



**YOUNG PEOPLE  
STRATEGY**

**2021-2024**

EDMONTON  
**POLICE**  
SERVICE





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*A Message From*  
**Dale R. McFee**  
*Chief of Police*

Although young people aged 10-24 are only 20 per cent of Edmonton's population, they are 100 per cent of our future, and at much greater risk of being involved with or becoming victims of crime.

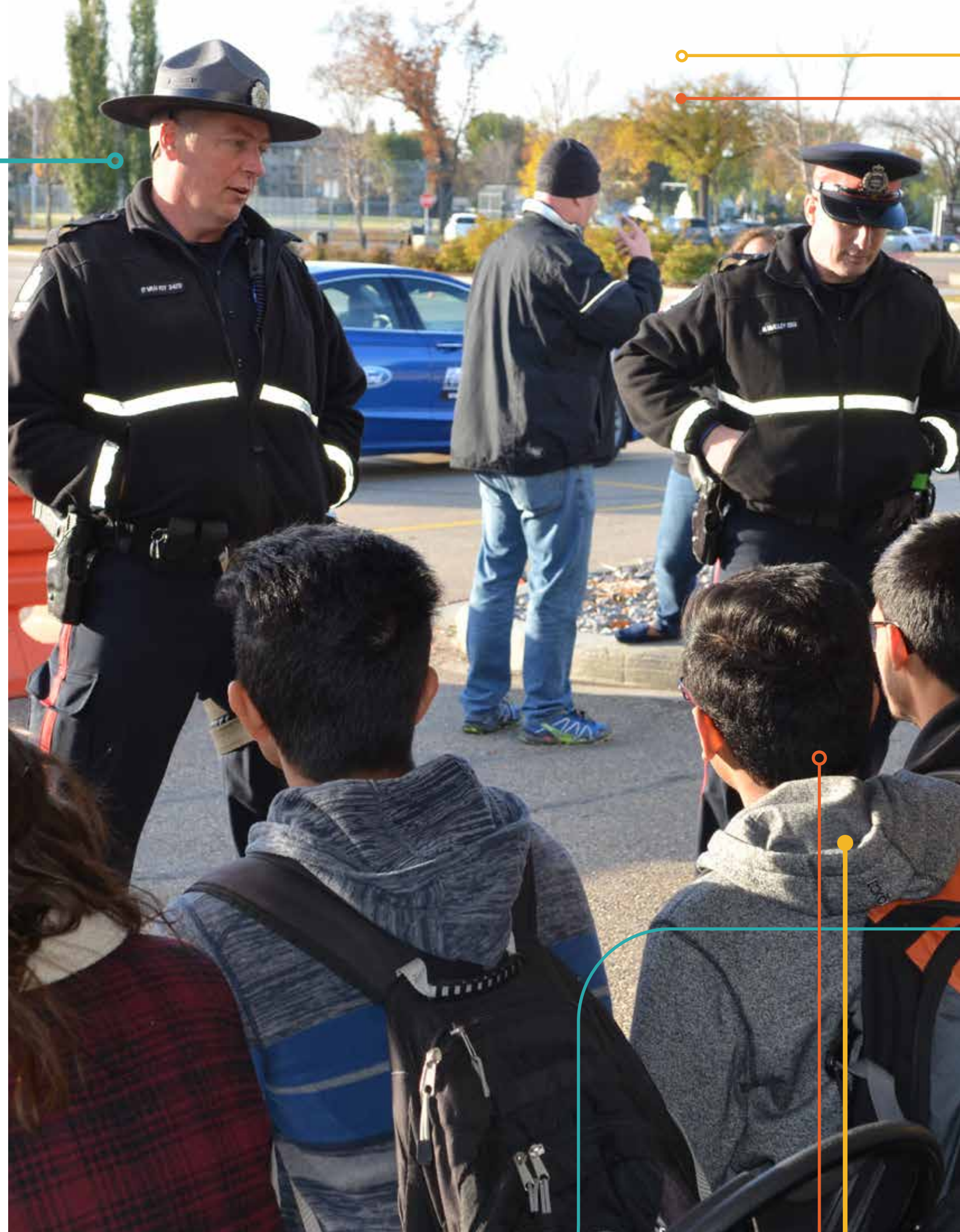
The Edmonton Police Service's Young People Strategy 2021-2024 reflects the responsibility police have in reducing the dangers crime and violence pose to some of our youngest and most vulnerable demographics. Although they come from diverse backgrounds, they all face the complexities of navigating a developmentally informative path from childhood to adulthood.

There are countless factors that can influence a young person's involvement in crime, and no two individuals will share the same set of circumstances. At any stage in their journey, interactions with the police can significantly impact their perceptions of crime and safety, and greatly affect their future involvement with the criminal justice system. Police and community services play a crucial role in redirecting, establishing support and helping to build better outcomes for young people, their families and the community.

The EPS has many specialized units focused specifically on youth, but the reality is that all frontline officers will interact with young people at some point. This strategy is the cornerstone of an organization-wide approach, providing officers with the knowledge and resources needed to build positive relationships. The result is a consistent approach driven by data, measured with coordinated outcomes and backed by research and the knowledge of our community partners.

Developing EPS' Young People Strategy was no small task, and I would like to commend the work of the multidisciplinary team of internal and external experts that made it possible. It is an invaluable tool that leverages our community partnerships to put prevention, intervention and diversion at the forefront, setting a framework to hold young people accountable while engaging their families and community supports to avoid unnecessary involvement with the criminal justice system.

As always, we will hold ourselves accountable to the goals we set within this strategy. This document is more than words: it is the future of empowering and building resiliency for the long-term safety and well-being of Edmonton's young people.





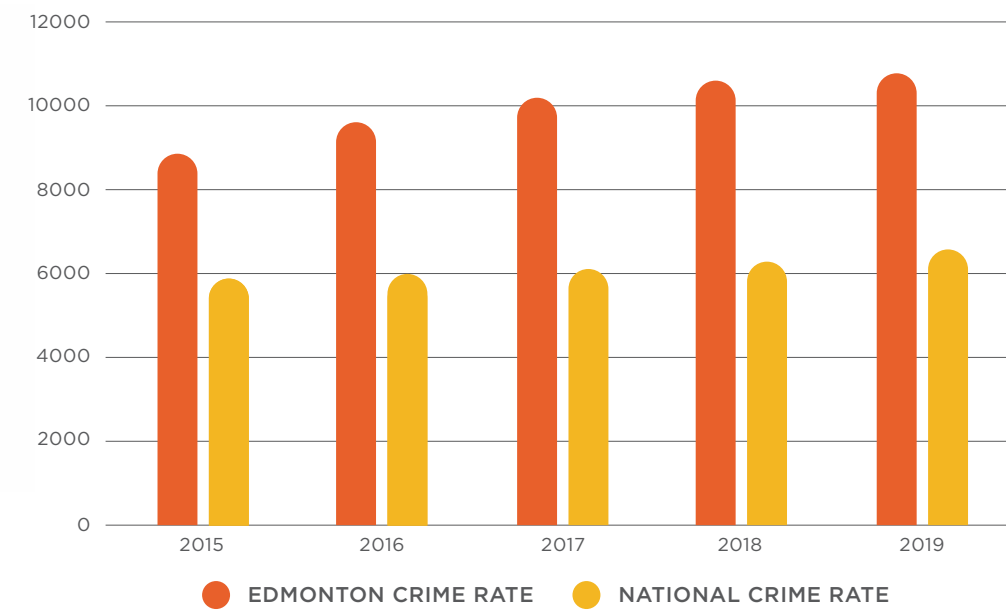
“Kids are not adults. By holding them accountable in developmentally appropriate ways we can reduce the harm and risk they pose to themselves and others.”

*International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2014*

Edmonton’s crime rates are decreasing at a slower rate than the national average, while also remaining higher than the national average. The highest crime and victimization rates are among young people. The Edmonton Police Service’s 2020-2022 Strategic Plan calls for a **balance between enforcement and support**. This balance is especially critical for young people. Under- or over-intervening in the early years can impact an individual’s likelihood of future contact with the criminal justice system, further widening any socioeconomic disparities and inequities in long-term outcomes. Much of the behaviour and thinking of young people can be attributed to their developmental stage. Science tells us that the brain does not fully mature until the age of 24. This strategy was developed based on the current best practices and builds on our strong foundation of youth-focused programming to invest more wisely in all **young people from 10 to 24 years of age** who come into contact with the criminal justice system.



