

# QUALITY ASSURANCE

## SERVICE FRAMEWORK

LAST REVISED FEBRUARY 2023



## Acknowledgements

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (ministry) gratefully acknowledges it carries out its work on the traditional territories of **Indigenous**<sup>1</sup> peoples throughout British Columbia, whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

The ministry would like to thank everyone who supported and contributed to the development of this Service Framework. In particular, the ministry is grateful for the youth and young adults, community representatives, **Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies** (ICFS Agencies, also known as *Delegated Aboriginal Agencies*), First Nations hereditary leadership and ministry staff who were involved in the practice shifts towards **Outcomes-based service delivery**, which informed the Quality Assurance Service Framework (QA Service Framework).

Quality service is a priority across all ICFS Agencies and ministry programs and services. We recognize the commitment and efforts made by staff across the province of British Columbia, to continually improve service delivery to the children, youth, families and communities served.



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<sup>1</sup> Words defined in the glossary (appendix) are in bold italics the first time they are used in the document



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## Introduction

The ministry provides quality services to support its vision that Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and youth in British Columbia live in safe, healthy and nurturing families and be strongly connected to their communities and culture. The direct services the ministry provides can be weaved together to form a network of care that is tailored to each family's individual needs. These services are provided across the ministry's core services:



The ministry developed a Strategic Framework, focused on long-term change and the work needed to address systemic challenges, to achieve its vision. The ministry uses a 'service framework' approach to operationalize these systemic changes and help organize, clarify and communicate the services the ministry provides.

In British Columbia, the Provincial Director of Child Welfare has accountability for quality assurance activities across all ministry services, some of which are required under the [Child, Family and Community Service Act](#). The QA Service Framework relates only to those monitoring and oversight activities conducted by the Quality Assurance Branch (QA) and defines how QA services contribute to lasting reconciliation and influence and guide ministry services and supports to the children, youth, families and communities served.

The QA Service Framework applies across all the core services of the ministry and ICFS Agencies, including those delivered by our partner agencies in the contracted sector. It is a 'living document' that will evolve over time to continually align with the ministry's overall strategic framework and the service frameworks implemented throughout the ministry, many of which are under development. The QA Service Framework will use QA data collection systems to measure, maintain and improve the quality of service provided to families on an ongoing basis. Placing families at the centre of planning ensures alignment across all the service frameworks.

