

MCFD Key Strategy Summary: January Update

Maintaining Momentum on Key Priorities Through Pandemic Recovery

Ministry of Children & Family Development

The following is a high-level snapshot of priority initiatives to support our goal of making transformative changes to our child and family service system. It also outlines how and when input is being sought on those initiatives.

This is not intended as a comprehensive overview of all of the work in the Ministry. We want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts that happen every day by front-line ministry staff, Delegated Aboriginal Agencies, our valued partners, and others who work so hard to support the children, youth, families and communities we serve.

Collaboration, cooperation and consultation will follow the principles of the Aboriginal Practice and Policy Framework (APPF) and our obligations under the *Declaration Act*. On August 31, 2021 we sent a [Letter of Commitment](#) to the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), which commits us to actively engage and co-develop policy and legislation changes with the FNLC and Indigenous governments.

We will continue to work with Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAAs), Indigenous service partners, as well as social sector partners. Most importantly, we want to ensure we are listening to the children, youth, families and communities we serve, knowing their voices and experiences are central to the creation of child, youth, and family services that truly meet their needs.



Context

In the [2019 Service Plan](#), the ministry shifted focus to support transformative change for the children, youth and families we serve through the following goals:

Goal 1: Indigenous Reconciliation

Goal 2: Prevention & Family Supports

Goal 3: Youth & Young Adults

Goal 4: Network of Care

Over the last two years, the ministry has worked to maintain momentum in advancing these goals, including reflecting the lessons learned through the COVID-19 pandemic. See the [2020 Service Plan](#) and [2021 Service Plans](#) here.

The following is a short overview of the key strategies aligned to the goals.

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Goal 1: Indigenous Reconciliation

Indigenous Children & Family Services Jurisdiction: Currently the ministry is engaged at tripartite coordination agreement tables with five Indigenous Governing Bodies that are seeking to exercise jurisdiction for child and family services pursuant to the pathway set out in the federal *Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families* (federal Act). Additionally, the ministry is meeting with five other Indigenous communities that are exploring options for increased authority and jurisdiction. This work is ongoing.

Reform of the Child, Family and Community Service Act: The ministry has committed to ongoing and transformative change to the child and family service system, supported by the federal Act, and the provincial *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (the Declaration Act). Meeting both Acts commits the ministry to work collaboratively with Indigenous¹ peoples to ensure systemic reform reflects their vision of self-determination. The ministry will work closely with Indigenous partners, such as the First Nations Leadership Council and the Métis Nation of British Columbia, in the development and implementation of an engagement approach that includes Indigenous partners and communities.

Initial engagement is expected to begin early 2022, going through to late 2022. Engagement will also support MCFD's ongoing commitment to change practice and policy to better support Indigenous children, youth and families.

¹Indigenous is used primarily to refer to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people

Goal 2: Prevention & Family Supports

Transforming Services for Children and Youth with Support Needs: MCFD is working toward the creation of a new community-based service delivery model. Under this new approach, children, youth and their families will be able to quickly access information, expert intervention and therapies at new one-stop family connections centres. These supports and services will be available from birth to age 19 and will be based on a child's or youth's individual needs, regardless of whether they have a referral or diagnosis. As a first step, centres will open in two areas – the Northwest and Central Okanagan – starting in 2023 before being launched provincewide in 2024.

Pathway to Hope: MCFD is actively working with the Ministries of Mental Health and Addictions, Education and Health to implement the following mental health services and supports:

Early Intervention Teams provide a wraparound service for families with young children. When there are emerging mental health and behavioural challenges identified for children age 0-5 (or before school age), a multidisciplinary team is available to provide more intensive support than community service providers can on their own. Teams have been supporting families in Maple Ridge and Comox Valley since June 2021 and are in the initial phases of offering services in Richmond, Coast Mountain (North West) and Okanagan-Similkameen. It is expected that 15 more teams will be in place by 2024.

Integrated Child and Youth Teams (ICYT) are multidisciplinary teams consisting of Clinicians from Child and Youth Mental Health, Education and Health Authorities. Teams are also made up of youth and parent peer support, Indigenous Support and multicultural support (depending on community need). Teams provide service in schools, in offices, in community and in family homes. These teams will work with young people and their family/caregiver to develop a common plan and provide evidence-based and respectful care that matches them and their needs. Currently, the teams are being established in five school districts and it is expected that 15 more teams will be in place by 2024.

