programs and its explicit focus on challenging systemic barriers align seamlessly with the CSWB Plan's overarching collaborative and upstream prevention strategy.

This means Northstar is not merely operating within the Durham Region but serves as a vital operational arm for achieving the region's mandated community safety and well-being goals. This deep integration into the regional framework opens a significant avenue for a strategic partnership.

Ignite Learning

Durham District School Board's Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP)

This plan emphasizes three core priorities, Ignite Learning, Ignite Connection, and Ignite Well-Being, which closely align with Northstar's Care and Treatment Education Program (CTEP). DDSB's focus on meaningful learning through high-quality teaching and individualized educational experiences mirrors CTEP's approach of blending academic instruction with therapeutic interventions.





Both prioritize preparing students for a changing world by centering their interests and goals, ensuring that learning environments are inclusive and responsive. This shared commitment reinforces Northstar's classroom culture, which integrates restorative practices, mentorship, and personalized support to help students achieve academic success while addressing emotional and behavioural needs.

Similarly, DDSB's strategic objectives around connection and well-being resonate with CTEP's outcomes for students. The MYSP calls for creating safe, caring, and respectful environments and fostering strong community engagement, principles embedded in Northstar's classroom agreements and program philosophy. CTEP's emphasis on trauma-informed care, cultural inclusion, and collaborative partnerships with families and schools reflects DDSB's vision of connected communities and holistic well-being. By aligning with these priorities, Northstar strengthens its role as a trusted partner in education and youth justice, ensuring that marginalized students experience dignity, belonging, and opportunities for growth both academically and personally.

Consequently, it is imperative for Northstar to explicitly track and communicate its contributions to these regional priorities, further solidifying its role as an indispensable community asset.

Looking Forward – The Plan

Northstar's 2026–2030 Strategic Plan sets a bold vision for transforming youth justice in our region. Over the next five years, we will focus on scaling our impact through innovative, evidence-based programs that respond to the evolving realities facing young people. Rising challenges such as youth gang involvement, complex mental health needs, and intersectional vulnerabilities demand a deeper level of clinical expertise and culturally responsive interventions. Northstar will strengthen its integrated service model, embedding trauma-informed care, restorative practices, and equity-driven approaches across all programs.

At the same time, we will institutionalize our framework as the regional gold standard for youth justice, while building strong partnerships, influencing policy, and leveraging data to drive measurable outcomes. This strategy positions Northstar not only as a service provider but as a leader in shaping systems that prioritize prevention, rehabilitation, and community well-being.



5 Strategic Pillars **Actionable** **Roadmaps for** **2026–2030**



PILLAR 1:

Service Excellence

Strategic Intent: To consistently deliver high-quality, client-centered, and culturally responsive services that exceed expectations and foster positive youth outcomes.

1

Implement a comprehensive client-centered care framework.

This initiative involves systematically tailoring interventions to align with the unique needs and lived experiences of each client. It requires fostering supportive and non-judgmental relationships, empowering youth to actively participate in their rehabilitation journey and decision-making processes. The approach begins by understanding the youth's current situation and individual circumstances, ensuring that services are relevant and impactful. Research indicates that client-centered practices are directly linked to improved outcomes, including reduced

recidivism rates and enhanced educational and employment prospects. This highlights that effective programs for youth in conflict with the law are those that meticulously “target interventions to the individual needs of each youth”. Thus, personalized service is not merely a philosophical preference but a proven methodology for achieving tangible results in youth justice. Investing in truly individualized, client-driven care is a direct and evidence-based strategy for Northstar to fulfill its mandate of reducing re-offending and improving the long-term trajectories of the youth it serves.

KPI 1

Percentage of youth with individualized care plans formally co-developed and signed off by the youth and their family (where appropriate).

KPI 2

Track the reduction in first-time entries into the formal youth justice system among youth engaged in Northstar's early intervention programs.

Integrate trauma-informed care principles across all programs and interactions.

2

Given that a significant majority (up to 90%) of justice-involved youth have experienced some form of trauma, the integration of trauma-informed care is not just beneficial but critical. This approach necessitates a deep understanding of trauma's profound impact on the developing brain and subsequent behaviour, prioritizing the establishment of physical and emotional safety, actively promoting resilience, and diligently avoiding any re-traumatization. Achieving this requires comprehensive and ongoing training for all staff members. Traditional youth justice responses often inadvertently re-traumatize young offenders, which

paradoxically increases the likelihood of future criminal behaviour. Conversely, a trauma-informed approach, which centers on safety, healing, and restorative justice, has been shown to be highly effective in promoting community safety and overall well-being. This establishes a critical connection, addressing trauma is fundamental to successful rehabilitation and the reduction of re-offending. Therefore, trauma-informed care is not an optional enhancement but a fundamental shift in organizational culture and practice, indispensable for Northstar to achieve its rehabilitative goals and prevent further harm to vulnerable youth.

KPI 1

Percentage of frontline staff and supervisors who complete a certified trauma-informed care training program annually.

KPI 2

Implementation of universal trauma screening questions during intake assessments, measured by the percentage of youth screened.

KPI 3

Achieve a 20% reduction in self-reported depression/anxiety scores (via validated screening tool) for 2SLGBTQ+ youth from intake to discharge.

3 Enhance cultural responsiveness and anti-oppressive practices in service delivery.

This involves actively understanding, respecting, and seamlessly integrating the diverse cultural backgrounds, languages, and belief systems of the youth and families Northstar serves. This commitment is particularly crucial given the documented overrepresentation of Indigenous and Black youth within the justice system. Services must be not only culturally sensitive but also trauma-informed, reflecting a deep commitment to anti-oppressive practice. Young people, especially Indigenous youth, consistently express a strong desire for diverse representation and culturally-relevant resources within the justice system.

