

BETTER SERVICES FOR MORE CHILDREN

Children and Youth with Support Needs Service Framework and Service Descriptions

Summary

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Ministry of
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Development

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Children and Youth with Support Needs Service Framework

When a child or youth is showing signs of a developmental or functional need, disability, or a perceived likelihood of a delay, they need support as early as possible.

Getting a diagnosis is not easy and can take months or years; many children lose precious time for early intervention services and support. They currently cannot access services without a specific diagnosis, and even with one, services and supports are not always accessible or available. The reality for many Indigenous families, and other families who experience discrimination, is that seeking a diagnosis is not the only barrier. Structural racism, historically traumatizing relationships with the child protection system, and stigma all play a role in creating barriers for children and their families in accessing the services and supports that they need.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) is leading a systemic shift to help more children and youth with support needs and their families access services they need. This shift will help break down barriers and provide more access to culturally safe and culturally sensitive services, regardless of where people live.

The Service Framework and its service descriptions outline:

- 1) The values and intentions of the transformation of services for children and youth with support needs;
- 2) The three major components of the new system (family connections centres, Disability Services, and Provincial Services);
- 3) High level details of what each major service component will look like.

Honouring Rights

Children and youth with support needs are a diverse community. Services for children and youth with support needs will promote culturally safe access that supports diversity, well-being, and development, and honour their rights. The Service Framework is grounded in the understanding and recognition of:

- The Declaration on the Rights of the Child;
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Commitment to Reconciliation including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), B.C.'s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC);
- Jordan's Principle and the Recognition of Services for Indigenous Children, Youth and Families.

What We Heard

In 2019, we heard from children, youth, families, Indigenous Peoples and leaders, service providers, physicians, cross-government partners, and other individuals who shared their stories, insights, and lived experiences. The Representative for Children and Youth and the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth called for improvements and a move to a needs-based system of supports as well. This input shaped the current Service Framework that is guiding the development of policy, services, and supports for children, youth and their families.

The COVID-19 pandemic elevated the urgency for moving forward to help struggling families because many of the services they needed and relied on were unavailable during lockdown.

Purpose of this Service Framework

This Service Framework guides decision-making, policy, and system changes as we work to make services for children and youth with support needs and their families more accessible. It sets the foundation to transform the range of services for children and youth with support needs to:

- Accessible supports based on functional abilities and needs, where diagnosis can inform interventions and approaches but is not necessary to begin accessing services;
- Services that are culturally safe, trauma informed and guided by anti-racism;
- A community-based service delivery model, making it easier to find and access supports through a central point of contact; and
- Services prioritized through Indigenous service providers for Indigenous children, youth and families.

The transformation of services will occur in phases. We are committed to working with Indigenous Peoples, leadership, service providers and partners to support children, youth, their families, and service providers through these changes in a good way.

As we move through this process and transformation, the Ministry will continue to engage and collaborate with Indigenous and non-Indigenous families, service providers, and community partners to implement this Service Framework. This engagement will also help improve the system for families throughout the province, and, in many cases, bring services to children and youth and their families for the first time.

Vision

Throughout B.C. all children and youth with support needs, as well as their families, have access to culturally safe, and trauma-informed services that are responsive to their needs and help them achieve improved quality of life, including social inclusion. These services

will honour culture and empower children, youth, and their families to enrich their development, functional abilities, social inclusion, and quality of life.

System Changes

Through initial consultation in 2019 and additional engagement and feedback, the Ministry has identified several major system changes for the new service approach:

1) Putting Family Connections Centres at the Heart of Community

At the core of this new model is a service approach that will provide developmental supports and intervention services for children from birth to 19 years old and their families in communities across the province. These will be offered through family connections centres. All services will use person and family-centred approaches (including, but not limited to in-community, in-home and virtual) to directly support families.

2) Responding to the Needs of Children and Youth

Children and youth will no longer have to wait to get a diagnosis before receiving intervention and support as early as possible. The new approach will be based on child, youth and family needs. This means better access to services for more children and youth, earlier in their developmental journey. However, a diagnosis can also provide useful information for service planning and families should continue to pursue one.

3) Consistent Services Available for Families

Moving from a patchwork of programs to three consistent service components will make navigating services easier for families: (1) Developmental and Goal Focused Services through family connections centres, (2) Disability Services, and (3) Provincial Services. The pathway of access to these services will be simplified.

