



EARLY YEARS FRAMEWORK

BC MINISTRY OF CHILDREN
AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

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EARLY YEARS SERVICE FRAMEWORK
JUNE, 2018

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PURPOSE

The purpose of the *Early Years Service Framework* is to define the services the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) funds within the early years service area.

The system of early years¹ services in B.C. is significant. Over \$200 million is spent each year in early years supports and services through provincial and federal organizations, in addition to the significant investments made in child care and specialized supports. Most government organizations have clear mandates that define what early years services they deliver. For example, health authorities provide child health support, immunizations, vision and audiology screening, and perinatal health supports such as breastfeeding education. MCFD also benefits from defining an overarching policy direction to guide its early years services.

MCFD funds a range of ‘universal’ and enhanced early years supports. Enhanced services have clear criteria for eligibility, while ‘universal’ services tend to have indistinct criteria, and overlapping mandates and intended outcomes. MCFD invests in three key areas in the early years period: child care, enhanced or eligibility-based services (for children and youth with mental health concerns or special needs), and a third less-defined category sometimes referred to as Early Childhood Development or Family Support, which will be referred to as “early years services” from here on.

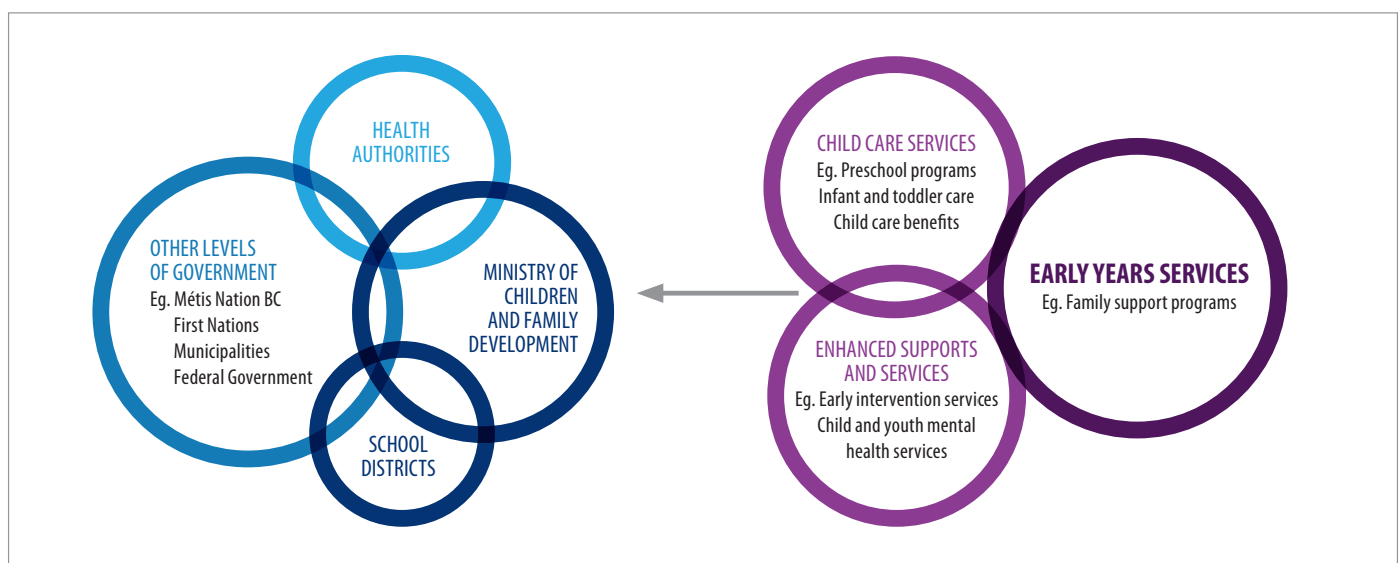
The first two key areas, child care and enhanced or eligibility-based services, have clear criteria and outcomes. For example, to access child and youth special needs supports, a person requires assessments and must meet eligibility criteria. Moreover, investments and intended outcomes for child care services are well defined in B.C.’s child care plan. The third area,

early years services, lacks eligibility criteria, making it more difficult to define. It is the early years service area that is the focus this document.

The absence of an MCFD ‘service framework’ with overarching policy to guide early years investments, namely in reference to the early years services area discussed above, has resulted in a patchwork of inconsistent services. Currently, families are confused about what services are available and where they should go to access supports, local MCFD areas are unsure about where to allocate funds in the context of exceeding demand and pressures. Additionally, partners (including service providers and government partners) are confused about the role of MCFD in the early years landscape – is MCFD a broker of partners, a funder of service, or a community-development arm of government?

This *Early Years Service Framework* outlines the policy direction for all early years services supported by MCFD. In providing clear policy direction, this framework seeks to explain what early years services are, why they are needed, and the goals, principles, service types and terminology that underpin these services. This information is intended to benefit families, service providers, and policy and decision makers.

With a clear mandate, MCFD will be in a better position to work with other vested community partners such as health authorities, federal departments, and municipalities to create a system of support for young children and families. This framework works from the assumption that governments will have a more effective impact on children, families and communities when they work collectively across sectors. In order to do this effectively, all partners require policy and service mandate clarity.



1. For the purpose of this framework, early years is defined as zero (prenatal) to 6 years of age.

FRAMEWORK VISION AND GOALS

VISION

Children and families have the supports and services that they need. MCFD early years services are intended to achieve the following goals:

- 1 Support the well-being of children and families
- 2 Serve as barrier-free access point, particularly for families facing acute or chronic vulnerabilities
- 3 Provide clear pathways to enhanced supports and services including Infant Mental Health, Children and Youth With Special Needs

In the short term, these goals enhance protective factors and intended outcomes such as improved cultural connectedness, enhanced parent child attachment, enhanced parent efficacy, and reduced immediate vulnerability.

In the long term, these service goals help achieve social and economic benefits through enhanced family preservation and maximized developmental outcomes for children. These goals also address social determinants of health, leading to improved equity across populations.

In addition to the overarching goals, in outlining key principles and services that will guide spending across MCFD, this framework will:

- » Provide clarity to service providers, families, and funders regarding the early years services funded by MCFD:
- » Ensure direct services and supports are prioritized for funding;
- » Allow for improved referrals between early years services and enhanced supports;
- » Support evidence-informed investments; and
- » Provide clarity of MCFD mandate to support collaboration with other vested partners in the early years landscape (e.g. health authorities).



