

## Frequently asked questions

### Why is this change happening?

- Today's system is not working and places extraordinary stress on families, who struggle to piece together services and support for their children.
- Children, such as children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome, and brain injuries, qualify for too few supports. In many rural and remote areas, children and youth and their families have no services or supports at all.
- Under the new approach, family connections hubs will provide children, youth, and their families quick access to information, expert intervention, and therapies.
- 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, hubs will open in two areas – the Northwest and Central Okanagan – starting in 2023 before being launched provincewide in 2024.

### **My child is currently on a waitlist for an autism assessment. Should I continue pursuing – and paying for – a diagnosis if it's not going to be needed to access funding?**

- In the future system, children will receive services quickly because they will no longer need a diagnosis.
- However, receiving a diagnosis is still beneficial as it provides information on the prognosis and, in some cases the cause of a disability.
- Families are encouraged to seek a diagnosis if possible because it may also help children and youth access services through other ministries and partners, including the education system and Community Living BC.
- Today services and supports for children and youth with support needs and their families are only available after the diagnosis is made, which can take months or years, delaying access to critical services and supports early in a child's life.
- Through the planned family connections hubs, they will access early intervention therapies and services that are critical to supporting optimal growth and development for children and youth who have – or who are at risk of – developmental delay or disability.

### **What services will be provided at family connections hubs?**

A range of supports and services will be provided that support the needs of children, youth, and their families that will be based on their needs, which will include:

- Development and goal focused services
- Disability services

Learn more about types of services that will be available: [gov.bc.ca/FamilyConnectionsHubs#services](https://gov.bc.ca/FamilyConnectionsHubs#services)

### **Will parents still have choice in their therapist?**

- Children and youth will be at the center of decision-making in the family connections hubs. Parents and caregivers are experts in their child or youth's lives and will be a central voice in their child's collaborative team and play a key and ongoing role in co-creating a plan and goal setting for their child.
- If the match for a therapist is not compatible for the child or youth, families will work collaboratively with the hub to find a solution. This could include a new professional or service, or an additional assessment.
- The goal of the hubs is to recognize and tailor services to the individual needs of the children, youth, families, and communities they serve. Families will collaborate with their primary professional at the family connections hub in developing goals and the support plan for their child/youth.
- In addition, each hub is expected to create a welcoming, inclusive, trauma-informed, culturally safe, and respectful environment for all Indigenous families, as well as those of different cultures and traditions, and LGBTQ2S+ children, youth, and families.

### **How will families be involved in deciding what their child needs?**

- Children and youth will be at the centre of decision-making in the family connection hub approach. Families know their children best, will be a central voice in their child's collaborative team, and play a key and ongoing role in decision-making and goal setting.
- Parents and caregivers will participate in the initial interview and any follow-up assessments.
- They will work closely with their child's professional team to create meaningful goals for their child and will collaborate with their primary professional at the family connections hub in developing the support plan for their child/youth.
- In addition, each hub is expected to create a welcoming, inclusive, trauma-informed, culturally safe, and respectful environment for all Indigenous families, as well as those of different cultures and traditions, and LGBTQ2S+ children, youth, and families.

### **How will a family receive respite and in-home supports?**

- Respite and in-home supports are among the supports provided through disability services.
- When a family is eligible for disability services, a Child and Youth with Support Needs worker from the ministry will join the hub support team and become their primary coordinating professional.
- Many families are already working with Children with Support Needs workers and this will continue in the new system.

Learn more about types of services that will be available: [gov.bc.ca/FamilyConnectionsHubs#services](https://gov.bc.ca/FamilyConnectionsHubs#services)

### **How does the new system support children and youth with specialized therapy needs?**

- Family connections hubs will provide a range of culturally safe, and trauma informed specialized therapies – including behavioral supports, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and speech-language therapy.
- Specialized services will be coordinated, tailored and flexible and, most importantly, based on need and not a diagnosis.
- The ministry is exploring how provincially contracted specialized services can play a role and support the family connections hubs and their professionals.
- Children and youth needing supports such as adaptive, mobility and medically necessary equipment and supplies will be able to access them through the ministry's provincial services with a focus on supporting their functional and health needs.

### **What if the family needs a specialist that is not available at their family connections hub?**

- The family connections hub will work with the family to identify what services they need to meet their goals and connect them with service providers outside of the hub where needed.