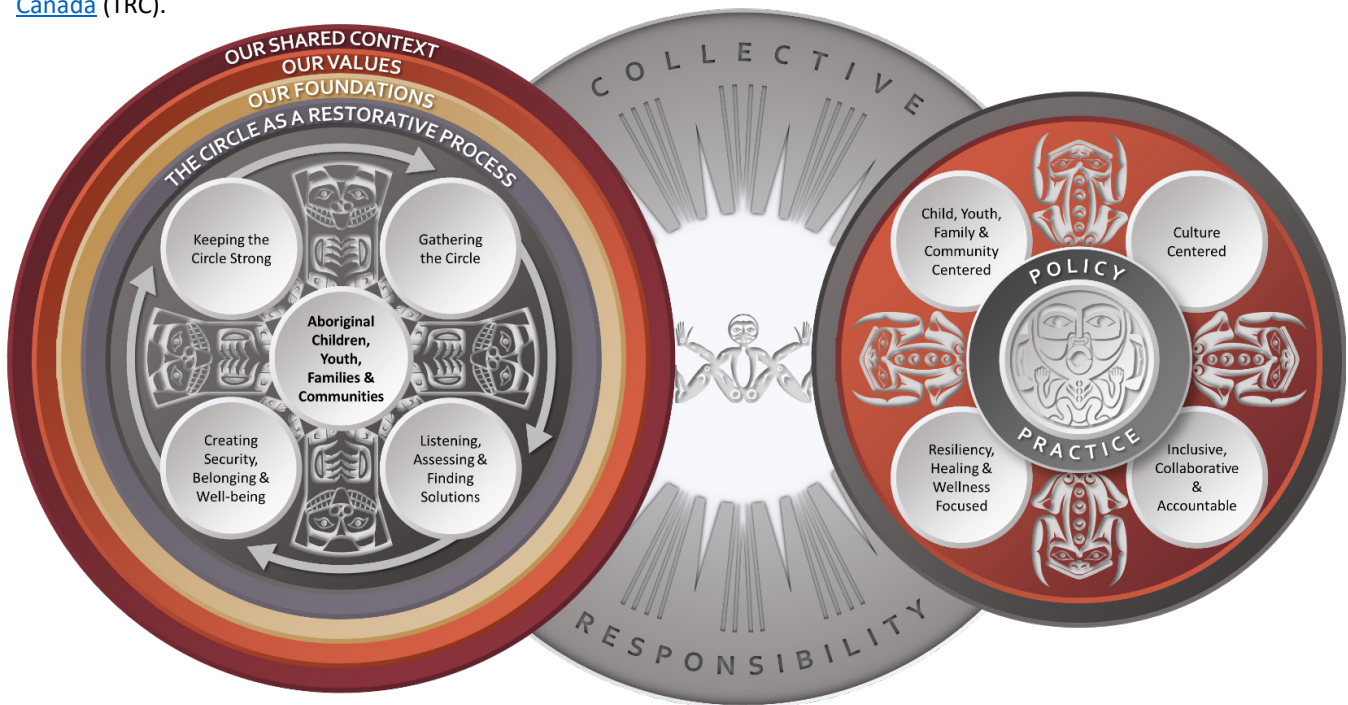


## Commitment to Reconciliation

British Columbia is home to the second largest population of Indigenous peoples in Canada, with distinct and diverse cultures, values and languages. This includes 34 distinct languages, making up 60% of the First Nations languages in Canada. Within British Columbia, there are over 129,000 First Nations peoples, with more than 200 distinct First Nations (that’s one-third of all First Nations in Canada), more than 59,000 Métis peoples and nearly 800 Inuit peoples.

Indigenous children and youth have long been over-represented in the child welfare system, a direct result of the over-involvement of the system in the lives of Indigenous families, institutional discrimination and racism, and the resulting **intergenerational trauma**.

The design and delivery of QA services will reflect the province’s commitment to adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) through the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#). In addition, the ministry is committed to responding to the [Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#) (TRC).



The QA Service Framework upholds the rights of Indigenous peoples to:

- Exercise jurisdiction over child and family services
- Self-determination
- Be recognized as distinct peoples
- Be free from discrimination

Lasting reconciliation requires continued commitment, effort and learning. The QA Service Framework intends to contribute to lasting reconciliation by:

- Honouring and including Indigenous leadership and knowledge-keepers in the design and delivery of QA services
- Adopting the principles of cultural continuity and substantive equality in accordance with [An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families](#), as well as the [Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia’s Relationship with Indigenous Peoples](#)



- Building upon and creating collaborative relationships with Indigenous families, organizations, and communities to develop flexible and **culturally safe** services that are free from stigma and racism
- Applying the ministry’s [Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework in British Columbia](#) (APPF) to all QA policy and practice involving Indigenous children, youth, young adults and families. The APPF is intended to improve the experiences of Indigenous children, youth, families and communities through restorative policy and practice that is culturally safe and **trauma-informed**. This approach supports and honours Indigenous peoples’ cultural systems of caring, wellness and resiliency at the community, family and individual level.

The term “Indigenous” is intended to be inclusive of status and non-status First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. This document recognizes that Indigenous peoples have the right to define and identify themselves as they choose.