NUMBER OF CRIME INCIDENTS PER 100,000 PEOPLE



Interactions with young people present a unique set of challenges and opportunities for law enforcement. We recognize that a more **holistic, integrated, and flexible approach** is needed in order to ensure the safety and well-being of young people and the community. By providing the right response at the right time and specific to a young person’s needs, we can help **build resilience and support positive life trajectories**.

The safety and well-being of young people is a collective effort. This strategy developed by a multi-disciplinary team from across the service. The team worked collaboratively to identify and analyze issues, opportunities, and outcomes for police and young people. The team leveraged their collective expertise and experience, and they tested their observations and assumptions using data from the service and national benchmarks. They consulted with many government and community agencies and young people, whose feedback and suggestions are infused throughout this document.

**This groundwork guided the EPS in selecting the following priority areas for its interactions with young people in 2021-2024:**

1. **Early Identification and Intervention**
2. **A Consistent and Coordinated Approach**
3. **A Spectrum of Responses**
4. **Continuous Learning and Improvement**

## PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

In March 2020, a multidisciplinary team of ten members with expertise in policing young people was drawn from across the organization to lead the development of a young people strategy for the service. It included representation from Youth Services, Missing Persons, Child Protection, Gang Suppression, and Strategic Design. The team met six times over a period of several months.

At the beginning of the process, members leveraged their collective expertise and experience to identify current challenges and trends in the involvement of young people in crime and victimization in Edmonton. To test their observations and assumptions, the team looked at evidence from the peer-reviewed literature, Legislations and Regulations, international police service strategies, reports from community engagement with young people and the community, and program evaluations. In total, **over 200 documents were reviewed** and used to inform the strategy.

In addition, the team collaborated with business intelligence to analyze EPS data to better understand the organizational context. The results were compared to national benchmarks using data from Statistics Canada. All this information was used by the team to confirm and prioritize key issues and opportunities and to draft the strategy components.

The draft strategy content was tested with a broad range of stakeholders. From the beginning, in the spirit of “nothing about us without us”, the team considered how the strategy could be developed in partnership with young people and include their voice wherever possible and appropriate. Due to the pandemic, our capacity to engage young people was quickly limited.

The team brainstormed creative ways to involve the voice of young people in the strategy. A call for young people’s artwork that reflects everyday experiences with police was distributed with the support of our partners. We also engaged with several young people with lived experience of EPS programming to get their input into the draft strategy.

In addition, we **consulted with a total of 25 individuals from 15 partner organizations**. The EPS Youth Services Section has developed and fostered many strong partnerships with government and community agencies, and a Modern Policing Analysis lens was used to identify and reach out to organizations that serve young people for a diversity of input.

The partners contributed a broad range of perspectives around the needs of and supports for Indigenous peoples, new immigrants, and faith-based communities, as well as services for young people around employment, recreation, housing, justice, education, mental health and addictions, and child intervention. Partners were asked for their perceptions of the role of police with young people, what the EPS is doing well right now, and areas for improvement. They were also asked for their feedback around the draft strategy components. Within the organization, consultations were conducted with over 15 individuals from diverse areas such as professional development, investigations, legal services, and the Community Solutions Accelerator.

**This strategy reflects the collective input and suggestions from our membership, our partners, young people, and best practices in policing.**

## BACKGROUND

In 2013, the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) recognized the need for an organizational response to youth 12 to 17 years of age. There was increasing public concern around the number of youths committing crimes and being victimized in the City of Edmonton. Analysis of youth crimes showed that the magnitude of harm to and by youth was significant. After extensive research and development, in 2014 a service-wide response was launched in the shape of a continuum of programming spanning engagement, intervention, and enforcement.

Collaborative efforts between civilian and sworn members balanced the need for community safety with the rehabilitative and individual safety needs of youth. The EPS also provided a range of youth education and engagement activities. Recognizing the complex realities that face our highest-risk youth, multiple cross-agency collaborations were also developed.

**In 2019, although individuals aged 10-24 made up 17.9% of the Edmonton population, they contributed to:**



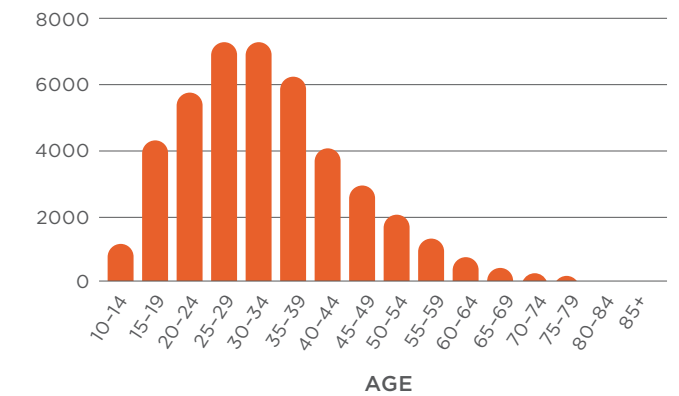
**They made up:**



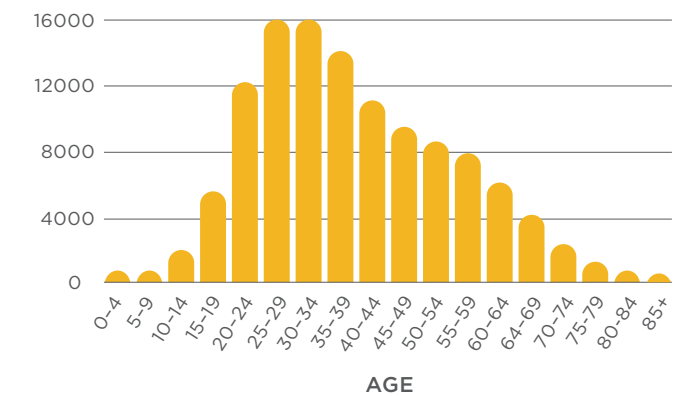
## OUR CURRENT CONTEXT

Young people have some of the highest crime rates in Edmonton, and the highest rates of violent crime. They are also at high risk of being victims of crime. Better understanding adolescent development and the factors that make some young people more likely to be involved in crime and/or be victims of crime can lead to improved interactions between police and young people. If the EPS invests wisely the Service can enhance the short-term safety and accountability of young people and the long-term safety and well-being of all citizens.

**NUMBER OF CRIME INCIDENTS (PER 100,000 PEOPLE)**



**RATE OF VICTIMIZATION (PER 100,000 PEOPLE)**





“Brain Architecture” illustration courtesy of the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative ([albertafamilywellness.org](http://albertafamilywellness.org))

## BRAINS UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Scientific research into how brains develop helps us understand the high rates of involvement of young people in offending and victimization. Adolescence is a distinct period between childhood and adulthood that starts at around **age 10 and continues until age 24**.<sup>1</sup> It is when individuals acquire the skills and capacities necessary to successfully take on adult roles. This time is a period of significant and rapid brain development and biological, psychosocial, and emotional changes.

Brains are built in stages over time.<sup>2</sup> The part of the brain responsible for stimulation and risk-taking matures before the executive functions needed for planning and decision making. It’s as if the brain’s accelerator is pushed to the floor before there is a good braking system in place.<sup>3</sup> The result is that the adolescent brain processes, perceives, and responds differently than adult brains. Adolescents are:

### More prone to risk taking

Adolescents are inherently more likely than adults to take chances.<sup>4,5</sup> They often engage in activities of greater risk and higher stimulation than children or adults in efforts to achieve similar levels of excitement.

### Less focused on the future

Adolescents tend to underestimate the level of risk of activities, and to downplay the threat of punishment. They place more emphasis on the short-term than on long-term consequences.<sup>6</sup>

### More influenced by peers

While they are influenced by both parents and peers, adolescents are more likely to respond to the influences of their peers.<sup>6</sup> They are also more likely to take risks while in the presence of their peers.<sup>7,8</sup>

### Sensitive to perceived injustice

Adolescents are more keenly aware of injustices, and the appearance of unfairness will reinforce this perception. They may be more likely to accept responsibility if they feel that processes are fair and transparent.<sup>9</sup>

The good news is that impulsive behavior declines with age. As an adolescent’s brain matures, they are better able to make rational decisions, and their likelihood of being involved in crime and/or becoming victims of crime decreases.\*

\*Visit [www.albertafamilywellness.org](http://www.albertafamilywellness.org) for more information and resources on how brains are built.

