
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2008CFD0027-000788
May 20, 2008

Ministry of Children and Family Development

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

VICTORIA – Implementation over the past five years of the child and youth mental health plan has created a solid foundation of effective programs and services that can now be built on, announced Children and Family Development Minister Tom Christensen today as he released the Child and Youth Mental Health Plan Progress Report.

“Over the past five years, we have seen much greater emphasis on prevention, early intervention, and a strengthening of family and community capacity to support children and youth with mental health problems,” said Christensen. “The ministry will now carry out community consultations to identify remaining service gaps and set priorities so we can continue to deliver effective mental health services for children and youth.”

One in seven children and youth experience mental health problems serious enough to cause significant distress and impair their functioning at home, at school, with their peers and in the community. Since implementation of the mental health plan, nearly 20,000 children and youth with mental health challenges have received mental health support annually, in contrast to only 11,000 who received support in 2004/05.

The Child and Youth Mental Health Plan was launched in 2003, and established B.C. as a national leader in child and youth mental health. The progress report outlines key successes, strategies and initiatives undertaken in four areas: reducing risk; building capacity; improving treatment and support; and improving performance.

Highlights include:

- Introduction of a classroom-based anxiety prevention program in elementary schools;
- Development of a self-help resource, *Dealing with Depression: Anti-depressant Skills for Teens*;
- Creation of approximately 300 new mental health positions in B.C. over the last three years; and
- Establishment of group treatment programs and services outside traditional office settings, new multicultural outreach services, and Kids in Control groups to assist children and youth living in families with parental mental illness.

The ministry will consult with stakeholders in June and July to review the impact of the work of the past five years on the child and youth mental health service system. Feedback from the communities will help determine next steps to continue to provide the tools, training and expertise to support ongoing improvement in child and youth mental health services.

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

Media contact: Seumas Gordon
Media Relations Officer
Ministry of Children and Family
Development
250 356-2939
250 818-4508 (cell)

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.

BACKGROUND

2008CFD0027-000788
May 20, 2008

Ministry of Children and Family Development

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CYMH PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

KEY FACTS:

- The Child and Youth Mental Health Plan launched in 2003 is the first of its kind in Canada and established B.C. as a national leader in the area of child and youth mental health.
- One in seven children and youth in B.C. will experience a mental disorder serious enough to cause significant distress and impair their functioning with their peers and family at home and at school.
- The most common mental health problems in children and youth are anxiety and depression. Anxiety disorders include generalized anxiety, social anxiety, fears and phobias, panic attacks, obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Depression is characterized by feelings of hopelessness, changes in appetite and sleep and, in extreme cases, suicidal thoughts and attempts. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people in B.C. and Canada.
- Mental health problems that begin in childhood or adolescence are often the beginning of difficulties that continue into adulthood. The good news is that the majority of children can be helped early and effectively, avoiding lifelong hardship and disability.

KEY STATS:

- Today, nearly 20,000 children and youth receive MCFD outpatient, community mental health services annually – almost double the number who received services in 2004.
- The Child and Youth Mental Health budget has more than doubled since implementation of the five-year CYMH plan: in 2008/09, it is more than \$87 million – an increase of \$17 million over 2007/08 and an increase of \$48 million or 120 per cent since 2000/01.
- Approximately 300 new mental health positions in B.C. were created over the last three years. Most of these positions have been filled and recruitment continues for Aboriginal and difficult-to-fill positions in some regions.

KEY PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES:

- A self-help tool for youth, *Dealing with Depression: Anti-Depressant Skills for Teens*, is available on the ministry website at www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental_health.
- Kids in Control groups in the Fraser Region to teach effective coping skills to children and youth living in families with parental mental illness.

- Through a partnership with the Knowledge Network and the Children's Health Policy Centre, four one-hour documentaries have been developed on depression, anxiety, early psychosis and behaviour problems in children and youth as part of a broader public-education campaign. To view the documentaries online, go to www.knowledgenetwork.ca/takingcare/intro.html.
- Group treatment programs and services delivered outside of traditional office settings have broadened the continuum of services and allow more children and youth to access help.
- New multicultural outreach services in Fraser and Vancouver Island regions for families who have difficulty accessing CYMH services due to language and cultural barriers.
- Improved planning and collaboration across the broader health and social services community related to delivery of child and youth mental health services through the CYMH Network, a cross-ministry committee.
- Approximately 90,000 Grade 4 and 5 students in B.C. have been provided the opportunity to participate in the FRIENDS program, an evidence-based anxiety prevention and risk reduction program presented in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and participating school districts.

Media contact: Seumas Gordon
Media Relations Officer
Ministry of Children and Family
Development
250 356-2939
250 818-4508 (cell)

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.