## Our Values and Principles

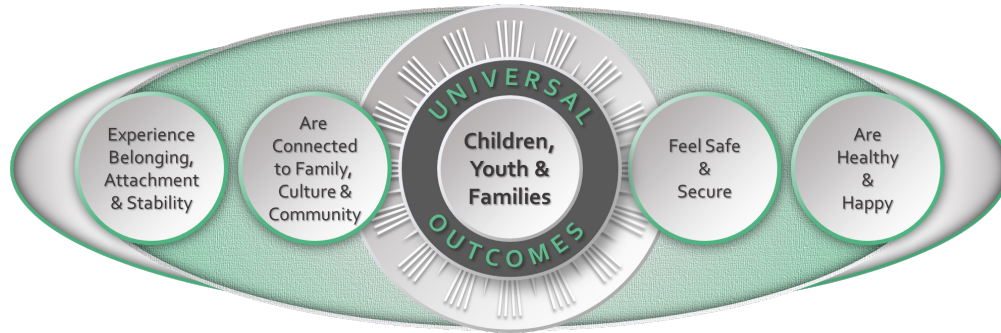
QA values effective, accountable and high-quality services that are child, youth and family centred, trauma-informed and culturally safe. The development and delivery of QA services is further guided by the following key principles and considerations:

- honours and embodies anti-racism and safety for all cultures
- recognizes children and youth have rights that are protected by the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- promotes a culture of learning and growth to support **continuous quality improvement**
- applies **gender-based analysis plus** (GBA+)
- utilizes a **strengths-based** approach
- relies on partnership and coordination across the system to improve outcomes for children, youth and families
- provides flexibility and evolves to align with the ministry’s strategic and service frameworks
- prioritizes keeping families together
- recognizes Indigenous families and Indigenous communities share responsibility for the upbringing and well-being of Indigenous children, and early identification and involvement of an Indigenous child or youth’s family, community and culture are essential to restorative practices that are culturally safe and relevant
- informed by research, experience and practice, including **Indigenous-wise practice** (evidence-informed)
- adheres to the **Principles of Administrative Fairness**



## Intended Outcomes

QA serves children, youth, young adults and families who received ICFS Agency and/or ministry services by supporting practice and system improvement that is focused on meaningful outcomes. The outcomes are defined within the ministry's various service frameworks, and vary depending on the service being provided, but are rooted to four universal outcomes:



## Core Services

QA supports the ministry in achieving its intended outcomes by overseeing key elements of the ministry service frameworks or the delegated services provided by ICFS Agencies. When QA identifies a practice or system improvement opportunity, QA may make recommendations, or develop actions in collaboration with ICFS Agencies or ministry leadership, to achieve this change.

The key success **indicators** for all QA services are developed through an **engagement circle** process and will draw from (or relate to) outcomes in the following ministry service frameworks: *Family Preservation and Out-of-Care Support, Services for Children and Youth in Care, Adoption Services, Youth Justice, Youth Transitions, Children and Youth with Support Needs, and Child and Youth Mental Health.*

As outcomes and indicators of success are defined, data collection methods and tools are developed. These tools support QA in evaluating whether the ICFS Agencies or ministry are delivering services and achieving outcomes as intended.

QA services are informed through a review of electronic and/or paper records as well as direct communication with service recipients and providers. Evaluating performance using outcomes, process measures and the voices and lived experiences of children, youth, young adults and families, provides a holistic picture that helps us understand the effectiveness of the ICFS Agencies or ministry in influencing change at all levels. The data collected across



QA services is shared in a manner that will be understood and accepted by ICFS Agencies and ministry staff and will inform practice and system changes.

QA serves children, youth, young adults and families directly and indirectly, depending on the service being provided. People who participate in QA services can expect a service that is trauma-informed, culturally safe and guided by a balance of their lived experiences with the expectation of legislation, policy and standards.

## CORE SERVICES

Core Services evaluate the performance of ministry services and those delegated to ICFS Agencies through qualitative (the voices and lived experiences of those involved in the service being evaluated) and quantitative (compliance to legislation, policy and processes) measures to ensure the intended outcomes for children, youth and families were achieved.

### Foster Parent Reviews

Foster Parent Reviews occur at the request of a caregiver (foster parent) after the ministry or ICFS Agency completes a Family Care Home Investigation or Quality of Care Review (QOCR) that results in serious restriction to their care home, such as a reduction in beds or closing of the home. These reviews examine whether the ministry or ICFS Agency followed the Principles of Administrative Fairness and the relevant policy in completing the investigation or QOCR.