### **How are needs met or services available for children and youth who are high functioning?**

- All children and youth with support needs will be able to access developmental and goal-focused services at the family connections hub.
- Services provided will be based on the needs of the individual child or youth, which will be identified through a collaborative process between families and the clinical expertise of professionals working at family connections hubs.
- Services may include needs-based developmental screening and monitoring, therapies, behaviour support, mental health supports and educational services,
- No child or youth will be turned away from service or support if they have identified needs.

### **Will professionals come to school or homes?**

- In-home services, either virtually or in-person may be available depending on the needs of the family and the capacity of the professionals.
- As with the current state, the ability of service providers to provide services in schools will vary on the policies of the local school districts.

### **What about travel to get to the family connections hubs?**

- It will be an expectation of the hub that services will be provided in way that best meets the needs of the children and youth and their families.
- Families will be supported through a blend of outreach or virtual services when going to a family connections hub is not possible.

### **How will waitlists for services be reduced by establishing family connections hubs?**

- The ministry will develop service request and service response guidelines for the family connections hubs to ensure consistent approaches are used throughout the province. This will ensure children, youth and their families are not left behind any longer.
- There are several service response strategies the ministry will explore including:
  - Establishing regular check-ins with children, youth, and families throughout the service journey to monitor progress of the support plan and goals
  - Adapting service delivery to provide group services and supports when reasonable and possible
  - Increasing the use of allied professionals such as therapy assistants and interventionists.
- Family connections hub staff will monitor and report on caseloads including the number of children and youth receiving services, number of children and youth waiting for services and the wait times to receive services.
- This new data collection in the early implementation areas will allow a better ability to monitor service response by the hubs and help inform service response for full province-wide implementation in 2024.

### **What if a family doesn't agree with certain therapies?**

- Family connections hubs will work collaboratively with the families ensuring the goals of children or youth are met.
- Parents and caregivers are experts on their children and their input will be important in the goal development and review process.
- Families should discuss their concerns, ideas and needs with the primary professional and they will work together to find a solution.
- Each family connections hub must offer a fair and transparent dispute resolution and appeal process to ensure that if families have a concern it can be addressed.

### **How will there be enough skilled professionals to meet the demand for service?**

- The availability of qualified professionals and organizational capacity is essential to reliable, high-quality service delivery and to successful implementation of the family connections hubs.
- To ensure that the expertise exists to staff the new hubs, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) conducted significant research into the current state of service delivery.
- MCFD analyzed the current services including:
  - Child Development Centres, (CDC) which provide most of the services (although not through the same delivery model) as the family connections hubs
  - Other MCFD contracts providing services to children and youth with support needs
  - Services offered to children with autism (separate from other services directly contracted by MCFD)
- Based on the ministry's research, the current complement of professionals found in today's contracted services and existing service providers providing autism intervention will make up the professionals in the new system.

### **What kinds of qualifications and experience will staff at the family connections hubs require?**

- While there will be core services provided in all family connections hubs, it is expected that services, supports and staff will be tailored to meet the needs of the children and youth and families being served, as well as the needs of the community and region.
- We anticipate a need for professional designations in speech/language, physical and occupational therapies, as well as board-certified behaviour consultants at every family connections hub in B.C.

### **What is the relationship between family connections hubs and public health or education?**

- There are overlaps and the ministry is having cross-ministry discussions with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education to work out the details around the linkages and relationship between the family connections hub and Health and Education systems to ensure service and supports are provided to children and with youth with support needs.
- MCFD staff host a biweekly meeting to discuss the impacts of changing CYSN services to partner ministries. The meetings have staff from the Ministry of Education, Health Social Development and Poverty Reduction and the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions.

### **What is the funding model for the new approach to services for children and youth with support needs and their families?**

- Government will make investments in supporting the transition, early implementation, and provincial implementation of the new approach to service delivery for children and youth with support needs and their families.
- The provincial government is in the middle of the budget process now and details about the investments for services for children and youth with support needs will be provided when the budget process is completed.
- In 2021/2022, the Province is investing \$440.6 million to provide services to children and youth with support needs including:
  - A \$13-million increase for direct services to children with support needs and their families
  - Over a \$2-million increase to funding for deaf and hard-of-hearing services — the first increase for these services in over 10 years.
  - Over \$4 million for staff recruitment and retention at community agencies that serve these children and families.
- In addition, the ministry has increased funding for children and youth with support needs services annually since 2017.
- Starting in April 2022, we are also investing \$10 million in the medical equipment benefits portion of the At Home Program, which will help save out-of-pocket costs for families whose children require in-home medical equipment to support their needs.