IMPORTANCE OF THE EARLY YEARS

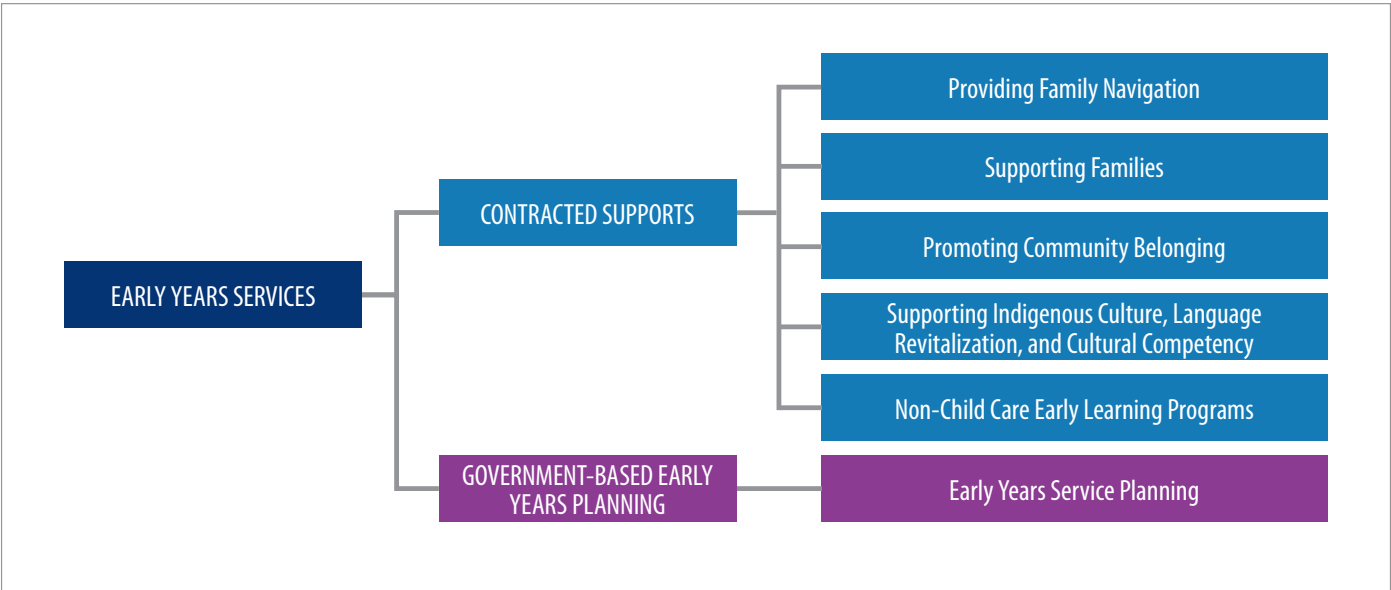


A child’s experiences in the first six years of life affect their immediate and long-term development, and have a strong impact on their social and health-related outcomes later in life. Vulnerabilities families may experience during these years can have profound impacts on this journey. Many vulnerabilities can be lessened or even prevented if families have the supports they need.

It is recognized that there is no single face of vulnerability. Families move in and out of vulnerability based on many different factors, from income to mental health to parental status. Vulnerabilities are not a reflection of flaws in a person or family. This framework aims to reduce the stigma of vulnerability by recognizing that most families, at some point in their family journey, experience vulnerability.

This framework assumes all families have unique strengths and assets. Effective early years supports harness these strengths to increase families’ protective factors and enhance family resiliency. Enhancing and increasing protective factors is complex. While many current services strive to achieve this goal, much more can be done.

It is important to note that issues such as poverty, domestic violence, access to quality child care and access to affordable housing are complex social and cultural challenges. These issues need a whole systems approach; no one service area can solve them. Thus, early years services alone cannot address the vulnerabilities that many families face. Early years services can help families find the supportive pathways they need, provide them with effective social networks, and in turn enhance the protective factors of both a child and family.



INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND PERSPECTIVES

Indigenous² perspectives are interwoven throughout this document, not only as 'Indigenous-specific' sections or considerations, but as fundamental pillars of all early years work.

Elders tell us that children are to be seen as gifts from the Creator to love, nurture and respect. They also teach us that parenthood is a tremendous journey that requires support, kinship, and honouring. In many Indigenous cultures, parenting is not the sole responsibility of the parents; extended family members have key roles to play in raising children.

This framework is grounded on an Indigenous concept of 'being connected'. Children do not exist in isolation from their families and community. They exist within families and the influence of parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents and elders all impact a child's growth and development. All supports provided in the early years must go beyond considering an individual or a child. Services offered must consider the well-being of the support system of that child – including their parents, elders and connections to the land.

Some Indigenous cultures teach us to stand with one hand in the past, connected to the teaching that are passed through generations, and one hand in the future, supporting a new generation with the transmission of the rich learnings that came before to create the best possible opportunities for the generation ahead.

Development is not seen as linear, but rather multidimensional and inclusive of spiritual, cultural, cognitive, physical, and emotional domains. The well-being of a child does not focus on a single aspect of this development, such as literacy. Development of a whole person is the way to foster health and well-being. Children develop and grow differently. This framework supports the shift from a deficit-based model (for example, models that label people as having 'developmental delays' or being 'at risk') to an inclusive strength-based approach to support children and families. Families have hopes, dreams, and visions for their children. All families want the best for them. It is critical that service providers use non-clinical approaches to support development by empowering families to draw on their cultural knowledge to build on strengths, and support areas for their growth.

This framework accepts that our collective work to support families is never done. We must keep our circle strong and engage in continuous reflection on what is working, what needs to change, and how we can find solutions for challenges that arise.



2. For the purpose of this framework, Indigenous refers to First Nations living off reserve, First Nations living at home (on reserve), Métis Nation and Inuit people.

COMPLEMENTARY MCFD EARLY YEARS INITIATIVES

UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE FOR B.C.