### Service Evaluations

Service Evaluations (SEs, formerly known as practice audits) are initiated by QA and conducted across several ministry service frameworks, at provincial and Service Delivery Area levels, to inform continuous improvements to policy and practice. SEs focus on the outcomes of the services provided and are based on a review of electronic and/or paper records, as well as information gathered through communicating with service recipients. Collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data across all evaluated service frameworks allows for greater contextual information to be used by QA when formulating findings of each evaluation. The goal of SEs is to present the reader with a holistic picture of services provided and their impact on children, youth and families. Ministry or ICFS Agency leadership can request an evaluation audit outside the established review cycle, with a focus on a specific service. These are known as a Special Audits.

### ICFS Agency Practice Audits

ICFS Agency Practice Audits differ from Service Evaluations in that ICFS Agency practice analysts work together on site at the ICFS Agency to collect data and consult with the staff as needed. QA audits every agency across the province separately. The practice audit process for ICFS Agencies is based on the Aboriginal Operational Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI) as well as ministry policies when applicable.





### Complaints Resolution Program

At times, disagreements may arise between a person engaged in service delivery and the ministry or ICFS Agency. Staff resolve most issues directly without a formal complaint. When it is not possible to resolve a disagreement, the Complaints Resolution Program provides a mechanism for children, youth, parents or their advocates to raise their concerns. Once QA accepts a complaint, the complainant may choose the Complaints Resolution process to negotiate a remedy to the complaint matters or the Administrative Review process. Both ICFS Agencies and the ministry strive to resolve complaints through the Resolution stream first, but it is the complainants right to make a request to move directly to an Administrative Review.

### Administrative Reviews

Administrative Reviews use an uninvolved review authority who will complete an independent analysis of all complaint related information obtained through a review of file documentation, interviews and review of relevant legislation, policy and standards, to draw conclusions, and if required, may develop recommendations to address issues raised. This administrative process does not provide an opportunity for the involved parties to engage in negotiation. QA shares a completed Administrative Review with the complainant and the involved ICFS Agency or ministry office.

### Contracted Services Monitoring & Oversight

QA provides monitoring and oversight of ministry services, including those delivered through contract. Evaluations are done by QA in relation to contract obligations and deliverables; systemic efficiencies; achievement of intended outcomes for children, youth, families, and communities; and staff practice in adherence to legislation and policy.