Community-based organizations that genuinely understand local needs and cultural sensitivities are demonstrably more effective in providing care. Furthermore, when students see

their culture authentically reflected in educational systems, they experience a greater sense of inclusion and connection, which significantly enhances their engagement with learning and support. This demonstrates that cultural relevance and sensitivity are not merely ethical considerations but directly influence a youth's willingness to engage with services and, consequently, the overall effectiveness of those services. If youth do not perceive their culture or identity reflected, disengagement is a likely outcome, leading to poorer long-term results. Northstar's commitment to cultural responsiveness is not just an ethical stance but a strategic imperative for improving service efficacy, building trust with diverse communities, and actively addressing systemic inequities within the youth justice system.

KPI 1

Development and implementation of at least two new culturally-specific program modules or adaptations by 2028.

KPI 2

Annual feedback scores from racialized youth and families on the cultural inclusivity and sensitivity of Northstar's services.

4 Establish clear, measurable service standards and client feedback mechanisms.

Service excellence is fundamentally defined by the consistent ability to meet and, on occasion, surpass client expectations. This necessitates the establishment of high core service standards, a focus on optimizing convenience, demonstrating genuine consideration, and proactively addressing problems before they fully manifest. To gauge client satisfaction and pinpoint areas for continuous improvement, robust feedback mechanisms, such as regular surveys and follow-up communications, are indispensable. Implementing a systematic feedback mechanism enables Northstar to continuously refine its service delivery by truly

understanding and addressing client needs, empathizing with their concerns, and resolving issues promptly. This cyclical process of collecting and acting on feedback is explicitly linked to enhancing client satisfaction and fostering enduring relationships. A robust and actionable client feedback system is therefore foundational for Northstar to uphold its commitment to service excellence, ensuring that its programs remain responsive, relevant, and impactful from the perspective of the youth and families it serves. For Northstar to achieve its rehabilitative goals and prevent further harm to vulnerable youth.

KPI 1

Achieve an average client satisfaction score of 4.5/5 or higher across all programs by 2027.

KPI 2

Implement a formal client feedback survey system with a response rate of at least 60% by Q4 2026.

Develop proactive intervention strategies to address emerging youth needs.

5

Service excellence extends to anticipating potential problems and addressing them before they escalate. This aligns directly with the “upstream approach” championed by the Durham Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. Early intervention programs that prioritize enhancing child, parent-child, or family well-being have demonstrated effectiveness in preventing social deviance and subsequent involvement in the criminal justice system. Empirically-based recommendations for reducing re-offending consistently highlight the importance of providing suitable interventions early in the lives of youth in conflict with the law.

Investing in these early, preventative interventions for vulnerable youth represents a critically important social investment that yields long-term savings through reduced crime rates and more productive residents. This underscores that proactive solutions are not merely socially beneficial but also fiscally prudent. By prioritizing and expanding proactive intervention strategies, Northstar can significantly enhance its impact by preventing youth from deeper involvement in the justice system, ultimately leading to better individual outcomes and reduced societal costs.

KPI 1

Increase the number of youth participating in Northstar’s preventative/early intervention programs by 15% year-over-year.

KPI 2

Average client satisfaction scores related to service personalization and responsiveness, measured quarterly.

Optimize service accessibility and convenience for youth and families.

6

A fundamental element of service excellence involves eliminating delays, reducing hassle, and simplifying processes for clients. This includes offering support through multiple channels, such as phone, email, and live chat, and striving for prompt response times to inquiries. Addressing existing service barriers and complicated referral processes is a recognized priority in the youth justice space. Research on Integrated Youth Services (IYS) models reveals that extended wait times and a lack of cultural consideration

substantially diminish the perceived utility of services for youth. This demonstrates that practical barriers directly impede equitable access and effective engagement with support systems. Therefore, Northstar’s efforts to enhance accessibility and convenience are not merely about improving user experience; they are critical for ensuring equitable access to justice and support, particularly for marginalized youth and families in Durham Region.

KPI 1

Reduce average client intake-to-first-service wait time by 20% by 2027.

KPI 2

Implement a multi-channel communication strategy (e.g., phone, email, online portal) with documented response time targets for all inquiries.

7 Expand specialized mental health and substance use support within programs.

Mental health and substance use are consistently identified as top priority risk factors within the Durham Region. Northstar already provides crucial mental health services, and the Intensive Support and Supervision Program (ISSP) specifically targets youth with mental health or dual diagnoses. Best practices for substance use treatment advocate for the integration of therapeutic modalities such as cognitive-behavioural therapy and motivational enhancement therapy. Furthermore, a significant majority of youth who come into conflict with the law are trauma survivors who

frequently struggle with co-occurring mental health challenges and addictions. This highlights that these issues are deeply intertwined root causes of criminal involvement. This understanding reveals a causal relationship: addressing one issue without considering the other is likely to be less effective. By strategically expanding specialized mental health and substance use supports, Northstar can address the underlying vulnerabilities that contribute to youth criminal involvement, leading to more holistic and sustainable rehabilitation outcomes.

KPI 1

KPI 1: Increase the number of specialized mental health and substance use therapy hours delivered by 25% by 2028.

KPI 2

Track the percentage of youth in Northstar’s programs who report improved mental health and/or reduced substance use.