Government is in the early stages of implementing *Child Care BC: A Path to Universal Child Care*, a ten-year plan for universal child care. This means over \$1 billion in new funding over the next three years to support an accessible, affordable, and high quality early care and learning system where any family that wants child care will have access for their child.

Implementing a universal child care system is the single largest social policy shift made in generations, and it will require time to develop the system and learn what works best for B.C.

Work is beginning immediately. Within the next three years, families in B.C. should benefit from the creation of over 24,000 new child care spaces. Further, parents will have reduced fees for child care, which is complimented by increased operating investment for child care providers. Additionally, as of September 2018, parents will have access to the new Child Care Benefit that will further reduce the cost of child care for families with the highest need. Together, this means families earning between \$60,000 and \$80,000 per year will pay on average \$10 per day, and families earning less than \$45,000 per year will receive free child care, in most cases.

The province will work to develop a workforce strategy in partnership with the Public Employees Sector Council and Early Childhood Educators of BC to develop systemic approaches to recruitment and retention for early childhood educators. Additionally, the province will update its Early Learning Framework, which provides curriculum to guide early learning environments, and has committed additional funding to ensure the child care system in B.C. is more inclusive and wrap around supports are available.



INDIGENOUS-LED EARLY YEARS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

It is widely recognized that the historical and intergenerational trauma of colonization and residential schools has impacted Indigenous families in Canada. All levels of government are called to action to address the impacts of this trauma at the individual, community and societal levels. This framework assumes that early years supports and services be considered within this context and as a way to support reconciliation, self-governance, and healing.

This framework acknowledges that Indigenous families and communities are strong and vibrant structures from which all families in B.C. can learn. The intention is for this framework to be implemented meaningfully in relationship and partnership with Indigenous families and communities in ways that are meaningful.

In acknowledging the positive shift of the child care landscape, it is also important to recognize that B.C. Government's commitments to Indigenous self-determination has gained support and momentum. The B.C. Government has committed to implementing the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*, as well as to answering the Calls to Action outlined by Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. These commitments extend to the plans for universal child care and early years services.

Initiatives and new investments announced as part of the Child Care B.C. plan extend to all families in B.C., including Indigenous families living on and off-reserve. However, there is recognition that the implementation of these initiatives requires thoughtful consideration, particularly for Indigenous people and communities. For example, we have already learned that child care does not exist in a silo for Indigenous communities. A real system of support for Indigenous children includes family supports, early intervention, cultural revitalization, and child care.

The *Child Care B.C.* plan and this Early Years Service Framework intentionally provide space and time to allow government to further understand the distinct early years and child care needs of Indigenous partners and communities, including: First Nations people living at home (on-reserve), Métis people, and Indigenous people living off reserve and in urban settings.

The Ministry is working closely with Indigenous partners to develop short, medium and long term program, policy, and governance recommendations that support Indigenous-led early years and child care services.

One such early investment is in the expansion of the Aboriginal Head Start program both on and off-reserve to include full-day child care spaces for infant/toddlers and children aged three to five years.

EARLY YEARS TOUCH-POINTS

The early years is a period of many transitions. Families have many needs in this period. Government and service organizations seek to meet these needs through an array of services; each with their own service delivery structures (e.g. health authorities, school districts, and service organizations). ‘Touch-points’ are when families engage and interact with these services.

Communities may also have unique informal settings, programs, or systems that provide a ‘social richness’ by building relationships and social networks.

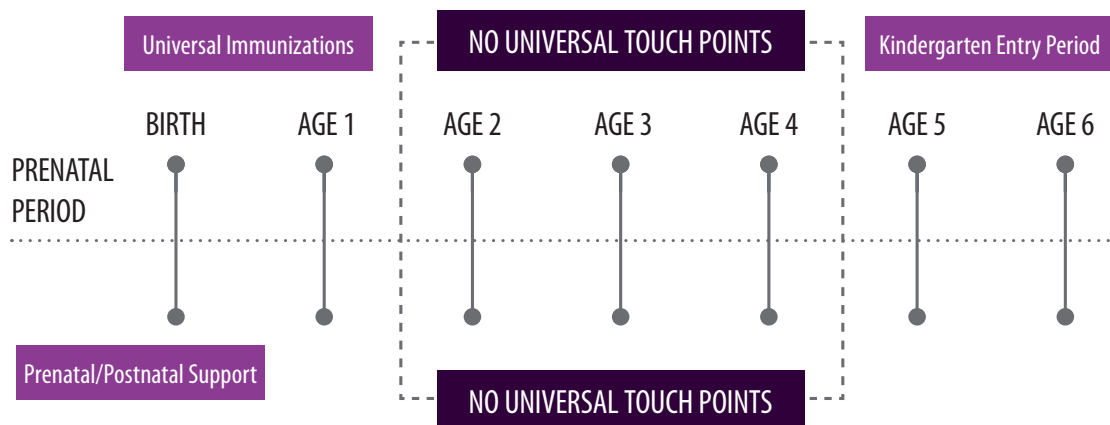
Many families lack consistent touch-points with formal systems of supports and services between a child’s 18-month immunization and their school transition. During this period, many families lack connections, supports, and learning and networking opportunities.

Early years services can and should develop or leverage touch-points with formal systems, as well as build up less formal opportunities within community settings to create and enhance opportunities for families to continuously engage and access the supports and services they need during their child’s first six years of life.

As depicted below, there is no universal touch-point for children and families between 18-months and school entry.



MCFD Early Years Services - Birth to Age 6



JOURNEY THROUGH THE EARLY YEARS

For many families, the journey through the early years is smooth and positive; they travel through the various community-based early years programs and transition to kindergarten effortlessly. There are an equal number of families who speak about the journey as overwhelming, confusing, and challenging. With over 1000 unique programs and services for young children and their families offered in B.C. today, many parents struggle to navigate and access this large system of services.

B.C. has a diverse demographic makeup that further affects the uniqueness of these family pathways. For example, the province has a significant rural/remote population, is home to the second largest population of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and has an ever-increasing number of immigrant, newcomer, and refugee families. These contextual factors shape families' journeys through the early years.

In recent decades, families in B.C. have undergone tremendous change that has resulted in a great diversity of family forms and relationships. In the vast majority of two-parent families, both parents now work. The proportion of lone parent families is also growing³. Concurrent to these shifting dynamics, is the reality that parental social isolation is becoming a significant concern⁴.

