UPSTREAM
KELOWNA

bgc Okanagan



Parent Handbook



WHAT IS UPSTREAM?

Upstream Kelowna is a youth-focused prevention and early intervention program that aims to prevent youth homelessness, reduce school disengagement, strengthen connections to family, school, and community, and improve overall mental well-being.

Our goal is simple: identify what a young person needs, strengthen the support around them, and connect them to resources before things become more serious. Participation is always voluntary and youth-centered

IMPORTANT TO KNOW:

Involvement with Upstream does not mean your child is in crisis. It means they have access to extra support while they need it.

Upstream Kelowna is a collaborative model that relies on the collective impact of our partners. Our primary partners include:

bgc Okanagan

Central Okanagan Public Schools
Together We Learn

THE BRIDGE
Youth & Family Services

arc programs

FOUNDRY KELOWNA

Métis Community Services Society

A WAY HOME
VERS UN CHEZ-SOI

MAKING THE SHIFT
youth homelessness demonstration lab

canadian observatory on homelessness

AN OVERVIEW OF UPSTREAM PHASES

STUDENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Upstream Kelowna administers a universal screener, the Student Needs Assessment, to Grade 8 students at Springvalley Middle School, École KLO Middle School, and Dr. Knox Middle School.

The SNA helps identify whether a student may be experiencing factors that could affect their engagement at school or housing stability. It uses multiple-choice questions about the youth's home and school experiences, relationships with peers, and physical and mental well-being to provide a broader understanding of things that may be affecting them.

The SNA is confidential, which means that we do not see students' individual responses. Our team only receives information about whether a student may benefit from additional support and the general level of risk identified.

Good to know: Parents are able to set up a time (in person or virtually) with the program coordinator to review the SNA and the questions being asked. The SNA cannot be shared due to confidentiality reasons.

PROCESS TO OPT OUT:

Parents/guardians have the option to opt their child out of completing the SNA. To opt out, parents/guardians can contact their child's school administration or the designated Upstream School Champion (Principle/Vice Principle/Counsellor) at their child's school.

If a parent/guardian does not opt their child out, the youth will be given the opportunity to complete the SNA, but participation remains voluntary and the youth can choose whether or not to complete it.

Upstream encourages each youth to complete the assessment because it can help identify areas where they may benefit from support early on. If the assessment indicates that additional support may be helpful, youth can choose whether or not they would like to access the services offered.

AN OVERVIEW OF UPSTREAM PHASES

CHECK-INS

Students flagged by the SNA have the choice to engage in check-ins or confidential validation interviews, which are conducted by Upstream Case Managers.

The case manager will have been trained on the principles of Upstream Canada, with an approach that is youth-focused, prioritizing place-based, coordinated care that may evolve with the needs of the young person. Check ins are voluntary for youth to participate in and they do have an opportunity to speak to their parents before consenting to service should they wish to.

Students who decline to participate in a check-in or choose not to engage in support following a check-in remain eligible to access services at a later time. They are encouraged to connect with their School Champion or reach out to any program staff to explore next steps when they feel ready.



Good to know: In Canada, youth who are considered "mature minors" may consent to services without parental permission. As Upstream is a voluntary program, young people choose to participate and accept services, and they can choose to stop at any time.

KEEPING PARENTS IN THE KNOW

As part of Upstream's commitment to transparency and collaboration with families, schools distribute pre-and post-implementation letters to all Grade 8 parents/guardians to keep them informed about the Student Needs Assessment (SNA) Implementation.

Pre-implementation letters are shared 2 weeks prior to Implementation and provide an overview of the Upstream program, the purpose of the SNA, implementation timelines, and key contact information, ensuring families know who to reach out to with questions or concerns.

Post-implementation letters are distributed following the completion of the SNA. These letters outline next steps, and again provide contact information to support ongoing communication

FAMILY & NATURAL SUPPORTS

Upstream uses a Family and Natural Supports (FNS) approach to help youth identify and strengthen relationships with people they trust, such as family members, friends, mentors, coaches, teachers, or other supportive adults.



Case Managers work with youth to identify strengths, reduce barriers, and explore how their natural supports can be involved in their goals.

With the youth's consent, Case Managers may support communication, connect families to resources, and identify ways natural supports can provide ongoing support. Upstream Case Managers do not replace the role or responsibilities of parents or guardians. Our role is to support youth and families, strengthen natural support networks, and connect them with resources that can provide ongoing support.

