



CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

# A Framework for Action

*Making it work!*



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*“Children and youth with special needs and their families require a clear and continuous pathway to services that will meet their individual needs. I am encouraged by this collective commitment to achieving higher quality outcomes through more effective change.”*

CINDY FROSTAD, PARENT





*“The CYSN framework establishes a new paradigm for ministries in the BC government to integrate and co-ordinate efforts on behalf of children and their families. It should also serve us well as a model of best practice in establishing a new approach to health and wellness for all children and youth in British Columbia.”*

DR. ROBERT PETERSON,  
DIRECTOR, CHILD HEALTH BC

## MINISTERS’ LETTER

We are pleased to present the *Children and Youth with Special Needs (CYSN) Framework for Action*, British Columbia’s strategy to improve access, quality and coordination of services for children and youth with special needs.

The Framework provides a foundation for coordinated, collaborative action among people working in the health, education and social service sectors in B.C., and a platform of common values, principles and overarching strategies to guide the work.

It recognizes the need to simplify and streamline the current array of services so it is easier for families to find information and access services.

It also provides an opportunity to build on our strengths and the excellent work already taking place in B.C.

Participation and action from all sectors and from families will be required to help us reach the goal of better supporting children and youth with special needs in B.C.

We encourage you to discuss the Framework and consider how it can be used in your own community.

We also encourage you to share your stories, experiences and feedback as we move forward with implementation across the province.

Together, we are embarking on an exciting and important step towards building the best system of support in Canada for children and youth with special needs.

We look forward to working with, and hearing from you. We are confident that through our shared commitment and partnerships, we can strengthen service delivery and help improve the lives of B.C.'s children and youth with special needs and their families.



***Honourable Tom Christensen***

***MINISTER OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT***



***Honourable Shirley Bond***

***MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR  
EARLY LEARNING AND LITERACY***



***Honourable George Abbott***

***MINISTER OF HEALTH SERVICES***



*“The CYSN Framework for Action sets the foundation for the seamless delivery of services for children and youth with special needs and their families in British Columbia. Parents and families will know how to access services for their children from the health, education and social service sectors.”*

*BRUCE SANDY, PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE BC ASSOCIATION OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT & INTERVENTION (BCACDI)*



## **PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK**

Families have been clear that they need information, as well as access to quality services to help ensure their children with special needs have optimal opportunities for development, health, well-being and achievement.

This Framework is B.C.'s strategy for improving the system of support for children and youth with special needs and their families. It is intended to provide a common reference on which to plan ongoing strategic work.

The CYSN Framework for Action includes a set of values and strategies to guide collaborative work among health, education and social service sectors in the creation of an integrated, accessible continuum of quality services for children and youth with special needs and their families.

Commitment and concerted action is required for this to work. We need to coordinate efforts, learn from others, and share expertise and resources.

As we implement the Framework, it is our collaboration that will ultimately improve services and access for children, youth and families.

School districts, health authorities, service providers, families and the Ministries of Education, Children and Family Development and Health Services all have a role to play.

Working together we can make a difference!

### **UNDERSTANDING SPECIAL NEEDS**

For this Framework, the term children and youth with special needs refers to children and youth up to 19 years of age who require significant additional educational, medical/health and social/environmental support – beyond that required by children in general – to enhance or improve their health, development, learning, quality of life, participation and community inclusion.

## WHERE WE WANT TO BE

### VISION

Optimal development, health, well-being and achievement for children and youth with special needs.

### MISSION

To promote and deliver accessible, high-quality intervention and support services for children and youth with special needs and their families, through an integrated service delivery approach.

### GOALS

*Improved access* – The right services at the right time

*Effective services* – High-quality services with strong evaluation

*Coherent systems* – Improved integration and coordination



*“Educators across this province applaud the collaborative approach outlined in this Framework. It puts children first, and clearly identifies strategies for success.”*

*GEOFF JOPSON, PAST-PRESIDENT,  
BC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS’  
ASSOCIATION*



## HOW WE GET THERE

### *VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES*

Common values and principles are key elements of the Framework and are used to inform and guide thinking and planning.

They provide the foundation for service planning and service delivery. The service system for children and youth with special needs should be:

- Integrated and comprehensive
- Accessible
- Child-centred and family-focused
- Functionally-based
- Evidence-based
- Culturally competent and safe
- Responsive to change
- Fair and equitable
- Evaluated
- Sustainable



## **SIX STRATEGIES FOR ACTION**

The following strategies are the cornerstones of the Framework. They are intended to guide collaborative work, frame discussions and planning, provide a practical approach to organizing activities, and support the identification of priorities.