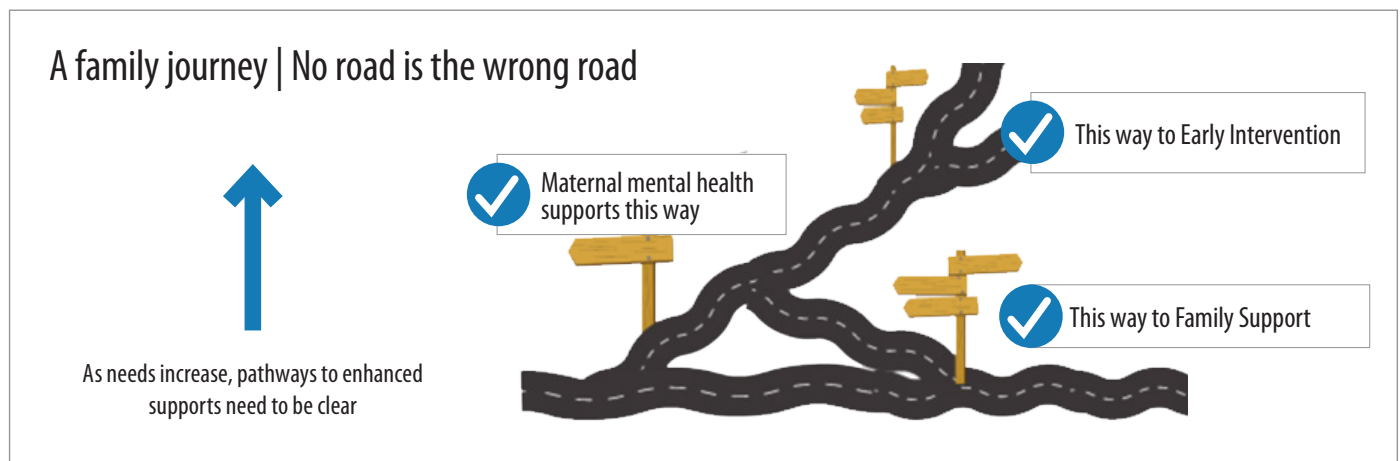
Becoming a parent is a significant life event. The change in routine, fragmented services and loss of time to socialize can mean that many parents feel lonely. Social isolation poses significant risks to parents. Health risks associated with social isolation have been compared in magnitude to the well-known dangers of smoking cigarettes and obesity⁵.

Parents' loneliness has also been shown to have negative effects on children, impacting their social competence, motivation to learn, and academic skills⁶. If a child is raised in a socially isolated family, the risk of the child becoming chronically lonely increases⁵.

The benefits of moving towards systems and practices that include peer-support, and where culture is central to well-being, are well documented in Indigenous communities. Indigenous mentoring has traditionally been embedded in cultural practice in which the entire society contributes to the raising and teaching of their children; yet today, many of the social and cultural systems and networks that once guided Indigenous peoples are no longer as central to community life.

Not only are families feeling socially isolated and unaware of the supports and services that exist to help them, often times it is difficult to identify and access specialized supports and services, such as Early Intervention Therapies.

There is demonstrated need to improve the supports and services for families during the early years period, including making them more consistently available, clearer in what they provide, and more welcoming to families of different experiences and levels of vulnerability. There is also a need to create clearer pathways from these programs and to enhanced supports and services that address vulnerabilities that a child or family might face, such as Infant & Child Mental Health supports and Children & Youth with Special Needs services. (See diagram below.)



3. Government of British Columbia. (2011). *British Columbia's changing families: family roots*.

4. Action for Children. (2017). *A report looking into the impact of loneliness in children, young people and families*.

5. Cornwell, E.Y. & Waite, L.J. (2009). *Social disconnectedness, perceived isolation, and health among older adults*.

6. Juntilla, N., Ahlqvist-Bjorkroth, S.J., & Raiha, H. (2013). *Mothers and fathers' loneliness during pregnancy, infancy, and toddlerhood*.

HOW ARE MCFD EARLY YEARS SERVICES CURRENTLY DELIVERED?

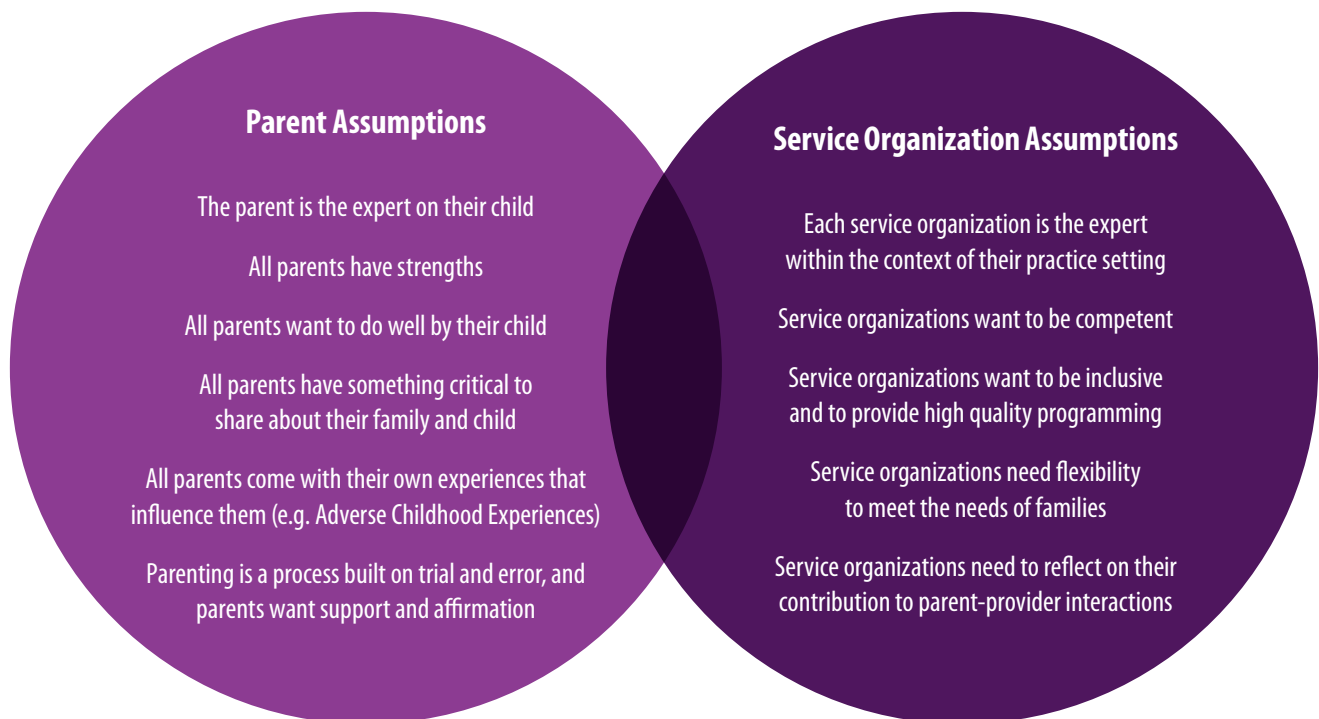
Early years services are separate and distinct from other services offered by MCFD (e.g. child care, child protection, mental health, or supports for children and youth with special needs), but help to broaden the range of supports available to children and families in B.C.