8 Strengthen post-program follow-up and reintegration support to reduce recidivism.

Research indicates that youth are most susceptible to re-offending within the initial months following their release from custody. Rehabilitation programs that incorporate comprehensive follow-up and transitional community-based support significantly enhance the likelihood of successful community re-entry and a reduction in re-offending. Reintegration planning is recognized as a pivotal component of effective case management within youth justice services. The data clearly establishes a direct causal link between robust post-program support and reduced recidivism.

Without sustained engagement during the vulnerable reintegration phase, the positive gains achieved during initial interventions are likely to diminish. This means Northstar’s responsibility extends beyond the immediate program duration, encompassing a critical post-release phase. Northstar’s long-term impact and its ability to meaningfully reduce re-offending rates depend critically on its capacity to provide comprehensive and sustained support during the reintegration phase, ensuring youth successfully transition back into the community.

KPI 1 Achieve a 10% reduction in recidivism rates among Northstar program graduates compared to a baseline by 2030.

KPI 2 Maintain a minimum of 75% engagement rate with youth in post-program follow-up for at least six months.

KPI 3 Demonstrate no statistically significant difference in recidivism rates between racialized 2SLGBTQ+ youth and the overall program cohort.

KPI 4 90% of discharged 2SLGBTQ+ youth are successfully transitioned into safe, stable housing or supportive living (documented at 6mon follow-up).

KPI 5 Program completion rate for Black youth is maintained at or above the overall program average.

Regularly review and update program curricula based on evidence-based best practices.

9

Effective treatment for youth in conflict with the law is underpinned by a substantial body of research. This research highlights the importance of incorporating diverse counseling modalities (individual, group, and family), anger management techniques, cognitive and social skills development, and meaningful family involvement. Furthermore, fostering a “learning culture” that facilitates easy access to, and broad sharing of, best practices is actively encouraged within the social services sector. Northstar’s services should be explicitly based on cognitive behavioural principles and interventions, best practices, and evidence-informed

and/or evidence-based programming. A meta-analysis of youth treatment programs directly links specific interventions, such as cognitive skills training and positive family communication to measurable reductions in re-offending. This demonstrates adherence to evidence-based practices is crucial for maximizing program effectiveness and ensuring accountability. This commitment to continuous learning and adaptation ensures that Northstar’s interventions are not only aligned with current research but are also optimized for the best possible outcomes for the youth it serves.

KPI 1

Conduct a comprehensive review of all core program curricula against current evidence-based practices by Q4 2026, with updates implemented by Q2 2027.

KPI 2

Document at least two instances annually where program modifications are directly attributable to new research or best practice findings.

Implement Anti-Racism Data & Accountability

10

The Impact of Race and Culture Assessment (IRCA) provide a structured framework for understanding how systemic racism, cultural identity, and lived experiences influence youth behaviour and justice involvement. By incorporating IRCA into clinical practice, Northstar ensures

that interventions are not only evidence-based but also contextually relevant, reducing bias and promoting fair outcomes for racialized youth. This aligns with Northstar’s commitment to dismantling systemic barriers and creating safe, inclusive environments where all youth can thrive.

KPI 1

Demonstrate that the retention/recidivism gap between Black youth and non-Black youth is reduced by 50% over the 5-year plan.

KPI 2

Number of court reports written by Northstar staff or partners incorporating Impact of Race and Culture Assessment (IRCA) principles in sentencing recommendations increases by 10% by 2028.

PILLAR 2:

Staff Development

Strategic Intent: To cultivate a highly skilled, resilient, and culturally competent workforce capable of delivering exceptional youth justice services.

1

Implement a comprehensive professional development and training program.

Continuous learning is paramount for enhancing the skills and knowledge of staff, particularly in a dynamic field like youth justice. This involves providing specialized training in critical areas such as mental health support, trauma-informed care, de-escalation techniques, and cultural competency. Such training must be evidence-based and culturally informed to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.

A skilled workforce is a fundamental element for successful operations and the delivery of high-quality services. Trainings directly impact the ability of staff to deliver effective interventions and to competently address the complex and often multifaceted needs of youth in conflict with the law. This investment ensures that Northstar's team remains at the forefront of best practices in youth justice.

KPI 1

Percentage of staff completing annual mandatory training hours in core competencies (e.g., trauma-informed care, de-escalation).

KPI 2

Increase in staff self-reported confidence in managing complex client situations, measured via annual survey.

KPI 3

100% of Northstar staff complete mandatory, annual SOGIE-affirming practice and anti-discrimination training.

Establish a robust clinical supervision and mentorship framework.

2

Clinical supervision is a vital process that enhances knowledge, refines skills, and strengthens professional judgment, ultimately providing essential support and improving client outcomes. It encompasses both case management guidance and the professional development of supervisees, with a particular emphasis on building strong therapeutic relationships and navigating complex client dynamics. Concurrently, structured mentorship programs, especially those involving experienced professionals, offer invaluable guidance and support, fostering professional

growth and helping staff build crucial support networks. Effective supervision is critical for maintaining the quality of care, promoting ethical practice, and ensuring the ongoing competence of staff, particularly when dealing with the intricate nature of youth justice cases. Mentorship, in turn, can significantly impact staff retention and accelerate skill development within the organization. This dual approach ensures both immediate support and long-term professional growth for Northstar's team.

KPI 1

Percentage of frontline staff receiving regular, structured clinical supervision (e.g., bi-weekly sessions).

KPI 2

Number of formal mentorship pairings established and maintained annually.

3 Prioritize staff well-being and burnout prevention initiatives.

Roles within social work and youth justice are inherently demanding and emotionally taxing, leading to a high risk of burnout and compassion fatigue among professionals. Proactive initiatives to address this must include fostering conditions for physical and psychological safety, ensuring adequate rest opportunities, normalizing and openly supporting mental health, and providing accessible mental health benefits.