## WHAT ELSE AFFECTS BEHAVIOUR?

Distinguishing what might be “normal” behaviour for a young person with a developing brain can be complicated by other issues. Risky behaviour, feelings of invincibility, moodiness, aggression, withdrawal, poor impulse control, and defiance, for example, all fall within the normal range of adolescent behaviour—but can also be symptoms of:

### Toxic Stress

Although not all stress is bad, when exposure to strong, frequent, or prolonged stress occurs without the support of a caring adult, it is called toxic stress.<sup>10</sup> Toxic stress causes physical changes to the body’s stress systems that can impact how a young person responds to perceived or actual threats.<sup>11</sup> They may have difficulties distinguishing dangerous situations from safe ones.

### Trauma and ACEs

Traumatic events that occur in childhood and can cause emotional, psychological, and/or physical consequences are called Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).<sup>12</sup> Research has shown that the more ACEs a young person has, the more likely they are to have poorer health outcomes,<sup>13</sup> be involved in crime,<sup>14,15</sup> and have repeat involvement with the criminal justice system.<sup>16,17</sup>

### Mental Health and Addictions

Young people aged 15 to 24 are more likely to experience mental illness and/or substance use disorders than any other age group.<sup>18</sup> 70% of all mental health disorders surface for the first time in childhood or adolescence, but only 1 out of 5 young people who need mental health services receives them.<sup>19</sup>

Mental illness is also increasingly threatening the lives of young people. Suicide is among the leading causes of death in 15- to 24-year-old Canadians, second only to accidents.<sup>20</sup>

### Alcohol and Drugs

Adolescence is often when drinking, smoking, and experimentation with recreational drugs begins. Alcohol can change the part of the brain responsible for impulse control and decision-making skills.<sup>21</sup>

### Developmental Disabilities

Developmental disabilities can have physical, mental, learning, and/or behavioural implications. Individuals with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) are overrepresented in the criminal justice system.<sup>22</sup> FASD are effects due to prenatal exposure to alcohol and are often not diagnosed until adolescence or adulthood, if at all. FASD can impact an individual’s memory, impulsivity, and recognition of social cues.<sup>22</sup>

*Certain behaviours can be misinterpreted as intentional misconduct or disobedience, but is it that a young person won't do what is asked of them...or can't?*





## RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

*Public health approaches* to policing offer a lens for understanding how a young person's well-being and behaviour are heavily influenced by social and economic factors, including race, gender, income, education, housing, and employment.<sup>23</sup>

*Risk factors* suggest why certain people or groups are more or less likely to become involved in crime or be victims of crime.<sup>24</sup> Risk factors can be individual characteristics or related to a young person's environment, including their family, peers, school, and community. Factors can be **static** (not amenable to change, such as past experiences of trauma) or **dynamic** (able to change, such as the quality of relationships).

Risk factors can **accumulate and interact** with each other. For example, intergenerational trauma may lead to parental alcohol abuse, which in turn may generate family conflict, and in turn influence a young person's own substance use. An **intersectionality lens** can help identify certain groups that may be placed at higher risk than others. For example, because of many historical and current compounding factors, the rate of violent victimization is over two times higher for Indigenous people, and the rate for Indigenous females is twice that for Indigenous males.<sup>25</sup>

*Protective factors* are positive influences that can help reduce the potential negative effects of risk factors. These include:<sup>26</sup>

- Family connectedness and the presence of a caring adult;
- School connectedness and performance;
- Feeling of safety in one's environment; and
- Positive relationships and engagement with law enforcement.

Early intervention and interventions that build on existing strengths and target multiple, dynamic factors help young people and communities better counteract negative experiences and risk factors.<sup>27,28</sup> For complex cases, this is best achieved when human service professionals across the system collaborate in identifying and mitigating risks that lead to harm.<sup>29,30</sup>

## RESILIENCE

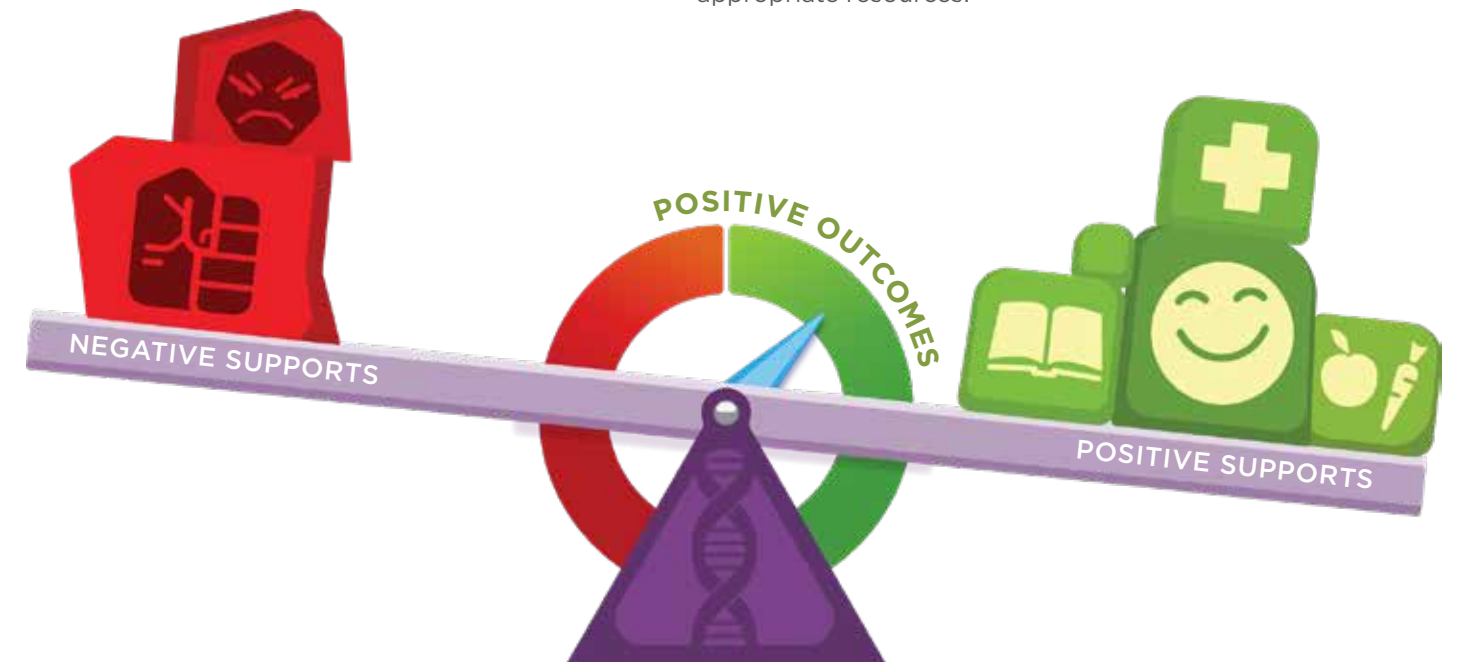
The EPS and its officers have a duty – and an opportunity – to respond to young people in developmentally appropriate ways and to help build the resilience needed for long-term safety and well-being.

Adolescents are specially primed to learn from their circumstances and environments.<sup>31</sup> In comparison to adults, young people demonstrate a greater capacity for growth and are more likely to respond to interventions to bolster their social environments.<sup>32</sup>