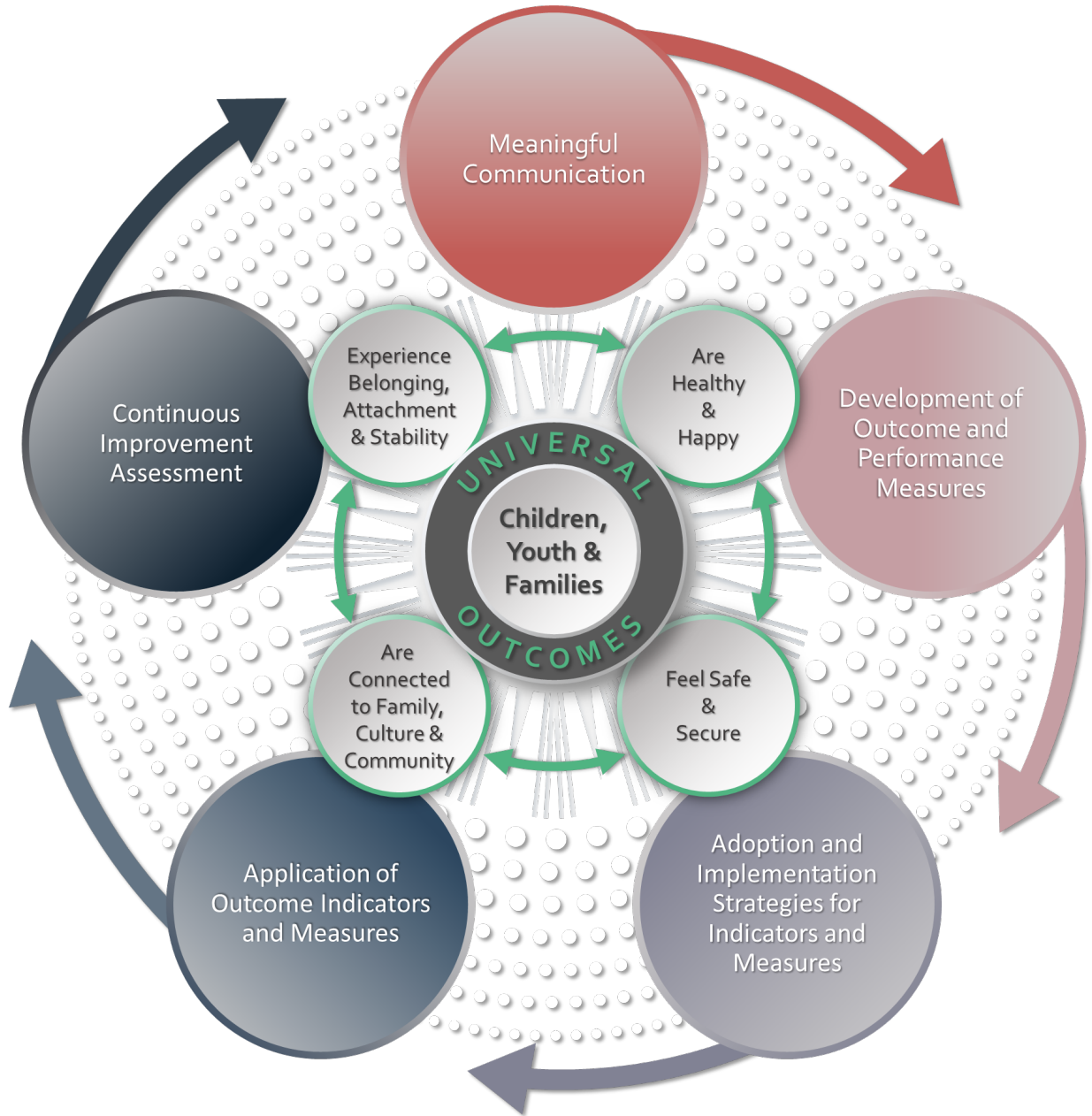
### Child & Family Practice Reviews

Child & Family Practice Reviews (formerly known as case reviews) are initiated by QA following the death or injury of a child, youth or young adult who were in care or received ICFS Agency or ministry services within the preceding 12 months. These reviews integrate the variety of services provided into one review to measure whether the ICFS Agency or ministry achieved the outcomes connected to the respective service framework. The reports are based on a review of the electronic and/or paper records and, at times, include interviews with involved practitioners.



## QA Logic Model

This logic model is a graphic depiction (road map) that presents the shared relationships among the resources, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact of QA services. It depicts the relationship between QA services and their intended effects.



## Glossary

**Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI):** CQI offers a set of concepts and methods the organization applies to its processes. It shifts the attention from the people of an organization to its processes and products, seeking ways to satisfy an organization's internal (employees) and external customers. CQI encourages teamwork and utilizes internal knowledge to optimize processes. Aligned with corporate goals, strategic plans, and cross divisional, ICFS Agencies and branch objectives, CQI is a cyclical culture of meaningfully engaged learning through shared measurement and activities that gather high quality evidence toward improved outcomes for children and families.

**Culturally Safe:** A style of practice that recognizes transformation of relationships where the needs and voice of the child, youth and family take a predominant role, and includes an analysis of power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonization and colonial relationships as they apply to social policy and practice. Cultural safety involves actively exploring and challenging complex power relationships including the way that bias, stereotyping, discrimination and racism can impact the way services are delivered and its recipients.

**Engagement Circle:** A process whereby group of people come together as a circle to collectively plan and co-create. It is rooted in the idea of the traditional Circle process. The Circle speaks to the vital importance of strengthening relationships through sharing, collaborating and striving for consensus in collective decision making. Diverse perspectives and needs can be shared and respected where equality exists. The Circle is the sacred space where healing can occur, interconnectedness and interdependent relationships with one another are emphasized and unity respectful of our diversity may be found.

**Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+):** An analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men, and gender diverse people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The “plus” in GBA+ is not just about differences between biological (sexes) and socio-cultural (genders). We all have multiple characteristics that intersect and contribute to who we are. GBA+ considers other identity factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability and how the interaction between these factors influences the way we might experience government policies and initiatives.

**Indicators:** Indicators provide a way to measure progress toward achieving outcomes and incorporate a range of administrative, social, physical, health and economic indicators at a qualitative and quantitative level.

**Indigenous:** First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada. The term Indigenous does not identify the uniqueness and diverse cultures of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and is often viewed as a “pan-Indigenous” approach. For this Service Framework, “Indigenous” is intended to be inclusive of status and non-status First Nations both on and off-reserve and Inuit peoples. QA recognizes Indigenous peoples have the right to define and identify themselves as they choose.

**Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies** (also known as Delegated Aboriginal Agencies): An Indigenous Child and Family Service agency that employs practitioners to provide mandated child welfare services in accordance with the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA). An ICFS Agency enters into a formal agreement with the director under section 93 (1) (g) (iii) of the CFCSA to provide necessary infrastructure and support for their employees, who in turn may receive delegation from the director under section 92 of the CFCSA. Only delegated practitioners can act under the CFCSA.

**Indigenous-Wise Practice:** A way of approaching Indigenous community practice and knowledge exchange, which utilizes the traditional knowledge base of Indigenous peoples and acknowledges the relevant and dynamic contextual nature of Indigenous peoples’ and communities’ experiences and contemporary approaches. Indigenous peoples in British Columbia



have unique world views, distinct cultures, values and ways of life, and a range of traditions and practices that are fundamental to supporting the well-being of their children and families. Research, evidence and learning demonstrate that when Indigenous cultures, values and world views inform and shape culturally safe child, youth and family practice, outcomes are improved.

**Intergenerational Trauma:** describes the neurobiological and/or psychological effects that can be experienced by people who have close connections with trauma survivors. Coping and adaptation patterns developed in response to trauma can be passed from one generation to the next. The historical and intergenerational trauma related to colonization (past and present), the Indian residential school experience, Indian Hospitals, the '60s Scoop and other forms of systemic oppression experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada has had a devastating impact on Indigenous families and communities.

**Outcomes-based Service Delivery:** An evidence-based, integrated approach to centering outcomes across the ministry's services. It measures and reports on the status of the ministry's programs and services and provides a rigorous, systematic and robust system of data gathering and analysis that assesses how the ministry is doing against a purposeful range of indicators set out in the Outcomes Model.

**Principles of Administrative Fairness:** The concept of administrative fairness is based on the recognition of "natural justice" or "procedural fairness", which has evolved through the courts to ensure that decisions of administrative bodies are arrived at fairly. Fairness in public service delivery has key principles, which includes allowing people to be heard in processes that affect them, ensuring decisions are made without bias, following the rules that apply, and making decisions that are considerate of an individual's needs and circumstances and based on relevant information.

Further, fairness allows for providing clear and meaningful reasons for decisions so the person affected can understand what process your organization followed and how it came to the decision it did. By following a fair process, members of the public can better understand the reasons for decisions being made by those in positions of authority.

**Reconciliation:** In Canada, the process of reconciliation is tied to the federal government's relationship with Indigenous peoples. The term has come to describe attempts made by individuals and institutions to raise awareness about colonization and its ongoing effects on Indigenous peoples. Reconciliation also refers to efforts made to address the harms caused by various policies and programs of colonization, such as residential schools.

**Strengths-based Approach:** 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.

**Trauma-informed Practice/Approach:** Trauma-informed practice means integrating an understanding of past and current experiences of violence and trauma into all aspects of service delivery. The goal of trauma-informed systems is to avoid re-traumatizing individuals and support safety, choice, and control to promote healing. Trauma-informed practice is about applying principles: awareness, safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, being strengths-based and skills-building. In each setting, these principles will play out differently, and services will need to be tailored for diverse groups (by age, gender, culture).