Crucial self-care strategies for staff include setting healthy limits, maintaining professional boundaries, engaging in physical activity, and participating in debriefing sessions after challenging incidents. Addressing staff well-being is fundamental for maintaining high staff retention, ensuring consistent productivity, and sustaining the delivery of high-quality services.

KPI 1

Implementation of a staff wellness program with measurable participation rates.

KPI 2

Reduction in staff turnover rates by 10% by 2028.

4 Develop clear career pathways and progression opportunities (where possible).

Providing transparent career pathways and opportunities for advancement is a powerful strategy to enhance staff motivation and retention. This includes defining specialized roles, such as advanced practitioners or approved mental health professionals, and outlining leadership positions like team managers or practice educators. The development of such frameworks involves clearly identifying the necessary

skills, knowledge and educational experiences required for progression within the organization. Structured career development fosters a sense of long-term investment in employees, which in turn reduces turnover and contributes to the accumulation of valuable institutional knowledge and expertise. This is vital for sustaining a high-quality, experienced workforce at Northstar over the long term.

KPI 1

Development and communication of a formal career progression framework by 2027.

KPI 2

Increase in internal promotions and role advancements by 15% annually.

Enhance performance management and feedback systems.

5

Implementing an effective performance management process is crucial for Northstar. This process should clearly define objectives, establish measurable standards (utilizing SMART goals), provide regular and constructive feedback, and systematically evaluate progress. It is important that this system is tailored to the unique context of a non-profit organization, emphasizing alignment with Northstar's mission and fostering Talent development. Furthermore, performance

evaluations should explicitly incorporate measures related to supporting effective family and youth engagement. Effective performance management drives accountability across the organization, motivates employees to achieve their best, identifies specific development needs, and ensures that individual efforts are consistently aligned with Northstar's overarching strategic goals.

KPI 1

Implement a quarterly performance review cycle for all staff by Q1 2026

KPI 2

Achieve a 90% completion rate for performance reviews with documented feedback and goal setting.

Foster a culture of continuous learning and knowledge sharing.

6

Cultivating a learning culture across Northstar is essential, making it easier for staff to access and broadly share best practices. This can be achieved through various mechanisms, including regular internal workshops, peer consultation groups, establishing communities of practice, and promoting self-directed study opportunities.

A robust learning culture promotes innovation, enhances organizational adaptability, and facilitates the widespread dissemination of effective strategies. This ultimately strengthens Northstar's overall capacity and ensures its responsiveness to the evolving needs of the youth and families it serves.

KPI 1

Establish a quarterly internal knowledge-sharing forum or workshop series.

KPI 2

Develop an online resource library for best practices and training materials by 2027.

7 Recruit and retain a diverse and culturally competent workforce.

Actively recruiting staff who reflect the diverse populations served by Northstar, particularly Indigenous and racialized communities, is paramount to ensuring genuine cultural humility and responsiveness in service delivery. This commitment necessitates emphasizing diversity in hiring practices and providing continuous cultural humility training for all staff.

A diverse staff is better equipped to understand and connect with youth from varied backgrounds, leading to more effective and equitable service delivery. This strategic approach directly addresses the persistent issue of overrepresentation of certain demographic groups within the justice system, fostering a more inclusive and effective support environment.

KPI 1

Increase the representation of Indigenous and racialized staff by 10% by 2029.

KPI 2

Implement mandatory cultural humility training for all new hires and annual refreshers for existing staff.

8 Develop specialized de-escalation and crisis intervention training.

Providing advanced training in de-escalation techniques, active listening, empathy, and crisis intervention is critical for Northstar staff, particularly given that emotional dysregulation is a common challenge in youth justice settings. This training should incorporate practical application and role-playing exercises to build real-world skills.

Equipping staff with these specialized skills is crucial for creating a safe and respectful environment for youth, effectively managing challenging behaviours, and preventing any potential re-traumatization during interactions. This proactive investment enhances both staff safety and the therapeutic efficacy of Northstar's interventions.

KPI 1

Percentage of frontline staff certified in a recognized de-escalation and crisis intervention methodology by 2027.

KPI 2

Reduction in incidents requiring external crisis intervention or physical restraint by 15% by 2029.

Foster a strengths-based and relational approach in all staff interactions.

9

Training staff to consistently utilize strengths-based approaches is essential, focusing on identifying and leveraging youth's inherent capacities, interests, and preferences to achieve positive and sustainable changes. This approach is built upon fostering authentic, respectful, and non-judgmental relationships with both youth and their families.

A strengths-based, relational approach is widely recognized as a best practice in youth development and has proven to be more effective in promoting long-term positive outcomes than traditional punitive or problem-focused models. By embedding this philosophy into every interaction, Northstar can empower youth and build a foundation for lasting success.

KPI 1

Percentage of youth reporting a positive and supportive relationship with their Northstar worker in annual surveys.

KPI 2

Integration of strengths-based assessments and goal-setting into all individualized client plans by 2027.



PILLAR 3: Operational Improvements

Strategic Intent: To enhance organizational efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability through streamlined processes, optimized resource allocation, and robust data management.

Implement a comprehensive case management software system.

1

Utilizing advanced technology to streamline client management processes is critical for Northstar’s operational efficiency. This involves implementing a comprehensive case management software system that can consolidate data, automate administrative tasks, and significantly improve data accessibility across the organization. Such a system should be capable of tracking personalized goals and outcomes,

while also ensuring compliance with relevant regulations. Centralizing data and automating workflows will free up valuable staff time, allowing them to dedicate more effort to direct client service, enhance overall productivity, and provide real-time insights crucial for informed decision-making and accurate impact measurement.