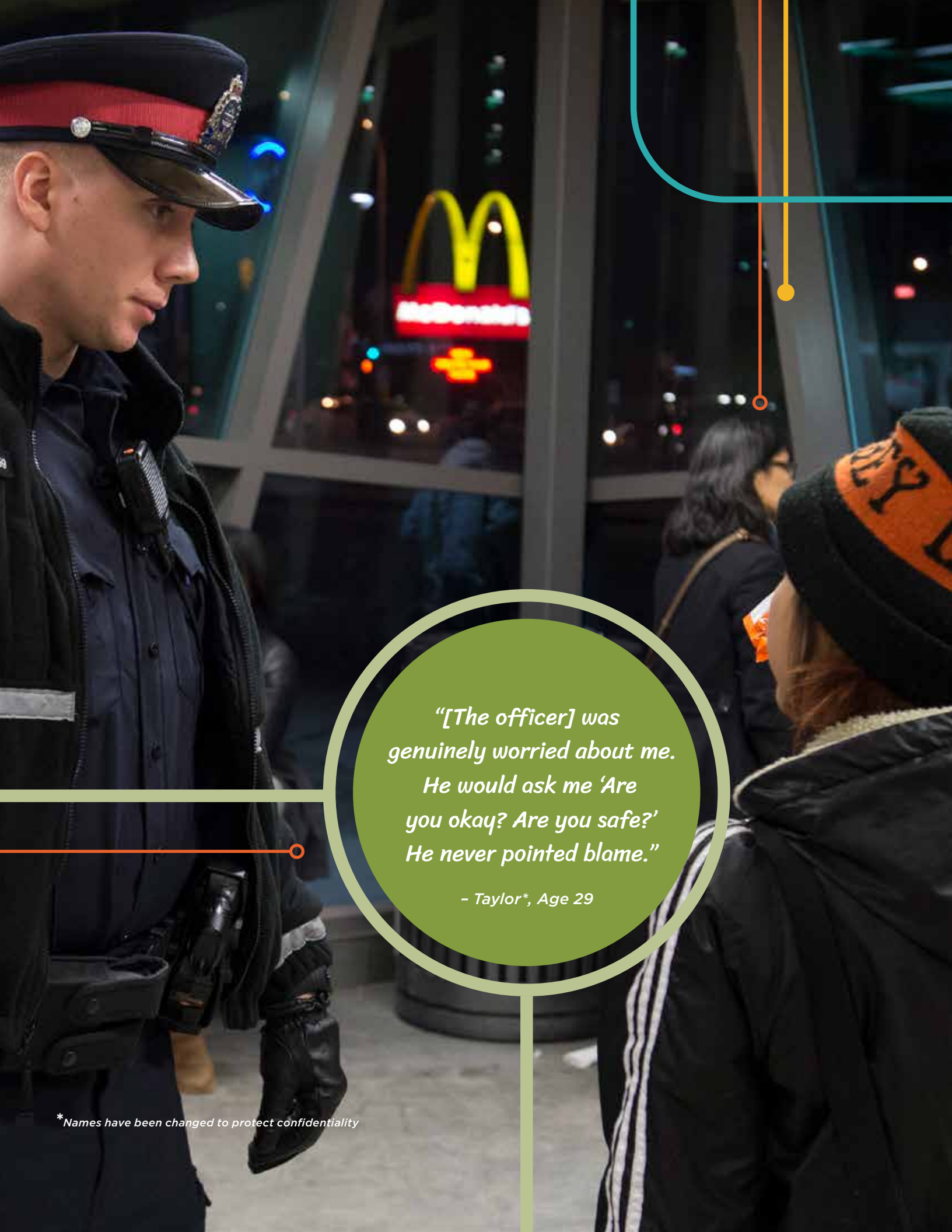
An adolescent's development can be imagined as a scale that has two sides.<sup>33</sup> As an individual develops, positive or negative factors in their experiences, relationships, and skill-building opportunities stack up like weights on a scale, tipping their development and life course trajectory toward positive or negative outcomes.

Protective factors such as positive interactions with adults, supportive relationships, and safe environments and communities tip the scale towards the positive. But when toxic stress and negative experiences outweigh positive supports, the scale can tip toward negative life outcomes like mental health challenges, addiction, and involvement in crime.

Informed by the work of Dr. Michael Ungar and the Resilience Research Centre,<sup>34</sup> we define resilience as the outcome when individuals navigate to and negotiate for the resources they need.<sup>35</sup> Individuals, especially young people, are not solely responsible for building resilience. The EPS sees its role as supporting young people by working collaboratively with them, their families, and our partners to connect them with appropriate resources.







“[The officer] was genuinely worried about me. He would ask me ‘Are you okay? Are you safe?’ He never pointed blame.”

- Taylor\*, Age 29

\*Names have been changed to protect confidentiality

In Edmonton in 2019, 5,283 young people between the ages of 10 and 24 were involved in a total of 9,000 incidents of crime.



**72%** Were involved in only **one** incident.

**28%** Were involved in **more than one** incident.

**AND** Were responsible for **57%** of all incidents

Of the 9,000 incidents:



Note that one incident might involve multiple types of crime.

In 2019, 9,319 young people were victims of crime.



Of the 9,000 incidents:



Note that one incident might involve multiple types of crime.

Victims of crime are at higher risk of future criminal behavior—known as the **victim-offender overlap**.<sup>36,37</sup> While there are sizable numbers of young people who continue to be victimized but desist or decrease their offending behaviors, very few adolescents continue to offend in the absence of continued victimization. In 2019, 20% of young people who offended were also victims. This proportion increased with every additional offense, doubling to 40% of the 50 young people who offended the most.

## CRIME AND VULNERABILITY

Although they are included in the criminal code, the following violations are categorized as *social disorder* rather than criminal in nature:

- Mental health
- Nuisance behaviour such as public mischief
- Suspicious behaviour such as trespassing
- Substance use
- Missing or eloped persons and welfare checks

In Edmonton in 2019, 8,698 young people were involved in a total of 12,101 incidents of social disorder. Of these individuals, 20% were involved in multiple incidents and were responsible for 40% of all incidents. Of the 8,698 individuals, 22% were also involved in a criminal incident.

How police respond to young people involved in these behaviours is important, because conditions such as mental illness or addictions should not be punished or criminalized. Furthermore, early identification and treatment of issues dramatically improves the chance for a young person's recovery and long-term well being. **As first responders to many of these complex situations, the EPS is well positioned to support young people in navigating to and negotiating for the most appropriate supports.**

## YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE LAW

In response to learnings about adolescent brain development, the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA)<sup>38</sup> was introduced in Canada in 2003 to ensure that the consequences for young people **at least 12 but under 18 years old** who break the law are balanced. **It emphasizes rehabilitation and the opportunity for youth to mature, learn from mistakes, accept consequences, and make amends.** The amendments adopted by Parliament in 2012 and 2018 aimed to further strengthen the ways in which the youth justice system deals with repeat and violent offenders.

### The YCJA mandates that police must emphasize:

*Enhanced procedural protection* to ensure that young people are treated fairly and that their rights, including their right to privacy, are protected.

*Timely intervention* that reinforces the link between the offending behaviour and its consequences.

### Victims should be:

*Treated with courtesy, compassion and respect* for their dignity and privacy and should suffer the minimum degree of inconvenience as a result of their involvement with the youth criminal justice system.

Provided with information about the proceedings and given an *opportunity to participate and be heard.*

Parents should be informed of measures or proceedings involving their children and encouraged to support them in addressing any concerns.

At age 18, young people begin falling under the Criminal Code of Canada. How and when young people transition to the adult criminal justice system depends on their circumstances and the procedures of the different agencies involved.

### Young people are protected by several other statutes, regulations, and bylaws including:

*Alberta Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* provides authority to intervene in cases of child maltreatment

*Children First Act* allows for greater information sharing when children are at risk

*Family Law Act* applies to young people who are involved in and impacted by custody cases

*Education Act* governs the quality of and access to education for young people

*Missing Persons Act* provides direction for investigating and working with missing young people

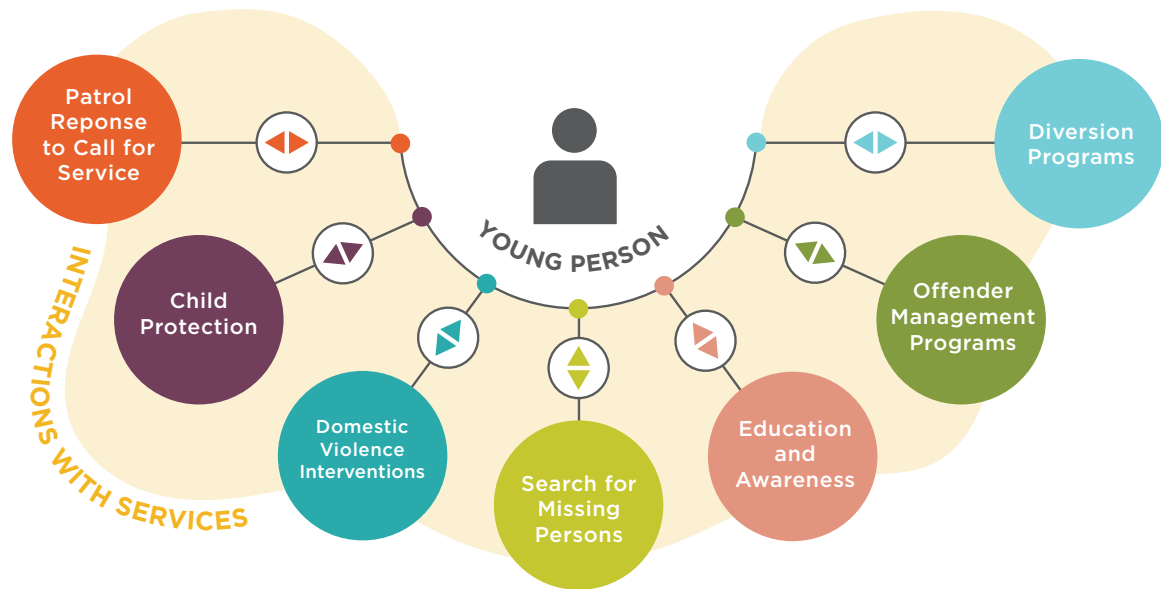
*Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act* authorizes the police to assist guardians with protecting young people in their care

*Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* sets out rights that include the interaction between the justice system and individuals to ensure fair treatment at every stage of the justice process





Police are often the first contact that young people have with the criminal justice system because police are typically the first ones on the scene when there's a safety issue or suspected crime.