Youth are encouraged to involve their family and natural supports in their case management. The youth's consent helps guide what information can be shared and how these supports are involved.

CONSENTS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Your child's privacy matters. Upstream case managers keep information confidential and only share it in the following circumstances:

- With required consent for program participation such as consent to communicate with the school, BGC Okanagan Team members, or other professionals involved in providing agreed-upon support.

- When required for safety reasons, parent/guardian contact information is collected and may be used when there is a safety concern or emergency involving your child. Information may also be shared when there is a concern that your child, or another person may be at risk of harm.

- When required by law, there are some situations where Upstream staff are legally required to share information, even without consent. For example, if a staff member has reason to believe that a child or youth may be experiencing abuse, neglect, or another situation requiring protection, staff may be required to make a report to the appropriate child protection authority. Information may also be disclosed when required by a court order or other legal requirement.

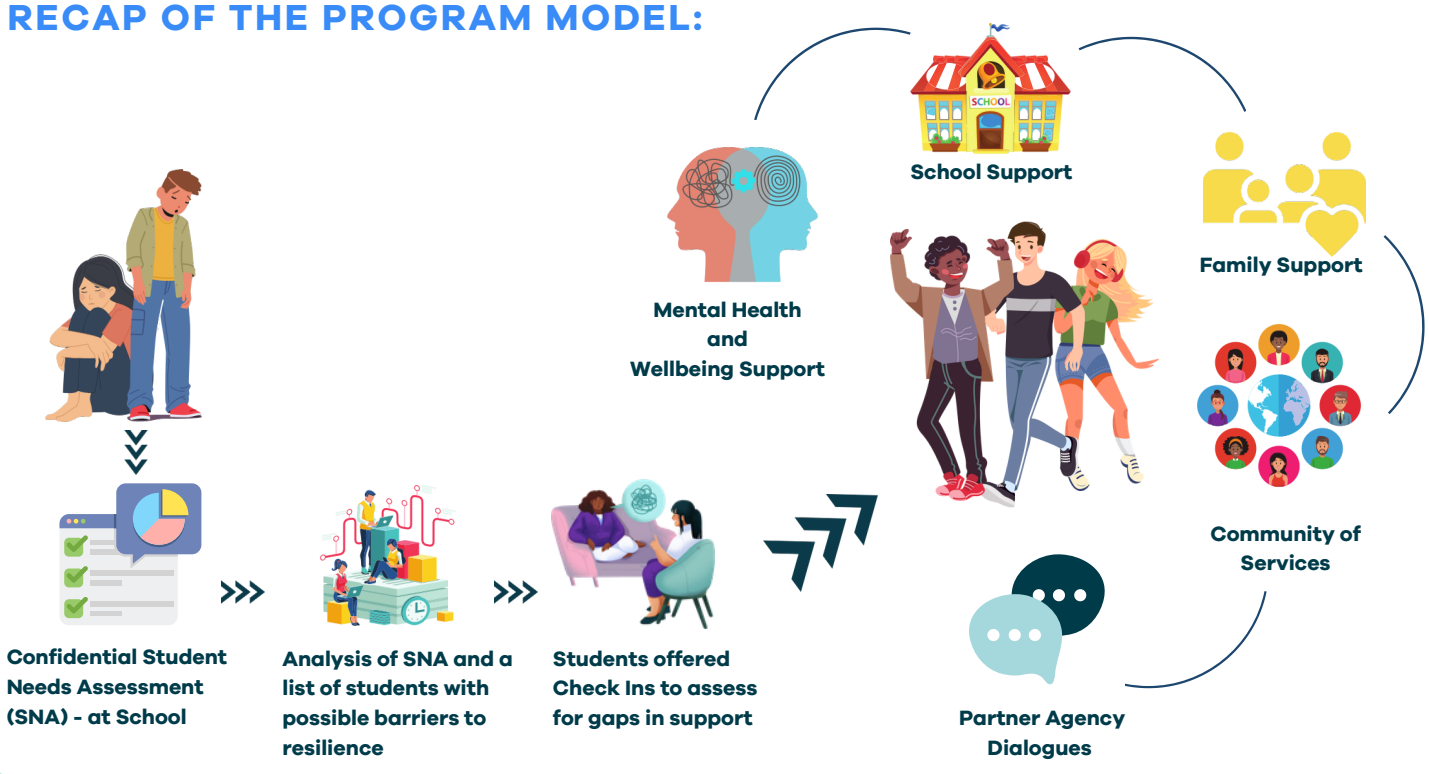
CASE MANAGEMENT & TIMELINE OF SERVICE

Youth who move into case management work one-on-one with a dedicated Case Manager. Together, they set goals that are meaningful to the young person, whether that's doing well at school, building relationships, managing stress, exploring employment, developing life skills, or something else that is important to them. Goals are based on the youth's strengths, needs, and individual circumstances, with a focus on reducing barriers, building on existing strengths, and supporting their overall well-being and resilience.

As an early intervention program, Upstream works to strengthen connections with family and natural supports, school, peers, and the broader community while youth are still connected to these systems. Case Managers help youth build on these connections and access resources that can provide ongoing support.

Upstream case management is short-term and goal-focused, with the intention of helping youth and families address their immediate needs, connecting them with community supports that can provide longer-term assistance if needed. The length and level of involvement is determined on a case-by-case basis, based on the youth's individual needs, goals, circumstances, and progress.

RECAP OF THE PROGRAM MODEL:



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Does my child being involved with Upstream mean they're at risk of homelessness?

Upstream is a prevention and early intervention program. Many of the youth we support are navigating everyday challenges, stress at school, difficulties at home, or social struggles. Our goal is to provide support early so that challenges don't escalate.