KPI 1

Implementation of a new case management system by Q4 2027.

KPI 2

Reduction in administrative time spent by frontline staff by 15% by 2028.

Develop robust data analytics and impact measurement capabilities.

2

Establishing a robust framework for defining outcomes and metrics is essential for Northstar to effectively measure its impact. This involves systematically collecting both quantitative and qualitative data and then analyzing it to assess program effectiveness and overall impact. The insights derived from this data should be presented using effective data visualization and storytelling techniques to clearly communicate results to all stakeholders.

Demonstrating measurable impact is critical for accountability, essential for securing and diversifying funding, and fundamental for building and maintaining credibility with partners and the public. Furthermore, this data-driven approach directly informs continuous program improvement, ensuring that Northstar’s services remain highly effective and responsive.

KPI 1

Quarterly reporting on key program outcomes (e.g., recidivism rates, educational attainment, mental health improvements) commencing Q1 2027.

KPI 2

Increase in grant funding secured by 20% by 2029, directly linked to demonstrated impact.

3 Streamline administrative processes and policies, effectively leveraging artificial intelligence (where appropriate and safe).

Reviewing and updating internal policies, including those related to the code of conduct, financial management, privacy, and human resources, is crucial to ensure transparency, accountability, and ongoing legal compliance. Where feasible, automating repetitive HR and administrative tasks can significantly enhance efficiency.

Securely using artificial language models for more efficient administrative processes will reduce the overall operational burden on staff, prevent instances of non-compliance, and allow a greater proportion of resources to be directed towards Northstar's core mission activities, namely, supporting youth and families.

KPI 1

Completion of a comprehensive policy review and update by 2027.

KPI 2

Reduction in manual administrative tasks by 10% through automation by 2028.

4 Optimize resource allocation and financial management.

Ensuring the responsible use of funds, strict adherence to legal standards, and the strategic allocation of resources to high-priority services are fundamental to Northstar's sustainability. This involves implementing robust budgeting practices, effective expense management, and transparent financial reporting.

Effective financial management is crucial for maintaining organizational stability, demonstrating accountability to funders, and maximizing the impact of every dollar directed towards youth support. This commitment ensures that Northstar operates with the highest level of fiscal responsibility.

KPI 1

Maintain a balanced budget with a minimum 5% operating reserve by 2028.

KPI 2

Achieve 100% compliance with all financial reporting requirements to funders and regulatory bodies.

Develop a comprehensive risk management framework.

5

A proactive approach to risk management is essential for Northstar’s long-term viability and reputation. This involves systematically identifying and mitigating operational risks, including those related to data security, client privacy, and the continuity of program delivery. The framework will include establishing clear protocols

for data protection, managing crisis situations, and ensuring continuous compliance with all relevant regulations. A comprehensive risk management framework safeguards the organization, protects its clients, and preserves its reputation, thereby ensuring uninterrupted service delivery and maintaining stakeholder trust.

KPI 1

Develop and implement a formal risk management plan by Q4 2026.

KPI 2

Conduct annual data security and privacy audits with no critical findings.

Enhance digital infrastructure and cybersecurity.

6

Investing in a secure and scalable digital infrastructure is paramount for Northstar’s future operations. This includes transitioning to and maintaining secure, cloud-based solutions for data management and communication. Implementing robust cybersecurity measures is equally critical to protect sensitive client data and

uphold privacy standards. A strong digital infrastructure supports efficient operations, ensures secure data handling, and enables flexible service delivery, which is increasingly vital in the evolving landscape of social services. This investment will enhance Northstar’s capacity to serve its clients effectively and securely.

KPI 1

Upgrade to a fully cloud-based data management system by Q2 2029.

KPI 2

Achieve 100% compliance with data privacy regulations (e.g., PIPEDA).

7 Regularly evaluate program effectiveness and efficiency.

Northstar will move beyond simply tracking outputs, such as the number of youth served, to rigorously measuring program outcomes and overall impact. This includes assessing metrics like reduced recidivism rates and improvements in youth well-being. The findings from these evaluations will be used to identify any gaps in service,

refine program delivery methods, and test innovative approaches to interventions. Continuous program evaluation ensures that Northstar’s services remain relevant, effective, and highly responsive to the evolving needs of youth and the broader community, thereby maximizing its social return on investment.

KPI 1

Conduct annual outcome evaluations for all major programs, starting Q4 2027.

KPI 2

Demonstrate a measurable improvement in at least one key outcome metric for each core program annually.

8 Develop a sustainable funding diversification strategy.

To ensure long-term stability and growth, Northstar will actively explore and secure diverse funding streams beyond traditional government grants. This includes cultivating corporate partnerships, launching individual giving campaigns, and initiating community fundraising initiatives. Leveraging demonstrated impact through data

and compelling storytelling will be key to attracting and retaining donors. A diversified funding base enhances Northstar’s financial stability and resilience, reducing reliance on single funding sources and enabling sustained strategic growth and innovation in its service delivery.

KPI 1

Increase non-governmental funding sources by 10% year-over-year.

KPI 2

Develop a comprehensive donor engagement and retention strategy by 2028.

Enhance volunteer management and engagement.