Interactions between young people and police can take many forms.<sup>39</sup> Contact can be initiated by young people, police, or the community and may occur in formal police-led programs or through day-to-day interactions in community and young people settings. Young people may be a witness, complainant, victim, or suspect. They may play any of these roles in a given incident, or in different incidents over time. The EPS has many officers and programs that support the accountability, safety, and well-being of young people.

**The EPS's mission is to be relentless on crime and a leading partner in building community safety. With respect to young people, this means balancing enforcement and support in developmentally appropriate ways to:**

**Hold young people accountable** through measures that are proportionate to the seriousness of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the young person. Before taking any formal measures against a young person alleged to have committed an offence, officers must use their discretion to consider whether it would be sufficient to take no further action, warn the young person, or administer a caution.

**Refer and navigate young people to programs or agencies** in the community to address the circumstances and root causes underlying their risky or problematic behaviours.

**Treat young people fairly** and ensure that their rights, including their right to privacy, are protected.

Mechanisms for holding young people accountable should not be the same as those for adults. Formal measures and court involvement can have long-term detrimental effects on a young person.

*Developmentally informed policing*<sup>40</sup> promotes accountability by providing a setting and opportunity for young people to accept responsibility for their actions, make amends to individual victims and the community for any harm caused, and participate in community service or other types of programs. It aims to **divert young people as much as possible and as appropriate out of or away from the criminal justice system.**

Balancing enforcement and support for young people means preventing the escalation of criminal behaviours and/or victimization while not damaging the life chances of young people with overly punitive and stigmatizing sanctions.

The safety and well-being of individuals and the community is a shared responsibility. The EPS is only one part of a complex system supporting young people and community safety and well-being. The service works closely and collaboratively with:

**Young People**

Wherever possible, young people should be engaged as partners in the decisions and systems that impact their lives.

**Families**

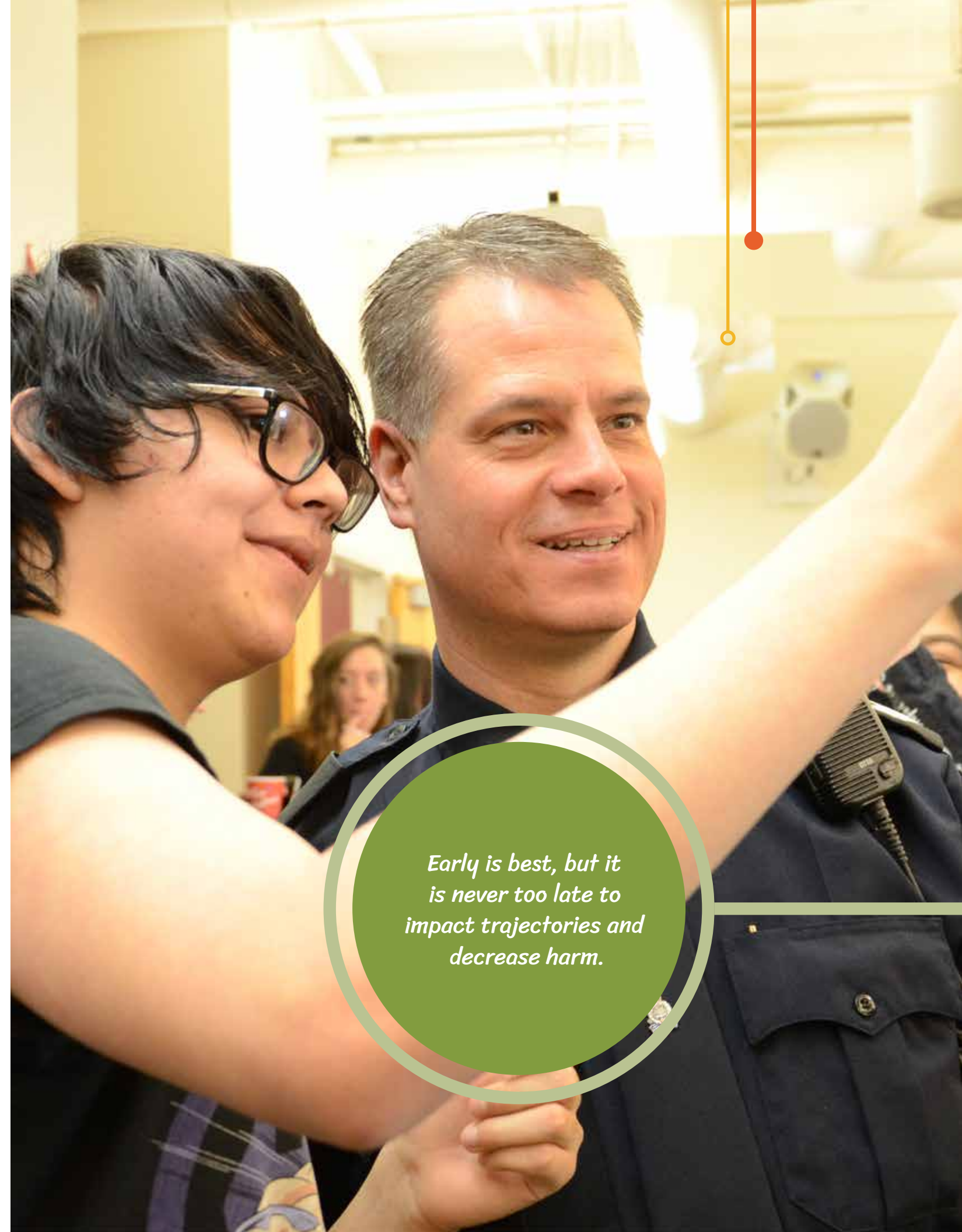
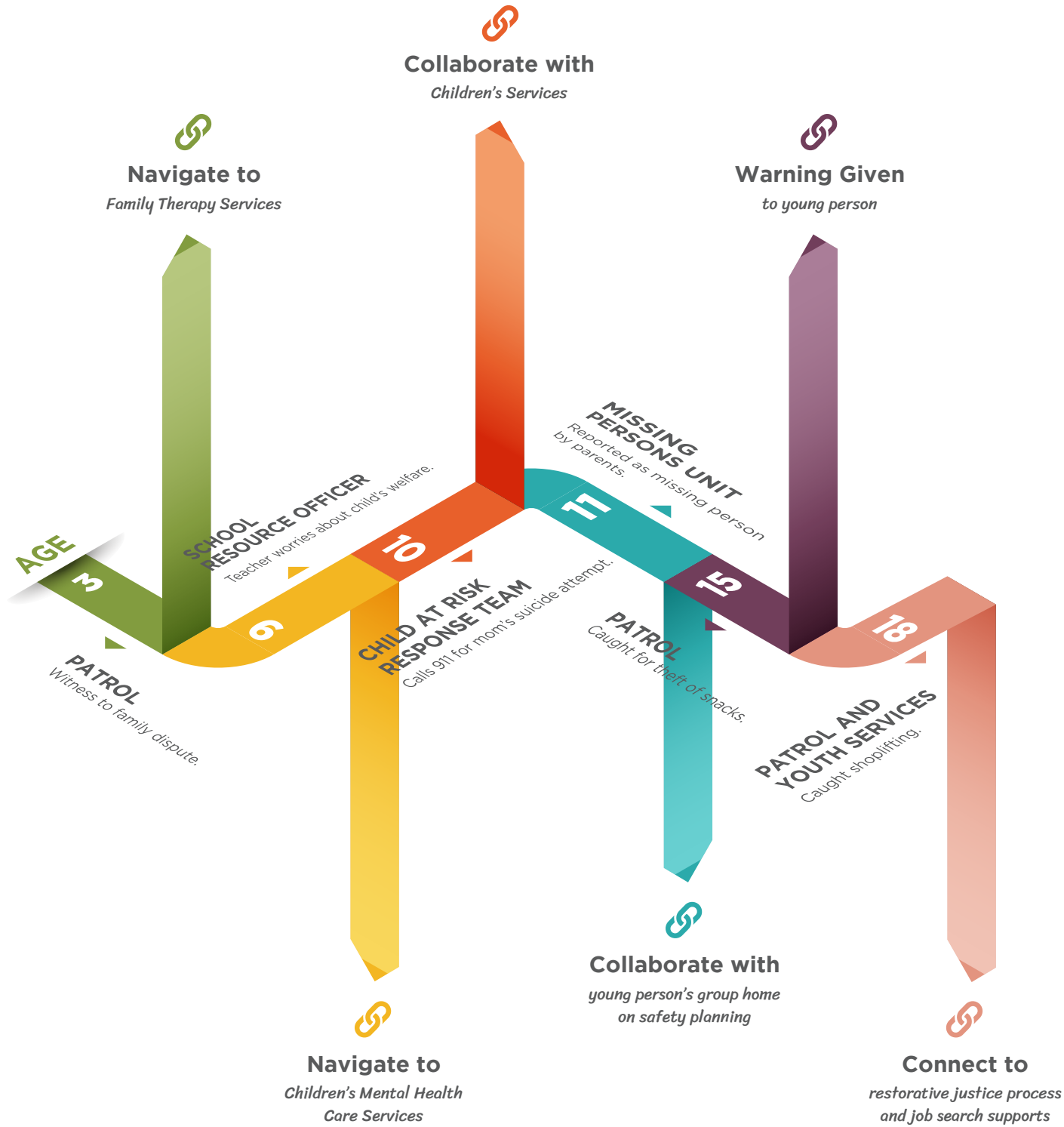
The EPS defines families broadly, including but not limited to immediate and extended family members, trusted adults, and other natural supports. Family members such as caregivers or siblings may also benefit from connection to supports and services.