The system of early years services in our province is large and complex, with numerous government ministries, health authorities, school districts, Indigenous governments, municipalities, and hundreds of community organizations sharing the roles and responsibilities of providing supports to families.

Early years services are delivered entirely through contracted organizations. These organizations are strong advocates for families and children. They include organizations such as

Family Resource Centres, Child Development Centres, Neighbourhood Houses, Boys and Girls Clubs, Literacy Organizations, and Friendship Centres, among many others. They aim to respond to families' unique needs. Early years services can help connect families to the services they need, provide them with effective social supports and networks, and ultimately support the wellness of both a child and family.

This framework recognizes that both parents and service organizations have beliefs that help shape the service provider-family relationship, and helps to determine the ways in which services are planned for and delivered to families in their local communities. The following set of assumptions help to support positive relationships and inform effective service planning and delivery.⁷



7. The above parent/service organization assumptions have been adapted from *The Brazelton Touchpoints Model of Development*.

PRINCIPLES

The following principles clarify the ministry's position on how early years services should operate.

Family at the Centre

Children do not exist in isolation. While service systems may fluctuate, family is the constant in a child's life, and should be viewed as the expert. Family-centered practice means children are seen in the context of families, and families are included in the planning, discussions, and implementation of services for their children.

Fostering Cultural Connections to Enhance Protective Factors

Particularly within an Indigenous context, learning one's culture and having strong connections between children, parents, and Elders are key protective factors in family well-being. Reclaiming culture into the lives of families has health benefits on physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual levels. Supporting cultural connectedness and promoting cultural safety is considered best practice.

Focusing First on Families Experiencing Vulnerability

Early years services have the greatest impact on long-term developmental, family, and societal outcomes when they are able to address existing vulnerabilities and challenges, and reduce the risk of experiencing vulnerabilities in the future. This means services must go beyond being barrier-free, and work to effectively build families' protective factors and enhance family resiliency.

Focusing on Barrier-free Direct Service

Barriers are defined as anything that prevents a family from accessing the services they need. Providing barrier-free direct services means offering services that are comfortable, free of charge, culturally and socially safe, and delivered in a setting that best meets the family's needs.

Supporting a Strengths-based approach to Programming and Services

This framework clarifies the need to support families who are facing vulnerability; however, when receiving services, it is vital that families experience strengths-based language and programming. All families have strengths, and celebrating these strengths can help families feel safe and engaged when accessing the services they need.

Supporting Co-location of Services

Families can most easily access the array of services they need if those services are co-located, or ideally integrated. Families often experience barriers to access, and the requirement to visit multiple locations to access the services they need adds to these challenges. Research demonstrates co-location is most successful when services include the key supports and services most often sought by families (e.g. primary health care, financial supports, housing, food security, family counselling, and employment).



Acknowledging Local Flexibility

BC is too large and diverse for a ‘one size fits all’ approach. There are large differences between living in urban and rural areas, and uniqueness in every community. Supporting local service delivery flexibility empowers local MCFD leadership and community organizations to work together to create innovative services that meet the local need.

Working Together to Build Referral Pathways

Early years services supported by government build and maintain referral pathways to enhanced supports (e.g. Early Intervention Therapies), the wider network of early years services (e.g. public health units, StrongStart programs) and other early years services. Early years services are often referred to as ‘gateway’ services, because the trusting relationships they form help families to honestly express their needs, allowing for effective referral.

Promoting Inclusion

Early years services should be welcoming to all families including families from diverse cultural backgrounds, families of children with extra support needs, those living with mental health concerns, and others. Families that could benefit from being connected and supported are most often those that commonly feel excluded.

Government Should Assume Responsibility for Planning Government Services

In order to effectively support and develop the system of early years services in B.C., it is vital that governments plan for, and directly support, community services. This means that the person responsible for assessing community needs, collecting community feedback, and supporting service organizations is located within the respective government. The scope of governments in this context also includes First Nations living away from home (off-reserve), First Nations living at home (on-reserve), and Métis Nation.

Incorporating Evidence-informed Data

Evidence informed means that service concepts and objectives have been informed by research, practice, and experience. Being evidence informed helps ensure services are as effective as possible, without being entirely prescriptive about the specific form of delivery.

Engaging in Continual Reflection

All those involved in the early years service delivery system, including government, engage in a continual process of reflection to ensure programs and supports are providing the greatest impact for British Columbians.



MCFD EARLY YEARS SERVICES

The following model illustrates MCFD's early years service categories that will guide investments in the ministry's early years services. This model reflects themes outlined in the framework's principles, such as fostering Indigenous cultural connection and cultural safety, focusing on families experiencing vulnerabilities and promoting inclusion for children. The following section provides a brief description of the services categories.

MCFD EARLY YEARS SERVICE CATEGORIES

Providing Family Navigation

Services focus on connecting families in need to services that can be of assistance. This is not simply an information service. The provider has a deeper understanding of common family needs and vulnerabilities and helps make effective direct connections. This service is key in ensuring referrals between universal and enhanced supports are made. Services may take the form of: one-to-one-in-person discussion; telephone communication; E-mail or text message communication; case management.