Volunteers are an invaluable asset to Northstar, significantly extending its capacity and contributing to operational efficiency. Developing structured processes for recruiting, training, and retaining volunteers is essential, recognizing their critical contribution to program delivery and

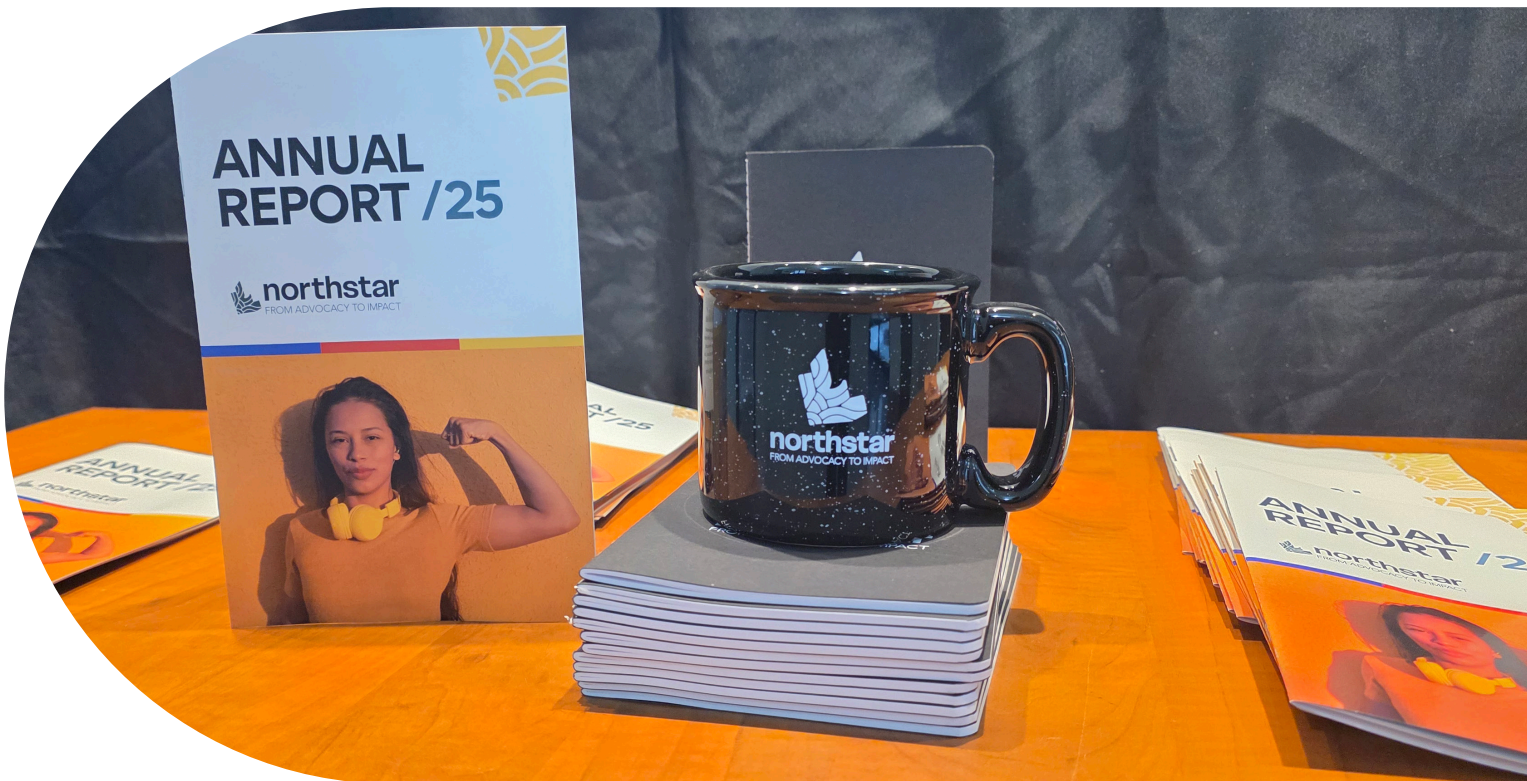
community engagement. Effective volunteer management not only enhances Northstar's ability to deliver services but also fosters a stronger connection with the community, contributing to both program quality and cost-effectiveness.

KPI 1

Increase active volunteer hours by 10% annually.

KPI 2

Implement a formal volunteer training and recognition program by 2027.



PILLAR 4: Amplified Advocacy

Strategic Intent: To strengthen Northstar's position and influence in shaping youth justice policy, raising public awareness, and challenging systemic barriers in Durham Region and beyond.

Develop and implement a targeted policy advocacy agenda.

1

Northstar will proactively identify and engage with key policy issues that directly affect youth in conflict with the law within Durham Region and across Ontario. This includes focusing on critical areas such as enhancing mental health support, promoting viable alternatives to custody, and addressing the persistent issue of disproportionality within the justice system.

This advocacy will involve strategic engagement with government officials, parliamentary committees, and other relevant stakeholders. Direct policy advocacy has the potential to drive systemic changes that benefit a broader population of youth, aligning directly with Northstar's core mission to challenge and dismantle systemic barriers.

KPI 1

Submit at least one formal policy recommendation or brief to provincial/federal government annually.

KPI 2

Participate in a minimum of two parliamentary committee studies or government consultations per year.

Launch impactful public awareness campaigns.

2

Northstar will design and execute targeted public awareness campaigns to educate the broader community about critical youth justice issues, highlight Northstar's vital role, and emphasize the profound importance of community-based rehabilitation and prevention. These campaigns can be tailored to reach specific audiences, such as youth themselves, parents, or educators, and will strategically

utilize various media channels to maximize reach. Public awareness campaigns are powerful tools that can shift public opinion, reduce the stigma associated with youth justice involvement, and generate widespread community support for rehabilitative initiatives, thereby fostering greater citizen participation in the justice system.

KPI 1

Launch at least one major public awareness campaign annually, focusing on a key youth justice theme by 2028.

KPI 2

Increase website traffic and social media engagement by 15% year-over-year, linked to campaign activities.