Importantly, consistent services and simplified access throughout the province will open opportunities to help more children and youth with support needs and reduce the amount of case-management families must do.

4) Opening Access to a Continuum of Services

The new model will offer families access to a broader range of services for their child or youth with support needs. For example, low-barrier stabilization, respite, and mental health services will now be integrated within this new service approach.

We are reducing the barriers for all families with children or youth with support needs so they can access the services they need, when then need them.

Outcomes

The well-being and quality of life of children and youth with support needs and their families must be considered within the context of their strengths, resilience, culture, and

community. This includes the range of environmental and social factors that can affect development from birth to young adulthood.

The intended outcomes in the new model are driven by this understanding of quality of life, including:

- **Progress:** Children and youth make progress towards their self-identified goals.
- **Social Inclusion:** Children, youth and families experience improved social inclusion.
- **Quality of Life:** Children, youth and families experience improved quality of life.
- **Safety:** Culturally safe, trauma-informed, and family-centred services to support safe access to services.

Children and Youth With Support Needs

Services will support all children and youth, from birth to 19, and their families who:

- Are B.C. residents, and
- Have signs of a developmental delay or have a confirmed developmental need or disability.

These services are voluntary, and they include children and youth living in care of the Ministry or a Delegated Aboriginal Agency, those who are transitioning out of care, as well as those who are not in care.

Service Foundations

MCFD recognizes the powerful influence that experiences, relationships, and physical environments have on child and youth development and lifelong well-being. This belief is reflected in the values and approaches that make up the foundation of all policies and services and guide this new model. All elements of the new model will be:

- **Trauma-informed:** all services for children and youth with support needs and their families, regardless of who provides them, are trauma-informed.
- **Culturally Safe:** all services are culturally safe and free from stigma or racism.

As further engagement happens, clearer definitions of cultural safety and trauma-informed practice must be interwoven throughout all elements of service. Service providers will be expected to have relationships with communities, honour reconciliation, and promote cultural safety in relation to the communities they support.

Service Framework Values

Five values guide decisions on the funding, planning and delivery of services. These values serve to motivate, inspire, and guide services that celebrate the gifts and abilities of children and youth with support needs to help them achieve their goals and desires.

1. **Inclusive and Accessible Services** that support substantive equality, with prompt access to services that support quality of life and social inclusion;

2. **Indigenous Service Providers for Indigenous Children, Youth and Families** by working in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, governments and organizations to best meet desires and needs, and to honour our responsibility and commitment to reconciliation;
3. **Strengths and Needs-Based** services and approaches that are guided by the child or youth and their family, and recognize their circle of support;
4. **Social Inclusion** is supported so children and youth living with disabilities, and their families, are included in their communities;
5. **Effective and High-Quality** services that are safe and accountable.

To ensure that families experience these values, all services will:

- Be voluntary;
- Actively involve children, youth and families in services;
- Use person-centered planning and related approaches;
- Be provided at a range of settings and times;
- Provide information and supporting connections.

Service Delivery Model

Services are delivered through two avenues of support: family connections centres and MCFD. Centres are responsible for Developmental and Goal Focused Services. MCFD is responsible for Disability and Provincial Services.

All services will also use relational based, family-centred and holistic approaches. This involves including the child, youth and family's **circle of support** and using person-centred approaches to planning and discussions.

A circle of support is broadly defined to include family (which includes all family and relationship differences, experiences, and kinship systems) as well as other important people involved in the child, youth and/or family's life. This is to ensure that all families can safely access support from support services in the context of their community.

Primary Support Coordinator

When a child or youth and their family are accessing more than one service or support one of those professionals will take on the role of **primary support coordinator**. That primary support coordinator will collaborate with the child or youth, their family and their circle of support to deliver services, share information, and help navigate supports and services.

Service Descriptions

This Service Framework and the services described below are based on consultation with a broad group of families and services providers that has happened in 2019 and is

continuing through 2022. Consultations have included specific engagement with Indigenous, First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples and partners. How Indigenous service providers will be supported and upheld within the new system requires additional, meaningful engagement and consultation with Indigenous, First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples and partners.

As early implementation begins, engagement with Indigenous communities, families, and service providers will continue.

Vision for Support Planning

The support planning process focuses on continuously developing collaborative relationships and partnerships between the staff of the family connections centre and the child or youth and their family circle. Staff will encourage and empower the child or youth and their family to lead the planning of services to support their identified needs and goals.

