

# My Rights at Portage Atlantic

## Portage Atlantic

**Portage Atlantic** is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping youth who want help with substance abuse. The lack of effective treatment programs to address addiction among New Brunswick youth led to the establishment of a local Portage residential program. Portage was chosen because it was already operating successful residential programs for adolescents in Ontario and Quebec.

The concerned citizens who founded Portage Atlantic worked to find partners and the project became a reality as a result of their advocacy and fundraising campaigns. A partnership with the New Brunswick Departments of Health and Public Safety, allowed Portage to open a service centre in Fredericton in 1996. The next year a rehabilitation centre for adolescents and young adults began at Cassidy Lake. The Cassidy Lake treatment centre has 64 beds and over the past 13 years, more than 1,400 youths from New Brunswick and other Atlantic provinces have been treated at Portage Atlantic.

This publication was created to provide residents of Portage Atlantic with information specific to New Brunswick and the Cassidy Lake facility. While the Portage Resident's Manual provides a great deal of information on the program some of the information, particularly in the Your Rights section, refers only to Quebec law or information for adult residents in other Portage programs across the country. Portage Atlantic staff worked with Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick and the provincial Department of Public Safety to create this pamphlet to clarify the law and rights of youth in New Brunswick.

## Youth Rights

The Resident's Manual outlines the rights of residents. Residents of Portage Atlantic, have basically the same rights set out in this manual, but these rights are protected under New Brunswick laws. While the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms** applies equally in New Brunswick and Quebec, below are a few notes on the differences for youth residents in New Brunswick.

- The **New Brunswick Human Rights Act** is similar but not exactly the same as the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.
- New Brunswick does not have one law which would be the equivalent to the **Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms**. Youth in New Brunswick have many of the same rights; however, they are contained in a number of different laws.
- New Brunswick services are offered in both official languages.
- The Portage Atlantic program does not have a local service quality and complaints commission. When the manual refers to a commissioner, the complaints or concerns should be brought to Director instead.
- Portage Atlantic does have a Portage Resident's Committee to assist you in carrying out your complaint about Portage.
- Portage Atlantic does not have a complaint's assistance and support centre.
- When you enter the Portage program you will be given information on the people who can help you address your complaints.
- In New Brunswick, the Child and Youth Advocate is an agency that helps protect the rights and interests of all children and youth. The Child and Youth Advocate may be able to help address concerns about the government's role in oversight, education programs or laws that impact the residents of Portage Atlantic.

If you have concerns about your legal rights, you can contact the office of the **New Brunswick Child and Youth Advocate** by telephone at **1-888-465-1100** by email [nbombud@gnb.ca](mailto:nbombud@gnb.ca) or online at [www.gnb.ca/ombudsman/Child-YouthAdvocate](http://www.gnb.ca/ombudsman/Child-YouthAdvocate).

## Keeping Youth Safe

There are many safeguards and policies at work to keep youth at Portage safe from physical, emotional or sexual abuse. You may choose to discuss abuse issues as part of the treatment program. It is important for all residents to know that New Brunswick law says that everyone has a duty to report suspicions or knowledge of child abuse.

This duty applies to anyone who suspects or has information about the abuse of a person under the age of 16 (or under 19 if the person has a disability). They must report what they know to Child Protection Services at the Department of Social Development. They do not have to have proof of the abuse.

If a youth in treatment at Portage tells someone that they have been abused the staff must contact Child Protection to ensure the person does not return to an abusive situation when they leave the program. This also applies to information a resident may tell about a sibling or friend who has been abused. It may be important to deal with these issues in treatment; however, residents should be aware that when other youth or staff members have knowledge or suspicions of abuse they must report the information.

If you suspect a child in New Brunswick is being abused, please phone **Child Protection Services 1-888-992-2873 (A B U S E)**.

## Portage Atlantic Rules

The rules in place at Portage Atlantic have been established to help youth with the treatment process and to ensure the safety of all staff and residents. Youth who attend the Portage program must choose to be there and are expected to follow the rules.

**There are three cardinal rules:**

- No sexual contact
- No drugs on the property
- No physical violence or intimidation

The youth workers and administrative staff have the flexibility and authority to deal with discipline issues as they arise. Youth who are overly disruptive or who pose a danger to the residents or staff can be removed from the treatment program. Being removed from the Portage program can have legal consequences for some youth who have been in conflict with the law.

The youth workers and staff are dedicated to supporting the youth at Portage Atlantic. The treatment program can be challenging and youth are encouraged to talk to staff members, or peer mentors and leaders, within the community if they have concerns or conflicts. If you have serious concerns or complaints you should bring them immediately to the attention of the Director.

**This pamphlet was created collaboratively by:**

- Portage ([www.portage.ca/en](http://www.portage.ca/en))
- Public Safety ([www.gnb.ca/publicsafety](http://www.gnb.ca/publicsafety))
- PLEIS-NB ([www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca](http://www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca))

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