3 Empower youth narratives in advocacy efforts.

Northstar will actively involve youth with lived experience in the conceptualization, development, and delivery of its advocacy initiatives. This includes providing meaningful leadership opportunities and comprehensive training to equip them for these roles. A core component of this empowerment is creating safe and inclusive spaces where youth

can contribute their perspectives freely, ensuring that their insights directly inform policy decisions. Youth-led initiatives are recognized as a best practice in the field, fostering personal development, skill acquisition, and ensuring that advocacy efforts are authentic and directly relevant to the actual needs of young people.

KPI 1

Establish a Youth Advisory Council or similar youth-led advocacy group by 2027.

KPI 2

Percentage of advocacy initiatives directly informed or led by youth participants.

4 Advocate for increased funding and resources for community-based youth justice services.

Northstar will actively advocate for greater investment in community-based youth justice services, emphasizing their proven cost-effectiveness and superior success rates compared to institutional custody. The organization will leverage data demonstrating its own impact to clearly illustrate the tangible value of such investments.

Increased funding for community-based alternatives is essential to alleviate issues such as overcrowding in detention centers and to ensure that youth receive appropriate, less restrictive, and more rehabilitative support environments. This advocacy aims to shift resource allocation towards more effective and humane interventions.

KPI 1

Secure a 10% increase in government funding for community-based programs by 2029.

KPI 2

Develop and disseminate a white paper or report on the cost-effectiveness of Northstar's community-based model by 2028.

Challenge systemic inequities and disproportionality in the justice system.

5

Northstar will actively address the persistent overrepresentation of Indigenous and racialized youth within the justice system. This involves advocating for the widespread implementation of culturally responsive services and anti-racist practices across all levels of the system. The organization will champion the application of an equity lens

in the design and delivery of all policies and services. Addressing systemic racism and disproportionality is not only a moral imperative but also crucial for achieving a truly fair and effective youth justice system that promotes equitable outcomes for all young people.

KPI 1

Partner with at least two Indigenous or racialized community organizations on joint advocacy initiatives by 2028.

KPI 2

Track and report on progress in reducing disproportionality among Northstar's client demographics, where data permits, by 2028.

Engage in strategic litigation and law reform advocacy (where appropriate).

6

Where strategic and impactful, Northstar will collaborate with legal experts and organizations to influence law and policy reform. This may involve engaging in strategic litigation or actively monitoring proposed legislative changes that affect children's rights.

Legal advocacy has the potential to bring about significant systemic change, protecting the rights of youth and ensuring that the justice system operates in a fair and equitable manner for all.

KPI 1

Identify and engage with legal partners on at least one law reform initiative by 2029.

KPI 2

Contribute to public legal education resources related to youth rights annually.

7 Promote restorative justice principles and practices.

Northstar will advocate for the broader adoption and implementation of restorative justice approaches. These approaches emphasize meeting the diverse needs of victims, offenders, and communities in the aftermath of harm, with a central focus on healing and accountability within a

supportive context. Restorative justice offers a compelling alternative to purely punitive measures, aligning closely with the Youth Criminal Justice Act's rehabilitative intent and fostering community-based solutions that promote reintegration and positive change.

KPI 1

Develop and disseminate advocacy materials promoting restorative justice practices in Durham Region by 2028.

KPI 2

Increase referrals to restorative justice programs by 15% through Northstar's advocacy efforts by 2030.

8 Influence public understanding of youth development and justice.

Northstar will work to shift public narratives from a punitive focus towards a more nuanced understanding of youth crime and development. This involves emphasizing an asset-based approach that recognizes the inherent strengths of young people, highlighting the critical importance of caring

adults in their lives, and showcasing the effective implementation of holistic programs. Changing public perception is crucial for building broader community support, reducing stigma associated with youth justice involvement, and fostering a more rehabilitative and supportive approach to youth justice across society.

KPI 1

Publish at least three thought leadership articles or opinion pieces annually in local or provincial media by 2028.

KPI 2

Host two community engagement events per year focused on youth development and justice.

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PILLAR 5: Commitment to Collaboration

Strategic Intent: To forge and strengthen strategic partnerships across sectors to create a seamless, integrated network of support for youth and families in Durham Region.

Strengthen existing partnerships and identify new collaborative opportunities.

1

Northstar will actively engage with its current partners, including MCCSS, stakeholders of the Durham Region CSWB Committee, local school boards and other youth justice organizations, to deepen existing relationships. Simultaneously, the organization will proactively seek out new collaborations with a diverse range of community organizations, local police services, broader educational institutions, and healthcare providers.

Formalizing these agreements through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or other frameworks will be pursued where beneficial. Integrated service delivery and cross-sectoral collaboration are explicitly recognized as best practices for effectively addressing complex social issues and improving youth outcomes. This approach ensures a more comprehensive and coordinated support system for youth and families.

KPI 1

Conduct an annual partner satisfaction survey with key collaborators.

KPI 2

Increase the number of formal Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or partnership agreements by 20% by 2029.

Develop integrated service delivery models for complex cases.

2

Northstar will implement advanced models, such as Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) or Integrated Youth Services (IYS). These models are designed to bring together multiple service providers to offer coordinated, holistic support for youth facing complex and intersecting needs, including concurrent mental health issues, substance use challenges,

and justice involvement. A core component of these models is shared case planning and seamless communication across all involved agencies. Service integration is crucial for addressing critical gaps in care, ensuring that youth receive timely and comprehensive support across various domains, which ultimately leads to significantly better outcomes.

KPI 1

Pilot an integrated case management model with at least two key partners by 2027.