Supporting Families

Services focus on addressing the expected or unexpected challenges that a family may face (particularly families with enhanced vulnerability). Services include: provision of language specific information and support; parenting education; provision of food and equipment (e.g. car seat, clothing, housing information); unstructured, safe place to access professionals informally.

Providing Non-Child Care Early Learning

Services specifically focus on child development in one or more of the following areas: physical, social, emotional, language and communication, cognitive, and spiritual. Services include: Physical and creative play; exploration and risk taking; Learning about social responsibility and empathy towards others; literacy and communication.

Promoting Community Belonging

Services provide opportunities for parents to share experiences, expertise, guidance and emotional supports with other parents, with the intent of reducing social isolation and promoting community belonging. Services may take the form of: One-to-one peer mentoring; group meetings and gatherings focused on connecting families; phone, e-mail, in person informal opportunities to meet/ share conversations, parent support groups.

Supporting Indigenous Culture, Language Revitalization, and Cultural Competency

Services connect families to their Indigenous culture and language, with the intent of reducing cultural isolation and supporting cultural connectedness and community wellness. Education to non-indigenous organizations to build cultural competencies with staff, children and families. Services may take the form of language/ cultural programs, community gatherings or informed cultural competency training.

Government-Led Early Years Service Planning

Government-led Early Years Service planning including: Ensuring referral pathways between early years and enhanced supports operate effectively; Keeping the circle of engagement strong and continuous with other government partners and community-based agencies. ; and working to build a robust early years service system in community.



CONCLUSION

In providing clear policy direction, this framework seeks to explain what early years services are, why they are needed, and the goals, principles, service types, and terminology that underpin these services. This information is intended to benefit families, service providers, and policy and decision makers.

Our vision for the Early Years in BC is to make sure young children and their families have the services they need and want to prosper. We want to make sure the system of services in the Early Years grows and develops to meet ever changing needs of families in their communities.

Continual reflection occurs within MCFD in collaboration with other system and community partners to ensure current services, practices, and investments are aligned with other initiatives within the broader early years system, and are best meeting the needs of children and families in the province. The *Early Years Services Framework* is a living document and will be updated as required to reflect these shifts.



APPENDIX A

MCFD EARLY YEARS SERVICE CATEGORIES

APPENDIX A - MCFD EARLY YEARS SERVICE CATEGORIES

The following section outlines key early years service categories. These categories are intended to help define a set of services that has historically been difficult to define. The first five categories are types of direct services offered through service organizations, and the sixth category is a newly created MCFD role designed to identify community service needs, plan for services, and help support service organizations who deliver these services.

These service categories are conceptual and based on the intention of the service. They are not intended to be restrictive, and it is acknowledged that a service may overlap several of these categories.

1. FAMILY NAVIGATION

Service Definition	Services that are focused on connecting families in need to services that can be of assistance to them. This is not simply an information service. This service category is key in ensuring referrals between early years services and enhanced supports are made. A family navigator is an individual who can help guide families through the numerous complex services and systems in B.C. A family navigator collaborates with service providers in these systems to locate resources that match identified needs, facilitate connections to these resources as efficiently as possible and support families along the way.
What Should the Service Achieve?	Services in this category have an array of intended outcomes, including: » Families are connected with services that are both appropriate and available in their local area. Where local services are not available, families have an understanding of where the closest out-of-community supports are, and what online or telephone based supports may be of assistance » Increased community connectedness » Improved access to services (through improved knowledge of what is available and navigation support) » Increased linkages with community services and parents to formal referral pathways » Connections and referral pathways should exist for: other service organizations, public health (including First Nations public health), the school system, primary health, professional services and other government services (e.g. housing and employment services)
What Can Families Expect?	Families can expect: » Opportunities to have one-to-one discussions about their child and family needs » Receive information on available services, understand the process for accessing those services, and get help making the connection » Increased sense of family wellness and support
How are Services Delivered?	Services meet families where they are at, by recognizing strengths and acknowledging challenges. To be responsive to the needs of families and local communities, services are delivered in a variety of ways: » One-to-one in-person discussion » Telephone communication » E-mail or text message communication While service delivery is responsive to families' needs, the goal is to engage with people more in-person than via email or telephone.

2. SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Service Definition	Responsive services that directly support parents/caregivers with the day-to-day challenges they may experience while raising a child. Services focus on addressing the expected or unexpected challenges that a family may face (particularly families with enhanced vulnerability).
What Should the Service Achieve?	Services in this category have an array of intended outcomes, including: » Parents have emotional support and increased stress management » Child and/or family vulnerabilities are identified and supported » Positive parenting » Increased parent knowledge of child development, including developmental stages and how to support a child's social, emotional, and spiritual development » Parents understand the importance of, and practice self-care » Strategies for children with enhanced needs (e.g. behavioural challenges) » Service organizations have an understanding of trauma and how to support a child who has experienced trauma » Parents develop specific skill development (e.g. grocery shopping and cooking skills)
What Can Families Expect?	Families can expect: » Comfortable, non-judgemental, culturally-safe, and informal environment » Modelling for families to recognize and learn from » Clear information on the intention of the service Programs may involve children or offer child minding to ensure that child care is not a barrier to parent attendance
How are Services Delivered?	Services are planned for, and delivered in, a variety of methods and settings to meet the diverse needs of families, including: » Parent support groups » Parent-child drop in programs » Parent group classroom programs » Home visiting » Outreach in high vulnerability area community settings » Toy lending libraries, food vouchers, food banks, clothing exchanges, etc.

3. PROMOTING COMMUNITY BELONGING

Service Definition	These services provide opportunities for parents to share experiences, expertise, guidance, and emotional supports with other parents. These services foster feelings of connectedness and wellness, and can reduce the impact of isolation many parents experience, while also helping to build protective factors.
What Should the Service Achieve?	Depending on the service, there are several related outcomes that could be achieved: » Parents will experience an increase in the number of quality social connections they can rely on for support » Parents will experience and increased sense of belonging from one-to-one connections or connections to groups » Parents will receive mentorship and advice from families/peers who are going through, or have already gone through, similar life experiences
What Can Families Expect?	Families can expect: » Safe informal network of parents/caregivers to share time and experiences as needed » Connections with other parents/caregivers with the intent of longer lasting relationships » Informal cultural connections for those who would otherwise not have linkages » Sense of belonging
How are Services Delivered?	Services are delivered via methods that work best for parents who are in need of support, including: » One-to-one peer-to-peer connections » Social networks, with parent group gatherings » Phone, email, in person informal opportunities to meet/share conversations While service delivery is responsive to families' needs, the goal is to engage with people more in-person than via email or telephone.

4. SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS CULTURE, LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION, CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Service Definition	Services connect families to their Indigenous culture and language, with the intent of reducing cultural isolation and supporting cultural connectedness and community wellness. The importance of language, culture and sense of belonging and connectedness to overall sense of social, health is critical to promoting family wellness and healthy child development. Education and training to non-Indigenous organizations to build cultural competencies with staff, children and families as part of the collective responsibility in reconciliation to ensure non-Indigenous children and families have cultural competencies, and knowledge.
What Should the Service Achieve?	Services support the intentional restoration of Indigenous language and culture, and the revitalization of Indigenous world-views of child, family, and community wellness. These services are intended to incorporate and implement Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Final Report, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and MCFD's Aboriginal Policy & Practice Framework in B.C. Service outcomes may include: » Holistic policies and practices that support children's development of the mind, body, heart, and spirit » Promotion and mobilization of community resources and connections » Family attachment and family preservation activities and supports » Meaningful long-term relationships and partnerships with local Elders, Wisdom Keepers, families and communities means that service providers have the fundamental understanding that "relationship" is the foundation of all activities and interactions with those they serve and that it takes time and openness to be in relationship » Accessible and welcoming services for children and families of all abilities » Organizations actively seek out on-going training and education opportunities to build staff and organizations competency in providing culturally safe, culturally based services in partnership with local Indigenous (Métis, First Nations and Indigenous) families and communities
What Can Families Expect?	Families can expect: » Services organizations and services that will respect, value and reflect their language, culture and traditions. » Organizations adopt a family first approach and implement flexible service delivery practices that demonstrate understanding of Indigenous family's culture (family and community's traditional harvesting time, community gatherings, healing work) that may impact family's participation in programming » Relational based family-centred care and support services » Opportunities to work as partners in restoring and enhancing language and cultural services » Connections to community cultural resources and supports such as mentors, Elders, Wisdom Keepers, peer social support networks are key components of service delivery » Culturally-safe services and welcoming environments » Partner with Indigenous Families and experts to include cultural practices as foundational intervention and prevention supports » Culture and traditional practices are promoted and seen as strengths » Resources and tools are culturally relevant, appropriate, strength based and supportive. Where tools and resources are not available, partnering with Indigenous families and communities to find alternative tools and resources or co-create adaptations and approaches to existing tools and resources may be an option » Nature and land-based teachings and activities are fundamental approaches to intervention and prevention supports

4. SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS CULTURE, LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION, CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Services are barrier free. Services that address barriers will depend on the needs of families. These might include:

- » Provision of food, transportation
- » Inclusion for all abilities
- » Inclusion of extended family, Elders

How are Services Delivered?

Culturally based services will vary in each community, and may be delivered through centre based or outreach programs, and they may be child centered and/or family/community centred. Examples include:

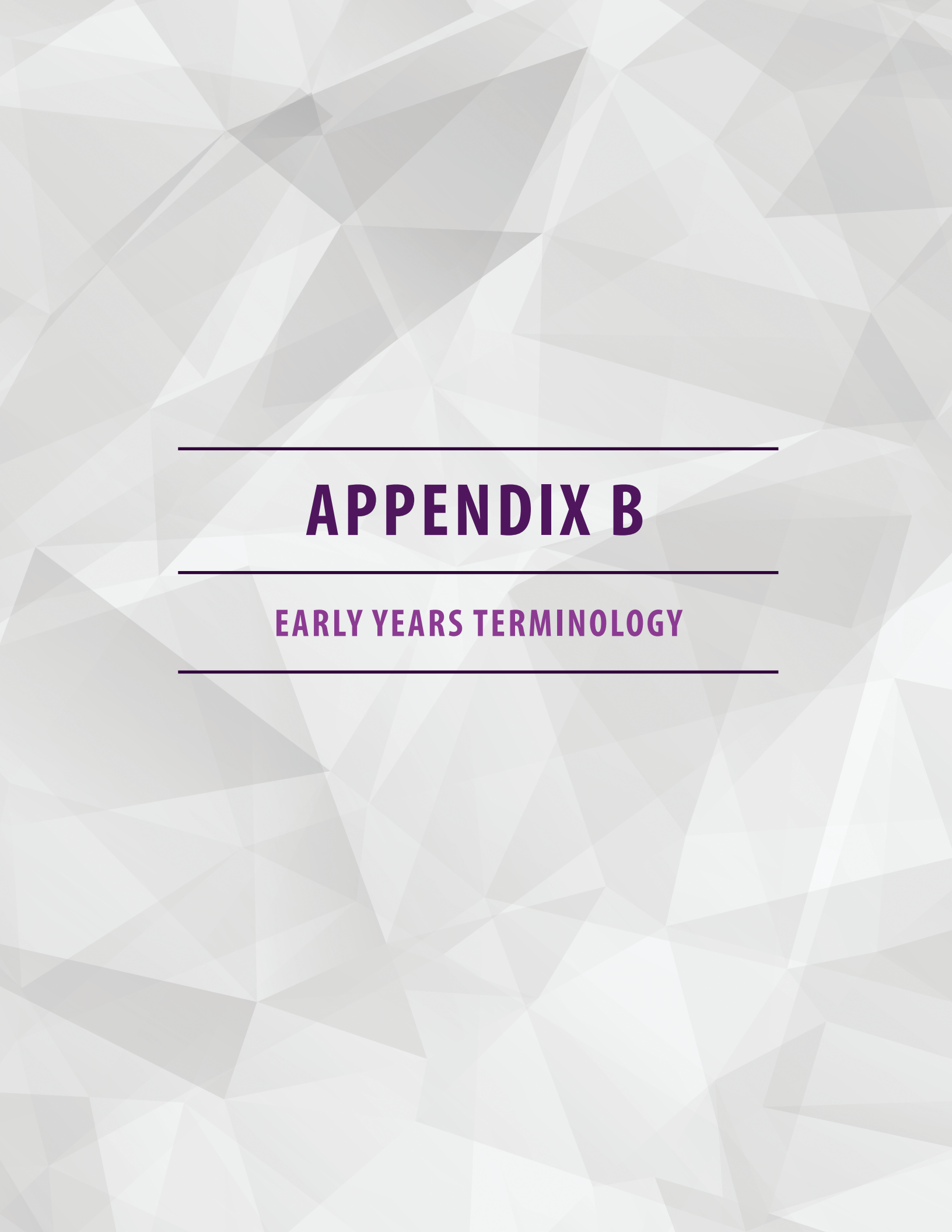
- » Family wellness groups
- » Language/Cultural groups
- » One-one peer support and mentorship
- » Community gatherings
- » Balance of nature/land based activities and modern methods/technologies to support learning activities (telehealth options where available)