**Strategy 1:** Placing children's and families' needs first  
*Functionally-based and accessible services*

**Strategy 2:** Supporting our people  
*Training, recruitment and retention*

**Strategy 3:** Ensuring quality and performance  
*Improving quality measurement and accountability*

**Strategy 4:** Building and using the evidence base  
*Promoting evaluation and research*

**Strategy 5:** Simplifying the pathway to services  
*Providers, agencies and ministries coordinating, collaborating and integrating*

**Strategy 6:** Planning together  
*Instituting a province-wide integrated planning mechanism*



*“This Framework will help us to better coordinate services and share successes together with the children and families we work with.”*

*DIANA ELLIOTT, PROVINCIAL ADVISOR, ABORIGINAL INFANT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS*



## **FOUR TIERS OF EXPERTISE**

In the CYSN Framework for Action, the service delivery system is organized into tiers representing the many layers of expertise available to children, youth and families. This is based on a model which has been used successfully in other countries to help reduce gaps and overlaps in service, and increase collaboration between service providers.

### ***TIER 1***

Tier 1 providers have a great breadth of knowledge and provide general services which are available to all children and families in B.C.

This group includes public health nurses, family doctors, social workers, and teachers. Tier 1 providers play an important role in the identification of special needs, and may have a role in screening, referrals and supporting families.

### ***TIER 2***

Tier 2 providers are the “home team” for children and youth with special needs and their families. They are specialized community-based service providers who have significant knowledge and experience in child development and disability.

This group includes infant development consultants, supported child development consultants, key workers, paediatricians, psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech language pathologists, and special education teachers.

### ***TIER 3***

Tier 3 providers have an in-depth knowledge in a particular area and provide specialized regionally-based services.

Examples in this group include the Complex Developmental Behavioural Conditions assessment teams in regional health authorities and SET-BC (Special Education Technology British Columbia).

## **TIER 4**

Tier 4 providers offer provincial one-of-a-kind services not available in every community.

Examples in this group include specialized teams at Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children, Provincial Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Community Brain Injury Program and the Provincial Integrated Support Program for students with severe/multiple disabilities.

### **TIER FOUR**

*Provincial Sub-specialized Special Needs Services*

Highly specialized and one of a kind  
(eg: Sunny Hill Inpatient Brain Injury Team)

### **TIER THREE**

*Regional Specialized Special Needs Services*

Regionally-based  
(eg: CDBC Assessment Teams)

### **TIER TWO**

*Community Special Needs Services*

“Home Team”  
(eg: Infant Development Consultants,  
Special Education Teachers and Paediatricians)

### **TIER ONE**

*“Broad-reaching” Service Providers*

General services, available to all  
(eg: Public Health Nurses, Family Doctors and Teachers)





## STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR SUCCESS

### GOAL: IMPROVED ACCESS

*The right services at the right time*

#### Strategy 1: Placing children's and families' needs first

*Enhancing services, aligning them to meet the real needs of children and youth with special needs and their families*

##### *Actions*

- Strengthen the integration of services for children and youth with special needs across the health, education and social service sectors
- Support the development of and access to a full range of effective services that reflect and support Aboriginal cultures and traditions
- Focus services on the functional needs of children, youth and their families

#### Strategy 2: Supporting our people

*Facilitating training, recruitment and retention of high quality, skilled service providers*

##### *Actions*

- Enhance the capacity and expertise of those serving children and youth with special needs and their families through cross-sectoral training and information
- Support recruitment of service providers with joint recruitment strategies, student initiatives, paraprofessional opportunities and a focus on rural areas
- Support retention of service providers with professional development, mentoring, training incentives and technology-based resources

*“One of the most positive things I’ve seen come out of government in a long time. Parents win with this Framework.”*

ALANNA HENDREN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION

## **GOAL: EFFECTIVE SERVICES**

*High-quality services with strong evaluation*

### **Strategy 3: Ensuring quality and performance**

*Improving quality measurement and accountability*

#### *Actions*

- Use inter-ministry protocols so that services are provided in an accessible, understandable and coordinated manner
- Use a common quality framework and service quality indicators to improve performance and accountability across the health, education and social service sectors
- Ensure an integrated approach across sectors to information systems and information management

### **Strategy 4: Building and using the evidence base**

*Promoting evaluation and research*

#### *Actions*

- Support existing and new research related to children and youth with special needs
- Develop mechanisms for sharing and using evidence and best practices
- Identify opportunities to make new research understandable to staff, service providers, and families across all sectors
- Promote evaluation in the planning and development of services