Step Up Step Down (SUSD) Outreach Services: Step-Up Step-Down Outreach is an intensive service for children/youth with severe mental health/substance use conditions that aims to prevent and reduce time in hospital, provide support after hospital where needed, and meet the need for a higher intensity service than what can be offered through community based services. Step up Step Down Outreach has been in operation in Maple Ridge since May 2021. Comox Valley, Coast Mountain (the North West), Richmond, and Okanagan-Similkameen have started hiring and will be operational soon.

Step Up Step Down (SUSD) Bed-based Services: When Step-Up Step-Down outreach services are not enough and a 24/7 treatment model is needed, Step-Up-Step-Down beds will be available. Planning for engagement and communication is underway.

Social Work Oversight Engagement: MCFD is responsible for the effective oversight of social work through the Social Workers Act, including social workers who are regulated through the BC College of Social Workers. MCFD is engaging broadly with partners and stakeholders on social work oversight to explore the complexities and challenges surrounding the current model and develop an informed

understanding of potential alternative models. The proposed engagement is in response to long-standing questions that have been raised on social work oversight in BC.

Prevention & Family Supports: The ministry recognizes the importance of strengthening and prioritizing supports for families and children based on their needs and in collaboration with communities and other partners. We know that early intervention leads to improved outcomes and keep families together, safe and well. The ministry is developing the Prevention & Family Supports Service Framework to ensure child safety and provide direction for the implementation of significant systemic changes in alignment with the federal *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families*, which prioritizes preventative care in supporting families, including prenatal services, over other child welfare services.

Intercountry Adoption Services and Regulatory Review: MCFD is conducting an external review of the licensed adoption agency model and regulatory framework, as well as how intercountry adoption services are provided. The review is expected to take 18 months.

Early Learning and Child Care: Through the 10-year Childcare BC Plan, the province is creating thousands of quality, affordable child care spaces, building better facilities, and training more people to become early childhood educators. As the Province advances this plan, the Ministries of Children and Family Development and Education will engage with a broad range of child care partners – including child care providers, community service partners, parent organizations, distinctions-based child care for First Nations, Metis and Inuit families, local governments, school districts and child care advocates. We value this input on what is most critical as we continue to evolve early learning and child care in British Columbia.

Goal 3: Youth & Young Adults

Youth and Young Adult Transitions Service Framework: The ministry's vision for youth and young adults in and from care is to provide them with the tools, cultural connections, resources and supports to meet their needs and interrupt the cycles of poverty, intergenerational trauma, homelessness and overreliance on the social system. While MCFD holds a clear mandate pre-19, to support the transition to adult services, one ministry alone cannot meet all of the needs. To make a difference, a cross-government integrated approach is needed and MCFD is working with cross-government ministries and agencies to identify a comprehensive youth transitions approach.

Consultation is occurring on key components of a Youth and Young Adult Transitions Service Framework – such as transition planning, housing supports, pandemic emergency measures, and funding for young adults leaving care and engaged in post-secondary education. The ministry is also developing options for an improved youth transitions service delivery model that better meets the needs of youth transitioning to adulthood, leveraging existing resources in the ministry.

Youth Justice Service Framework: Aligned with the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, the ministry is modernizing youth justice services and allocating youth justice resources to better support youth and families and to provide opportunities to victims, communities, along with key human services professionals to be involved in and informed about the range of youth justice services in BC.

Initial service framework engagements began in the spring of 2021 and will continue to occur with Indigenous partners, rights holders, and communities over the next 12 months to inform future service enhancements in youth justice.

Goal 4: Network of Care

Specialized Homes and Support Services: Supporting children and youth – by intervening earlier and with better supports – is a priority for the ministry. We will establish a responsive network of Specialized Homes and Support Services for children and youth needing more than what community-based and outreach services can provide them. These integrated services include respite and relief, low-barrier short-term stabilization, emergency care, and specialized long-term care. Input is being collected through [govTogetherBC](#) in addition to specific engagement sessions.