5. NON-CHILD CARE EARLY LEARNING

Service Definition	Services that focus on child development in one or more of the following areas: physical, social, emotional, language and communication, cognitive, and spiritual. These services go beyond providing opportunity for development alone (e.g. supervised playtime); to include pre-planned programming that is purposeful (e.g. facilitated playtime). Quality early childhood programming acknowledges each child's uniqueness and helps to improve a child's developmental outcomes.
What Should the Service Achieve?	The outcome of this service is supporting the healthy development of children. Programs that promote children's healthy development support: » Physical and creative play » A sense of belonging » Exploration and risk taking » Social responsibility and empathy towards others » Appreciation for diversity » Excitement for learning Programs may also provide direct supports for child development to address common or specific developmental challenges some children may experience, including but not limited to: » Fine or gross motor skills » Self-regulation » Verbal and nonverbal communication » Social interaction
What Can Families Expect?	Families can expect: » Experienced staff » Child-centered programs » Supportive non-judgemental and culturally safe programs » Wherever reasonable and appropriate, family members will be able to observe or participate in the program » Programs that are inclusive of children with varying skill levels
How are Services Delivered?	Services are delivered via methods that work best for parents who are in need of support, including: » Parent-child drop in » Group programming for children » One-to-one early intervention » Professional services (e.g. Occupational therapy) » Developmental assessments and screening may also be available as a part of a program/ services (e.g. Nipissing District Developmental Screen or Ages and Stage Questionnaire)

6. EARLY YEARS SERVICE PLANNING – GOVERNMENT BASED (EXAMPLE: MCFD REGIONAL OFFICES, MÉTIS NATION, ETC.)

Service Definition	Dedicated government-based staff across B.C. provides strategic planning and service integration in collaboration with community partners. The staff person will: » Support decision makers to understand the information and gaps in local service delivery » Assist service organizations with understanding how to build effective referral pathways for families and support system integration » Create a system and infrastructure that can support emerging priorities, such as the roll out of a universal child care system » Work with other regional government partners, such as municipalities, health authorities, school districts, First Nations, and Métis Nation, to support collective impact planning and encourage shared responsibility for collaboration efforts » Plan for, and make decisions about, MCFD early years service investments, monitoring and accountability
What Should the Service Achieve?	The outcome is to maximize services to families, support integrated service delivery, and ensure effective referral pathways. As a whole, the staff person will support service organizations to best prepare and deliver direct Early Year Services. This may be achieved through: » Increased cultural competence » Improved staff understanding of common child and family challenges » A deeper understanding of how trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences may affect a family, including how to better support families with these life experiences » A higher number of efficient communication and referral pathways that reduce the burden on a single service organization
What Can Service Organizations Expect?	Early years service organizations should expect: » No direct services to come directly out of this service area » Regional government-based staff person to be dedicated to early years planning » Clear understanding of regional early years services and priorities » Access to available data and analysis » Consistent provincial communication » Enhanced relationships and engagement with government partners
How are Services Delivered?	MCFD regional offices will staff a position to support Directors of Operations and the Executive Director of Service in each MCFD Service Delivery Area. This individual is the primary liaison between MCFD, contracted early years service organizations and relevant government partners within each Service Delivery Area Indigenous partners hold positions to support planning in respective governments and/or organization.



APPENDIX B

EARLY YEARS TERMINOLOGY

APPENDIX B - EARLY YEARS TERMINOLOGY

Barriers to Access – Anything that prevents a family from accessing a valuable service. For early years services, this could include availability of program, transportation, social stigma, costs, spoken language, cultural appropriateness, or lack of information.

Early Years – The early years is the period in a family's development from prenatal through kindergarten transition. For early years services, this means from 0-6 years of age.

Early Years Services – Services funded by MCFD that fall under one of the following six service types: Family Navigation, Supporting Families, Promoting Community Belonging, Indigenous Culture and Language Revitalization, Non-Child Care Early Learning, and Government-Led Early Years Service Planning.

Referral Pathway – The process where a family who is in contact with one service is connected through to another service that might be of value. The strength of the referral pathway is indicated by the rate of successful connections. Strong two-way referral pathways between EY Services and more intensive services such as therapies (e.g. Speech and Language Therapy) are vital to ensuring the overall system of early years services in B.C. functions well.

Service Organization – In the early years context, a group contracted by MCFD that is usually a not-for-profit, and who collectively deliver one or more services in a local community.

Social Determinants of Health - The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power, and resources at global, national and, local levels.⁸

Strengths-Based Approach - A collaborative process between the person supported by services and those supporting them, allowing them to work together to determine an outcome that draws on the person's strengths and assets.⁹

The System of Early Years Services in B.C.
– All services across all Provincial, Federal and Local Governments that focus on the early years.

Touch-Points - A time when a family interacts with a formal or informal service, such as primary care or social services.

Vulnerability – Children and their families who are experiencing vulnerability due to factors related to development and health, including physical and mental health, or external factors such as violence, social exclusion, or living in poverty. EY services are intended to reduce vulnerabilities by enhancing protective factors and ultimately building resiliency.

8. *World Health Organization. (2018).*

9. *Social Care Institute for Excellence. (2015).*

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:
GOV.BC.CA/EARLYYEARS**