KPI 2

Reduce the average time for youth with complex needs to access multi-agency support by 25% by 2029.

3 Participate in regional and community networks.

Northstar will maintain active engagement with both regional and provincial communities of practice and networks to strengthen collaboration and advocacy. This includes consistent participation in the Durham Region Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan Committee, the Situation Table, and other regional working groups focused on priority risk factors such as mental health, criminal involvement, and social isolation. At the provincial and national level, Northstar will contribute to forums such as the

National Youth Justice Network and other community safety tables to share knowledge, address common challenges, and identify opportunities for collective action. Through these efforts, Northstar will leverage its specialized expertise to inform strategic development, align services with regional priorities, and secure collaborative funding opportunities. Networking also ensures continuous learning from best practices and positions Northstar as a leader in youth justice advocacy.

KPI 1

Northstar representation on at least five Regional Communities of Practice groups annually.

KPI 2

Northstar staff participate in at least three relevant community network meetings quarterly.

KPI 3

Northstar staff to chair a provincial table or committee by 2028.

KPI 4

Host or co-host one community forum on youth justice issues annually.

4 Establish formal referral pathways and shared protocols with key partners.

To ensure seamless transitions for youth and optimize service delivery, Northstar will develop clear, documented referral processes and communication protocols with essential partners. This includes formalizing relationships with Probation Services (for ISSP and CST referrals), local school boards (for CTEP), and mental health

agencies (for EYOW and VPP). Addressing potential barriers, such as privacy concerns related to information sharing, will be a priority to facilitate effective collaboration. Formalized pathways reduce service gaps, improve the efficiency of the broader youth justice ecosystem, and ensure that youth receive timely and appropriate support.

KPI 1

Develop and implement formal referral agreements with three new key partners by 2028.

KPI 2

Reduce referral processing time by 15% through optimized protocols by 2029.

Co-develop and co-deliver programs with community organizations.

5

Northstar will actively partner with other non-profit organizations to create and deliver joint programs. This collaborative approach leverages complementary expertise and resources, particularly for addressing specific needs such

as gang prevention, social isolation, or culturally specific supports. Co-delivery enhances reach, prevents duplication of services, and fosters a more holistic approach to youth development and crime prevention within the community.

KPI 1

Launch at least one co-delivered program with a community partner annually.

KPI 2

Increase the number of youth served through co-delivered programs by 10% year-over-year.

Engage families and caregivers as integral partners in youth support.

6

Northstar will actively involve parents and caregivers in all stages of program planning, decision-making, and support processes. This recognizes their indispensable role in a youth's overall well-being and successful rehabilitation. Providing families with appropriate skills and resources to

monitor and supervise youth is also a key component of this engagement. Family involvement is consistently identified as a critical element of effective youth programs, leading to demonstrably better outcomes and sustained positive change for young individuals.

KPI 1

Implement a formal family engagement strategy by 2027.

KPI 2

Achieve a 70% participation rate of family members in youth care planning meetings.

7 Foster interdisciplinary collaboration within Northstar and with external professionals.

Northstar will actively promote strong working relationships among its own multi-disciplinary staff, encompassing mental health, legal, and education specialists. This internal collaboration will be extended to external professionals, including healthcare providers, educators, and legal

professionals, to ensure the provision of comprehensive, wrap-around care for youth. Interdisciplinary collaboration leads to more comprehensive and coordinated care, which is essential for effectively addressing the multifaceted needs of youth in conflict with the law.

KPI 1

Conduct quarterly interdisciplinary case conferences for complex youth cases.

KPI 2

Develop a shared resource directory of external professional contacts by 2028.

8 Leverage technology to enhance collaborative efforts.

Northstar will strategically utilize technology to facilitate seamless information exchange and coordinated service delivery with its partners. This includes implementing shared digital platforms, secure communication tools, and integrated data systems.

Technology can effectively overcome geographical barriers, improve operational efficiency, and significantly enhance the quality of collaborative care, particularly for diverse stakeholders involved in youth justice.

KPI 1

Implement a secure, shared digital platform for partner communication and referral tracking by 2029.

KPI 2

Increase the number of partners actively using collaborative digital tools by 20% annually.

IV. Conclusion:

A Path Forward for Northstar

The 2026–2030 strategic plan represents a pivotal moment for Northstar, charting a course for enhanced impact and sustained growth within the Durham Region’s youth justice landscape. By grounding its future in the five strategic pillars of Service Excellence, Staff Development, Operational Improvements, Amplified Advocacy, and Commitment to Collaboration, Northstar is poised to significantly deepen its mission of guiding, supporting, and empowering youth and families.

The plan acknowledges Northstar’s inherent alignment with the rehabilitative intent of the Youth Criminal Justice Act and its direct operational fulfillment of MCCSS youth justice mandates. This foundational congruence, coupled with the organization’s critical role in addressing the priority risk factors identified in the plans, reports and studies outlined here, underscore Northstar’s indispensable position in the community. The strategic emphasis on establishing robust, quantifiable impact metrics will transform Northstar’s ability to demonstrate its value, secure vital funding, and continuously refine its programs based on evidence.

Each pillar’s actionable items are interconnected, recognizing that improvements in one area amplify success in others. For instance, investing in staff development directly enhances service excellence, while operational improvements free up resources to amplify advocacy and strengthen collaborative efforts. Ultimately, this comprehensive strategy aims to foster a more equitable, responsive, and effective youth justice system in Durham Region. By diligently pursuing these measurable objectives, Northstar will not only improve individual youth outcomes, reducing recidivism, improving mental health, and fostering educational and employment success, but also contribute significantly to the overall safety and well-being of the broader community, building brighter futures for all.



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