All services involved in support planning will include regular opportunities for families to regularly review their support plans with the support plan coordinator and team of professionals and circles of support. This is done to make sure services are flexible and adjusted in response to changing needs.

Family Connections Centres

Family connections centres (FCCs) are contracted community agencies that will be located across the province and are intended to provide voluntary support services to the children, youth and families in each geographic region. They will be responsible for ensuring that rural and remote communities have access to services, as well as larger population centres. They will do this through outreach (such as in-home or in-community services), virtual service, and service at FCC physical locations. Physical locations may include a central location and satellite spaces to best meet the needs of the families in the region.

FCCs will deliver two main types of services; Developmental Services and Goal Focused Services.

- 1) **Developmental Services** include education and guidance, including the About My Child/About Me tool, developmental screening, and developmental monitoring. These services are available to anyone who connects with an FCC.

About My Child/About Me

About My Child/About Me are descriptive tools that offer an opportunity for families to discuss their concerns or questions with FCC staff, describe their context, and share their child or youth's strengths and needs. These tools are an initial intake questionnaire completed with the family and **are not mandatory** for accessing services at an FCC. The tools help FCC staff and families determine next steps in their support.

Developmental Monitoring

Developmental monitoring is intended for any child or youth and their family where there is concern of a developmental delay or if a delay has been highlighted through conversations with FCC staff. Developmental monitoring offers ongoing check points for families, so they are regularly supported by the centre while their child grows. This allows for timely connections to new services and shifts in ongoing services. Developmental monitoring also offers families opportunities to share feedback and access information.

- 2) **Goal Focused Services** include goal development, support planning, family support, behaviour and skill building supports, interventions, therapies, mental health supports and clinical mental health supports. *Mental health supports* are embedded within family supports, behaviour supports, and educational services offered by FCC staff. These services address overall development including social and emotional well-being for children and youth aged 0-19.

When a family accesses multiple Goal Focused Services, they may access support planning with the help from a primary support coordinator.

Support Planning

Support plans are developed collaboratively with children or youth and their families using a family and person-centred planning approach. Support plans include the contributions of a child or youth's circle of support and the goals they develop with professionals providing supports and services.

Each professional will work to build strong relationships and collaborate with the child or youth, their family, and their circle of support to ensure that each of these services is culturally safe, trauma-informed, and meaningful.

To ensure consistent delivery of services, an FCC and its satellites or subcontractors will use an MCFD provided information platform, as well as consistent criteria, to determine support needs. FCC and satellites will adhere to overarching policies, Jordan's Principle, and guidelines to support the delivery of services to children, youth, and their families.

Disability Services

When a child or youth has identified prolonged functional needs and/or a prolonged disability they may be eligible for MCFD Disability Services. These are voluntary supports delivered by the Ministry. Disability Services include:

- 1) **Support planning and coordination:** The CYSN worker (a professional employed by MCFD to deliver disability services) operates as the primary support coordinator when a child or youth and family are accessing Disability Services. The CYSN worker also coordinates planning/review meetings with professionals and monitors and assesses the provision of contracted supports.

- 2) **Respite support for families;**
- 3) **Parenting and professional supports.**

Provincial Services

These services are intended to support and enable families to access other services for children and youth with support needs. They are also specific services that can be included in support plans. These services are:

- 1) **Information services** for all members of the public (including service providers);
- 2) **Adaptive and mobility equipment and biomedical equipment and supplies** provided to eligible children and youth with a focus on supporting their functional needs;
- 3) **Health benefits** for eligible children and youth
- 4) **Youth transition consultation** and information;
- 5) **Deaf and hard of hearing services;** and
- 6) **Provincial contract management** for services for children and youth with support needs.

Conclusion

This Service Framework represents one component of a larger collaborative effort to deliver accessible, high quality, culturally safe, trauma-informed, and effective services for children and youth with support needs and their families. Family connections centres, Disability Services, and Provincial Services will work together to provide the best possible range of supports for children, youth, and their families within the context of their individual needs and preferences, their circle of support and their communities.

As engagement continues, the Service Framework and the Service Descriptions will grow and change to reflect feedback and input. We are grateful for all the work families and partners have done with us so far, and we are grateful for all the input provided and work being done now and into the future.