Can my child leave the program if they want to?

Absolutely. Participation is always voluntary. Youth can choose to step back at any time, and there are no negative consequences for doing so.

How long will my child be involved?

Because Upstream is a short-term program, we complete a progress check-in around the three-month mark to see whether goals and needs have been met. Support may be extended if it's still needed, but the intention is for involvement to remain short-term.

Support is a collaborative process. We regularly assess who is supporting your child, what additional supports may be needed, and whether community connections can help meet their ongoing needs. Youth and families are at the centre of conversations about next steps.

FAQS

Can I be involved as a Parent or Caregiver?

Yes, when your child consents to it. We warmly welcome family involvement and will work with you together as a team wherever possible. Youth consent to involve parents/guardians is explored on an ongoing basis throughout their time with Upstream, not just at the start.

UPSTREAM PROVIDES REAL RESULTS.

Because of Upstream, youth are reporting significant positive outcomes

- **100 %** of participants said they have increased feelings of safety
- **97 %** of participants are doing better in school
- **73 %** of participants are gaining access to mental health supports

2025 program data

What if I have concerns about what is being shared?

If you have questions or concerns about information being shared, please speak with your child's Case Manager first. They can explain what information is being shared, why, and with whom.

If you have concerns that are not resolved or would like to speak with someone further, you can contact the Upstream Program Coordinator. We encourage families to reach out whenever they have questions or concerns about their child's support or involvement in the program.

Who sets the goals for my child?

Goals are developed collaboratively, with the youth taking an active role in identifying what they want to work toward. Case Managers provide guidance, while parents/guardians are encouraged to support youth in taking ownership and accountability for their goals.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

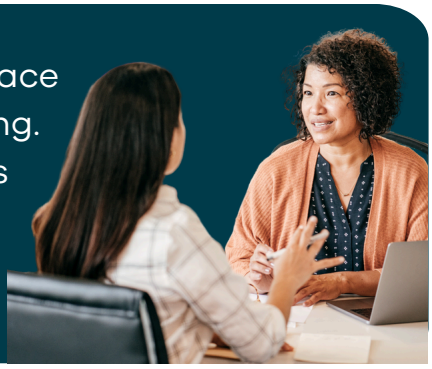
"Upstream really helped me with my friendships, getting involved in sports, and talking about things instead of keeping everything to myself. I'm really glad I joined."

UPSTREAM KELOWNA PARTICIPANT



"My son is going to love this opportunity. It's a safe place for him to meet other youth after experiencing bullying. We're incredibly grateful Upstream could provide this opportunity."

PARENT OF AN UPSTREAM YOUTH





My worker was so understanding and supportive. They helped me come up with different strategies to improve my time management."

UPSTREAM KELOWNA PARTICIPANT

GET IN TOUCH

We are always happy to answer questions, address concerns, or simply connect with you. Please don't hesitate to reach out.

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