**Partner Agencies**

The EPS works in collaboration across the criminal justice system, including Prosecution Services, Defense Bar, Courts, Legal Aid, Correctional Services, and Restorative Justice Services. The EPS also works closely with healthcare, education, children's services, and community organizations.



At any stage in their life, a young person might come into contact with police. Each interaction is an opportunity to help individuals and families navigate to and negotiate for supports. Early is best, but it is never too late to impact trajectories and decrease harm to or by young people.



Early is best, but it is never too late to impact trajectories and decrease harm.



# STRATEGY-AT-A-GLANCE



## SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

All young people between the ages of 10 and 24 who interact with the criminal justice system

## OUTCOMES

### Long-term Outcome

Reduced frequency and severity of offending and victimization by and of young people.

### Immediate Outcome

Right response at the right time for the right young person.

## KEY INDICATORS

- Crime rate for young people
- Crime severity index for young people
- Repeat offending
- Repeat victimization
- Reoffending into adulthood

## PRINCIPLES

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and Transparency
- Empowerment, Voice and Choice
- Culture, Gender, and History

## STRATEGIC PILLARS

- Data and Evidence
- Partnerships

## FOCUS AREAS



### 1 EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION

#### Outcomes:

- EPS and partners collaborating on identification of, and intervention planning for young people at risk
- Young people being diverted out of or away from the criminal justice system as appropriate, and much as possible
- Young people and families at risk being connected to resources and agencies



### 2 CONSISTENT SERVICE AND COORDINATED APPROACH

#### Outcomes:

- A consistent approach being used in all interactions with young people
- Young people still involved with the justice system at age 18 are supported in navigating into the adult system
- The EPS and its partners having shared accountability for the safety of young people



### 3 SPECTRUM OF RESPONSES

#### Outcomes:

- Members having skills and confidence in responding to and working with young people
- Members having knowledge of resources and programs for young people and families
- Harm to and by young people being reduced



### 4 CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

#### Outcomes:

- Understanding of risk factors impacting the safety of young people and use of them to identify individuals
- Young people being partners in the design and development of programming
- Programming for young people adapting to evidence and changing community needs

### Scope of the Strategy

This strategy applies to all young people between the ages of 10 and 24<sup>41</sup> who interact with the criminal justice system. Officers will use their discretion and be guided by the Acts and Legislations. When needed, they will be supported with consultation and mentorship. For complex cases, they can access specialized services across the EPS. Services can be tailored to the needs of specific age ranges (e.g., youth 12 to 17 years old), risk areas and level, and/or the primary concern (e.g., domestic violence or chronic offending).

### The Right Response at the Right Time

Every young person is unique, and every situation is unique. The right response is individualized, proportionate to the level of risk and complexity of the situation, and informed by evidence of what works. Wherever possible, it considers the preferences of the young person and their family and other supports. It balances short-term safety and accountability with long-term safety and well-being.

### Outcomes

#### Long-term Outcome

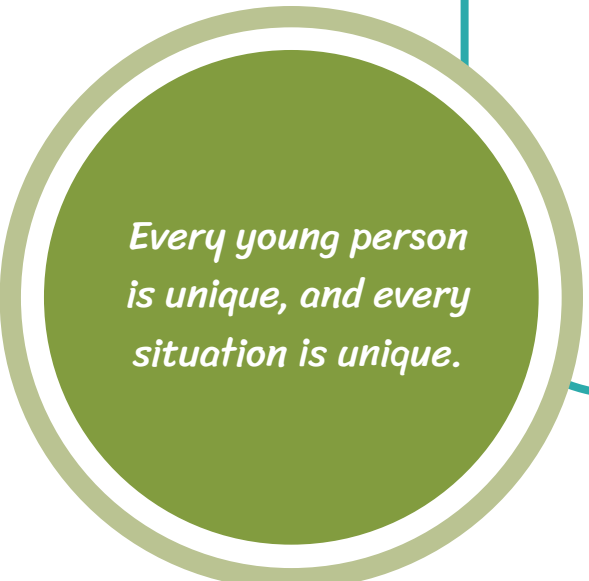
Reduced frequency and severity of offending and victimization by and of young people.

#### Immediate Outcome

Right response at the right time for the right young person.

### Key Indicators

- Crime rate for young people
- Crime severity index for young people
- Repeat offending
- Repeat victimization
- Reoffending into adulthood



## PRINCIPLES

Principles inform and guide decisions and choices. These principles apply to all contexts and interactions between EPS members and young people. They are founded on the principles of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, trauma-informed care,<sup>42</sup> and procedural justice.<sup>43</sup>

### Safety

- Ensuring physical and psychological safety for young people, families, natural supports, and officers
- Focusing on reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors
- Ensuring safe and appropriate use of information about young people

### Trustworthiness and Transparency

- Building trusting, supportive relationships with young people while setting clear boundaries
- Consistent and neutral decision-making and rules
- Ensuring young people and families are treated fairly and that their rights are protected
- Clearly explaining next steps, options, and consequences

### Empowerment, Voice, and Choice

- Listening to what young people have to say and seeking first to understand
- Giving young people and families a choice whenever possible
- Providing the opportunity for young people to express opinions about a situation prior to formal police decision-making
- Facilitating opportunities for young people and families to provide input
- Building on the strengths of young people, families, and natural supports

### Culture, Gender, and History

- Understanding and being respectful of different cultures and worldviews
- Considering culturally appropriate supports and programming
- Recognizing the importance of history (e.g., traumatic histories, cultural histories)



## STRATEGIC PILLARS

Strategic pillars are the foundations needed to effectively and efficiently achieve the activities identified in the focus areas.

### Data and Evidence

We collect and analyze a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data in order to identify and understand issues and impact – both intended and unintended. We value the experience and expertise of young people, families and natural supports, officers, partners, and community. We are informed by published research and emerging practices. We protect the safety of data and monitor systems for potential biases.

### Partnerships

We connect and collaborate with partners across the criminal justice system and with service partners and community to understand and address the complex needs of young people. Effective partnerships involve shared outcomes and accountability, as well as collaborative planning and problem solving.



*Effective partnerships  
involve shared outcomes  
and shared accountability.*

## 1 EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION

Young people who come to serious harm and/or seriously harm others have often interacted with police in previous years. Proactive and early identification of individuals who may be at greatest risk can help keep young people and families from coming to greater harm. Early interventions should consider and target multiple dynamic factors. Early identification and intervention will support young people and families at highest risk in navigating to and negotiating for services and resources to address root causes of crime and victimization.