*“After years of talking about it, something is actually happening. And it makes sense. It’s certainly the most exciting initiative I’ve seen in 35 years.”*

*JANE HOLLAND, ADVOCATE FOR SERVICE QUALITY*



*“It offers promise of truly integrated, rational, and better quality services.”*

CLARE SCHUMAN, EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR ACT AUTISM  
COMMUNITY TRAINING



## **GOAL: COHERENT SYSTEMS**

*Improved integration and coordination*

### **Strategy 5: Simplifying the pathway to services**

*Coordinating, collaborating and integrating among providers, agencies and ministries*

#### *Actions*

- Identify and address cross-sectoral program duplications and service gaps
- Provide cross-sectoral information to help families of children and youth with special needs access services more easily
- Improve the coordination of services for families seeking or currently receiving services

### **Strategy 6: Planning together**

*Instituting a province-wide integrated planning mechanism*

#### *Actions*

- Coordinate regional and provincial planning among the three sectors
- Jointly identify priorities
- Share successful practices and knowledge
- Use electronic collaboration and communication tools

## YOUR ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING THE FRAMEWORK

Whether you work at a community, regional or provincial level, you have a role to play in bringing this Framework to life.

### *AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL...*

Communities take into account the views, knowledge and experience of a range of people and organizations – an important first step in planning effective action.

It is at the community level, in all sectors, that the voices of children and youth with special needs and their families are heard most directly.

This is where families live and the child's "home team" resides. Work at this level depends on the unique needs, strengths and capacities of each community, including the existing knowledge base, relationships, and current work underway relating to children and youth with special needs.

### *AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL...*

The role at the regional level is one of strategic planning, setting priorities, coordinating across sectors and with communities, and supporting implementation of regional and community initiatives.

### *AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL...*

Much of the activity at the provincial level focuses on strategic planning, development of implementation tools, collaborative policy development, developing and strengthening coordination across ministries, ensuring an integrated quality assurance approach and supporting the implementation of regional and community initiatives.



*“The time has come to realize that one sector cannot do the work alone. This framework provides the impetus and opportunity for “all of us” to truly collaborate, to ensure that the future for children with special needs and their families is bright.”*

*Laurie Meston, Director of Instruction, School District 42, and President, BC Council of Administrators of Special Education*

*“Wow! I am really impressed with the work done by the three ministries to provide a common framework for all providers to work together in our support of children with special needs and their families. I am already using the framework in planning and reviewing programs and find it to be tremendously helpful.”*

*ROBERT (BOB) ARMSTRONG,  
HEAD OF THE UBC DEPARTMENT  
OF PEDIATRICS AND CHIEF OF  
PAEDIATRIC MEDICINE AT THE  
BC CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL AND  
BC WOMEN’S HOSPITAL AND  
HEALTH CENTRE*



## **WHAT WE CAN ALL DO**

- Engage in discussions about services for children and youth with special needs, the CYSN Framework for Action and its potential uses
- Enlarge the circle of people and organizations that understand the issues and are committed to developing solutions
- Involve youth and families in discussions, planning and implementation
- Establish, strengthen and support cross-sectoral provincial and regional planning tables, community coalitions and networks with a focus on children and youth with special needs
- Promote effective partnerships, improve collaboration and increase integration across sectors
- Use the Framework to guide service planning and service delivery, with a focus on new and innovative practices
- Use the Framework’s vision, mission, values and strategies to identify priorities for collaborative work
- Share expertise, knowledge and strategic priorities across sectors and between regional, community and provincial levels



## MOVING FORWARD

While the idea of collaboration is not new to anyone involved in supporting children and youth with special needs and their families, the CYSN Framework for Action offers a new way to collaborate. It provides a model for coordinating collective energy among the health, education and social service sectors and encourages us to work together as a seamless service delivery system.

The Framework builds on the good work that is already taking place across B.C. and provides a focus for organizing current and future activities. The strategies, principles and actions will frame our discussions and assist us as we move forward.

Communities, regional partners and provincial stakeholders are encouraged to use this document to guide all aspects of priority setting, actions, reporting, and evaluation.

The power of cumulative action cannot be underestimated. With the leadership and passion of B.C.'s service providers, and the support and input of families, we can take the steps needed to create an integrated continuum of quality services for children and youth with special needs and their families.

Do you have questions or ideas? Let us know by emailing:  
[cysnframework@gov.bc.ca](mailto:cysnframework@gov.bc.ca)

For more information visit the following websites:

Ministry of Education  
[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed)

Ministry of Health Services  
[www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications)

Ministry of Children and Family Development  
[www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/spec\\_needs/](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/spec_needs/)









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