### This will lead to:

- EPS and partners collaborating on identification of, and intervention planning for young people at risk
- Young people being diverted out of or away from the criminal justice system as appropriate, and much as possible
- Young people and families at risk being connected to resources and agencies

*“A lot of times, someone isn’t ready to talk or to accept help, so having options is important.”*

*– Taylor\*, Age 29*

\*Names have been changed to protect confidentiality

## 2 CONSISTENT SERVICE AND COORDINATED APPROACH

Young people can come into contact with the EPS through a variety of ways. A consistent approach by all officers and areas ensures fair, effective, and equitable treatment for all young people.

To keep young people from falling through the cracks, we need to coordinate across service areas, share information, and collaborate on complex files. The EPS will reduce barriers to services in order to ensure that young people and families do not have to be traumatized by telling their stories multiple times. We will build shared accountability with our partners for navigating young people and families to supports that enhance their safety and well-being. Consistent service and coordinated approach will provide effective and equitable services to young people.

### This will lead to:

- A consistent approach being used in all interactions with young people
- Young people still involved with the justice system at age 18 are supported in navigating into the adult system
- The EPS and its partners having shared accountability for the safety of young people

## 3 SPECTRUM OF RESPONSES

Officers will use their discretion and be guided by the Legislations and Regulations. When needed, they will be supported with consultation and mentorship. For complex cases, they can access specialized services across the EPS. These programs and services are typically tailored to the needs of specific age ranges (e.g., youth 12 to 17 years old), the degree of risk, and/or the primary concern (e.g., domestic violence or chronic offending). A spectrum of responses will ensure members have options for enforcement and support for young people, as well as clear guidelines on when and how to use which response.

### This will lead to:

- Members having skills and confidence in responding to and working with young people
- Members having knowledge of resources and programs for young people and families
- Harm to and by young people being reduced



## 4 CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

Engaging with young people, families, and the systems that support them can be complex and requires a holistic response. Officers may vary in training, experience, and skills when interacting with young people. They may also have different degrees of knowledge of the many and evolving resources and services for young people and families.

We will support and train officers in what practices work, for whom, and in what context, so that they can choose the right response at the right time for each young person along the spectrum of responses.

We will learn from each other. We understand that police are but one service supporting the safety and well-being of young people. We will listen to and learn from young people, families and other supports, partners, and community to understand their evolving needs. We will adapt our practices and programs to ensure continued value and impact. We will share our learnings and advocate for broader systems change using evidence and trends. Continuous learning and improvement will align responses to young people with evidence and evolve to meet the needs of young people, families, and the community.

### This will lead to:

- Understanding of risk factors impacting the safety of young people and use of them to identify individuals
- Young people being partners in the design and development of programming
- Programming for young people adapting to evidence and changing community needs



**1** EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION

EPS STRATEGIC PLAN OUTCOMES	YOUNG PEOPLE STRATEGY OUTCOMES	KEY ACTIVITIES	MEASURES
EPS uses a variety of responses, informed by needs, data and evidence to enhance public safety	EPS and partners collaborate on identification of and intervention planning for young people at risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build and expand collaborations with agencies serving young people in key areas including gang intervention, homelessness, mental health, and justice support</li> <li>Continue participation in Zebra Intake meetings for child sexual abuse</li> <li>Scale the Zebra model to other areas of vulnerability</li> <li>Collaborate across EPS areas to support chronic missing young people</li> <li>Work in collaboration with partners to educate young people around safety, based on identified trends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of young people identified and supported</li> <li>Number of collaborative tables for young people with EPS involvement</li> <li>Distribution of partnerships across the young person age range</li> <li>Programs are evidence-based and evaluated</li> </ul>

EPS STRATEGIC PLAN OUTCOMES	YOUNG PEOPLE STRATEGY OUTCOMES	KEY ACTIVITIES	MEASURES
EPS manages offenders more effectively through collaboration and partnerships to reduce recidivism	Young people are diverted out of the criminal justice system as appropriate and much as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverage community and justice diversion resources</li> <li>Create alternative to custody programming</li> <li>Create pathways to community restorative justice programs</li> <li>Leverage the expertise of EPS programs to support young people (e.g., HELP, PACT, and IOM)</li> <li>Develop collaborative diversion programming through existing partnerships across the full range of developmental stages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in school attendance and graduation rates</li> <li>Proportion of chargeable young people in non-violent crimes who were charged</li> <li>Proportion of incidents with young people where alternate measures were used</li> <li>Number of referrals to community restorative justice programs</li> <li>Number of partnerships that contain restorative justice practices</li> <li>Proportion of incidents with young people who offend where alternate measures are used</li> </ul>
EPS connects offenders, witnesses, and victims to services so that diversion pathways are created	Young people and families at risk are connected to resources and agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand partnerships to ensure coverage across key risk factors for young people</li> <li>Develop, measure, and report on common outcome measures with partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of young people connected to appropriate resources based on identified risks</li> <li>Number of families connected to appropriate resources based on identified risk</li> <li>Self-reported resilience by young people</li> </ul>

**2** CONSISTENT SERVICE AND COORDINATED APPROACH

EPS STRATEGIC PLAN OUTCOMES	YOUNG PEOPLE STRATEGY OUTCOMES	KEY ACTIVITIES	MEASURES
EPS members are given clear expectations and priorities to guide action more effectively	A consistent approach is used in all interactions with young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish service-wide response expectations and protocols for responding to young people</li> <li>Provide training in adolescent-focused policing practices to frontline members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officer-reported level of confidence in responding to young people</li> <li>Trust in police by young people, broken down by identify factors</li> </ul>
EPS connects young offenders, witnesses, and victims to services so that diversion pathways are created	Young people involved with the justice system at age 18 are supported in navigating into the adult system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify transition process between Y50 and the Integrated Offender Management Initiative.</li> <li>Maintain strong justice partnerships within youth-focused areas (e.g., Youth Probation, Youth Crown prosecutors, Edmonton Young Offenders Centre)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of young people successfully transitioned</li> <li>Reduction in recidivism</li> <li>Proportion of incidents where charges were laid against a young person that progressed to court and proportion of those that resulted in conviction</li> </ul>
EPS manages offenders more effectively through collaboration and partnerships to reduce recidivism	EPS and its partners have shared accountability for the safety of young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with partners to identify, measure, and report on shared outcomes for young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of shared outcome measures reported on</li> <li>Reduction in recidivism</li> </ul>



Artwork submitted by a class from Ben Calf Robe School showing their experience of police in community using tangible media.



**3** SPECTRUM OF RESPONSES

EPS STRATEGIC PLAN OUTCOMES	YOUNG PEOPLE STRATEGY OUTCOMES	KEY ACTIVITIES	MEASURES
EPS members are given clear expectations and priorities to guide action more effectively	Members have skills and confidence in responding to and working with young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train new and current members in key issues of adolescent brain development including trauma, ethnocultural awareness, and understanding the LBGTQ2S+ community</li> <li>Participate in joint training within youth-serving agencies partnering with EPS</li> <li>Provide linkages between frontline members and subject matter experts in EPS and the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officer-reported level of confidence in navigating systems</li> <li>Officer-reported level of access to resources when needed</li> <li>Officer-reported knowledge of internal supports</li> </ul>
EPS members are given clear expectations and priorities to guide action more effectively	Members have knowledge of resources and programs for young people and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create easily accessible list of resources for young people and families</li> <li>Incorporate experiential learning placements at partner agencies and specialized EPS areas for recruits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officer-reported level of confidence in navigating systems</li> <li>Officer-reported level of access to resources when needed</li> <li>Improved connections between officers and community partners</li> </ul>

EPS STRATEGIC PLAN OUTCOMES	YOUNG PEOPLE STRATEGY OUTCOMES	KEY ACTIVITIES	MEASURES
EPS is responsive to high-harm crimes	Harm to and by young people is reduced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate services between Youth Offender Management Unit (Y50 Program) and Integrated Offender Management Initiative</li> <li>Create an Integrated Offender Management Initiative that meshes suppression with intervention practices</li> <li>Conceptualize and create an offender management program for medium-risk offenders</li> <li>Youth Services Branch maintains strong collaborative relationships with Youth Probation and Youth Crown Prosecutors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in recidivism</li> <li>Perceived safety by young people</li> <li>Percent of citizens who report feeling very or reasonably safe when walking alone in their neighbourhood</li> </ul>

**4** CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

EPS STRATEGIC PLAN OUTCOMES	YOUNG PEOPLE STRATEGY OUTCOMES	KEY ACTIVITIES	MEASURES
EPS uses evidence and data to determine root causes to prevent crime	Risk factors impacting the safety of young people are understood and used to identify individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to share and combine risk data</li> <li>• Use risk factors, data, and trends to develop early identification protocols</li> <li>• Provide mechanisms whereby young people feel safe disclosing and reporting</li> <li>• Monitor data systems for possible biases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reporting rates of victimization</li> <li>• Number of collaborative risk analyses / reports</li> </ul>
EPS has a range of perspectives which allow it to continuously adapt to a changing environment	Young people are partners in the design and development of programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate the voice and lived experience of young people and families into program design and development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of opportunities provided for young people and family involvement</li> </ul>
EPS has a range of perspectives which allow it to continuously adapt to a changing environment	Programming for young people adapts to evidence and changing community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect data on identity factors of young people to better understand possible inequities in-line with organizational direction</li> <li>• Evaluate effectiveness of programs for young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All programs are evaluated</li> <li>• Program outcomes are more equitable for all young people</li> </ul>







*“We need new strategies that produce bigger impacts and we need a better understanding of why interventions work – or don’t work – for whom and in what contexts.”*

*- Dr. Jack Shonkoff,  
Director, Harvard University*

## GLOSSARY

**Bias:** A subjective opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination, often formed without reasonable justification, that influences an individual's or group's ability to evaluate a particular situation objectively or accurately

**Child:** An individual under 12 years of age.

**Equity:** Fair treatment of people that addresses specific needs, barriers, and accommodations to ensure all have equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of a program or opportunity

**Diversion:** The utilization of community resources or other government services, by an individual independently and/or as directed by the court, to have charges stayed or withdrawn by the Crown.

**Fairness:** Individuals being treated according to the rule of law, without discrimination, while also considering a person's individual characteristics throughout the process.

**Harm:** Physical, psychological, and/or emotional injury, damage or loss, that impacts the health and wellbeing of an individual.

**Navigation:** Providing a continuum of care through referrals to support services.

**Resilience:** The outcome when individuals navigate to and negotiate for the resources they need

**Trauma:** The lasting (and overwhelming) emotional, spiritual, and/or physical response that impacts an individual's ability to cope as a result of living through distressing event(s).

**Violation:** An illegal act for which there is a penalty and it is within the mandate of the Edmonton Police Service to investigate and lay charges.

**Well-being:** The experience of feeling safe, happy and healthy, having a sense of meaning or purpose, and being socially and/or spiritually connected, accepted, and valued.

**Youth:** An individual between the ages of 12 and 17.

**Young adult:** An individual between the ages of 18 and 24.

**Young person:** An individual between the ages of 10 and 24.



## LIST OF PARTNERS CONSULTED

### Indigenous:

- Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society

### New Immigrants and Faith-based:

- Africa Centre
- Edmonton Mennonite Centre

### Employment / Recreation / Housing:

- Working Warriors at Bent Arrow
- YOUCAN Youth Services
- YMCA of Northern Alberta
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- REACH Edmonton Council for Safe Communities
- YESS

### Justice:

- Edmonton Young Offender Centre
- Legal Aid
- Young Offender Community Corrections

### Education:

- Edmonton Islamic Academy

### Mental Health and Addictions:

- Alberta Health Services Children and Youth
- Alberta Health Services Urgent and Intensive Services
- Alberta Health Services Provincial Justice and Mental Health

### Children's Services:

- Government of Alberta Children's Services

## KEY THEMES FROM THE FEEDBACK:

### Current understanding of the role of police with young people:

- Good knowledge and awareness of certain Youth Section programs but generally limited knowledge about other programs and interactions
- Polarized and inconsistent experiences with individual officers
- Limited understanding by many about the nature and complexity of police work

### Perceptions of the ideal role of police with young people:

- Enforce laws and hold youth accountable
- As police are often the first contact young people have to the court system, use diversion and alternative measures wherever possible and appropriate
- Be a connector/navigator
- Act as a trusted adult / mentor / role model

### What EPS is doing well right now:

- The Youth Section has cultivated really great relationships in the community
- The Youth Section programs are well-respected
- Specific EPS members are proactive and going above and beyond in their role with young people, families, and partners
- Mix of sworn and civilian members works well

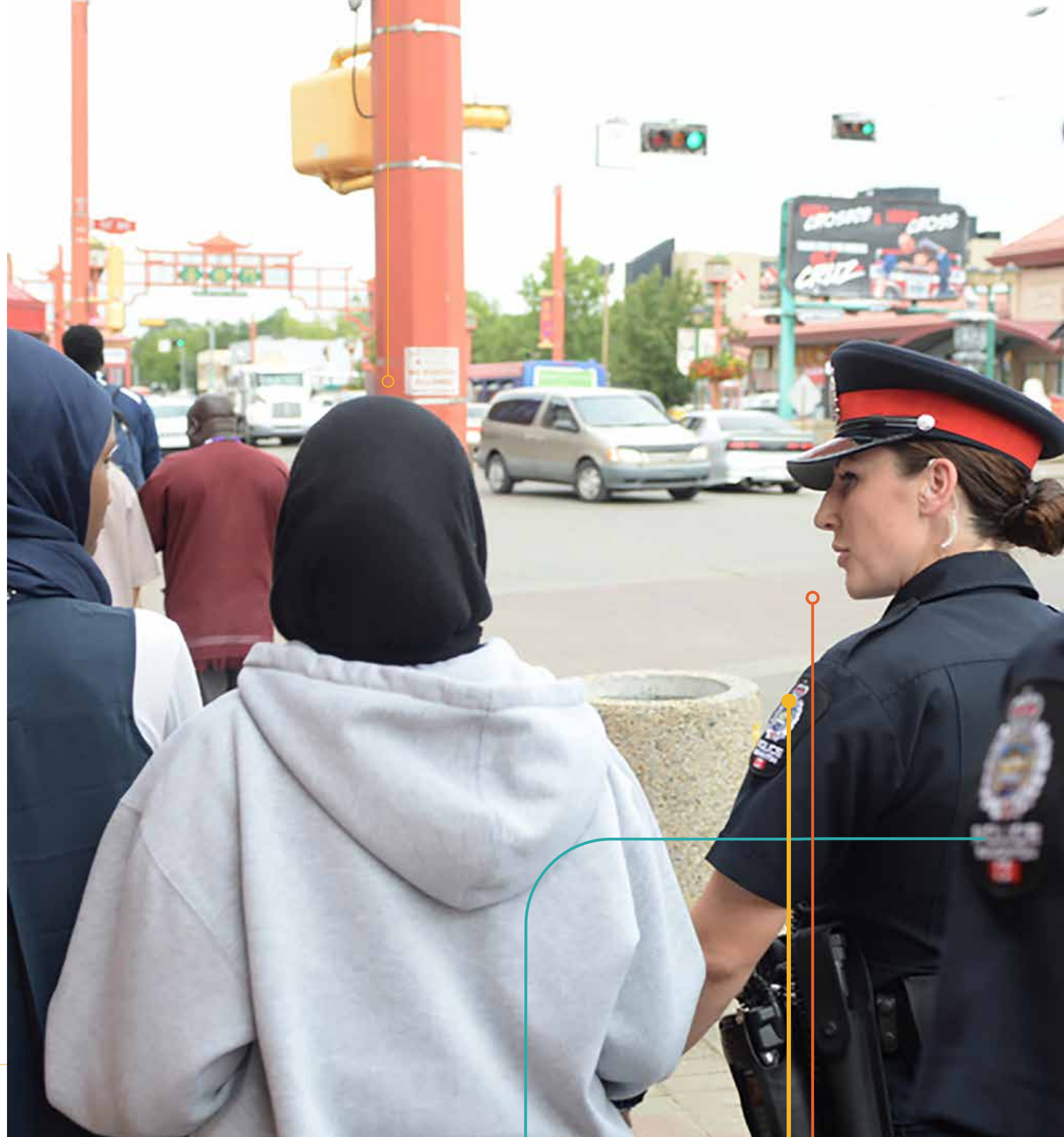
### What EPS could improve on:

- Enhance trauma-informed approach
- Improve consistency in approach across the service
- Broaden diversion pathways
- Strengthen partnerships and community involvement in interventions
- Address any inequities in responses to and outcomes for youth
- Leverage restorative justice programs

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