

Ministry of Children & Family Development  
**Multi-Year Action Plan**  
**2017-2020**





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# A Message From our Deputy Minister

I am very pleased to present the Ministry of Children and Family Development's Multi Year Action Plan which outlines our long-term vision for children, youth and their families in British Columbia.

The ministry provides a wide range of services, with much of the current focus on the group of most vulnerable children and youth who are highest risk and in the care of the ministry due to a protection concern.

The ministry has taken steps over the past few years to reduce the number of children and youth in care; however, the overrepresentation of Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> children and youth in care remains a significant issue. We also face challenges with respect to outcomes for children and youth in care, unmet needs for services, complex care resources, and recruitment and retention issues for foster parents and staff. There is wide recognition that the child welfare system in BC is not working to meet the needs of all children, youth and their families and that more fundamental reform is needed. The aim of this plan is to address these challenges.

We know that children and youth have better outcomes when they are able to safely remain with their family. As such, over the coming years we will redirect our efforts towards prevention, early years services, youth transition services to adulthood, and supports that help keep families together. We will reinvigorate our focus in working with Aboriginal communities to support Aboriginal families to stay together.



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<sup>1</sup> The term Aboriginal is used to include individuals who identify as either Métis, Inuit, or First Nations as this is the term that is referenced in legislation, policies and programs.

## Message, Continued

The Multi Year Action Plan is an overarching framework that sets out the key strategies that we will take over the next three years to achieve our long-term vision. Detailed operational plans at the divisional level within the ministry will support this framework.

This Plan – developed through consultation with First Nations Health Council regional caucuses and Aboriginal leadership – takes into consideration many past reports and recommendations made to the ministry, including the most recent report prepared by Special Advisor Grand Chief Ed John, *“Indigenous Resilience, Connectedness and Reunification – from Root Causes to Root Solutions.”* His report puts forth clear recommendations to both provincial and federal governments, through short and longer term actions towards a new vision for Aboriginal child welfare, a new fiscal relationship for Aboriginal child welfare, and, ultimately, addressing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and youth in our care.

This is an exciting time as we work collaboratively with Aboriginal leaders, other government ministries, service delivery partners, communities and organizations to collectively reach our vision and reshape British Columbia’s child welfare system so that children and youth live in safe, healthy and nurturing families that are strongly connected to their communities and culture.



Lori Wanamaker  
Deputy Minister, MCFD



# Our Story

## What We Know

- Children and youth have far better social, health, education, and economic outcomes when they live safely with a family – a parent, family member or extended family, or in a home with permanent caregivers – than they do in government care.
- Investment in early childhood development and early intervention has lasting positive impacts on individuals and society as a whole.
- Aboriginal children and youth are significantly overrepresented in the child welfare system – as of May 2016, 60.1% (4,445 out of the 7,246 children and youth in care in BC were Aboriginal) – and they have poorer social, health, education, and economic outcomes than non-Aboriginal children and youth in care.
- Youth transitioning from care often lack the traditional family support network to help them through early adulthood; better supports are needed to prepare them for aging out of care.
- Children and youth are too often brought into care due to circumstances related to neglect based on the parent’s inability to provide for a child’s basic needs due to poverty, mental illness, substance abuse, intergenerational trauma, domestic violence, or due to challenges coping with a child’s special needs whether physical, cognitive or behavioural. These issues can be mitigated by enhancing services that support the family to remain intact.



We know that successfully supporting families to stay together helps to break the cycles of intergenerational trauma remnant from the 60’s Scoop and the residential school system.

- Grand Chief Ed John

## The Steps We've Taken

**OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS** we have reduced the number of children and youth in care by 20% from (9,171 to 7,246), by working with families to overcome the challenges they face in caring for their children, supporting out of care options so children and youth have homes outside the foster care system, and finding permanency for children and youth already in care.

We have also directed attention to improving outcomes for children and youth in care. This includes enhancing supports to youth leaving care to ensure their successful move to independence.

As well, steps have been taken to increase the integration of services and supports for children under the age of six years, including the creation of a provincial network of Early Years Centres.

Efforts in these areas have, however, been much more successful for non-Aboriginal children, youth and families than for Aboriginal children, youth and families. Although there has been a slight decline, the number of Aboriginal children and youth in care remains high. Recently, Aboriginal leaders and the provincial and federal governments came together under a renewed commitment to reduce the number of Aboriginal children and youth in care.



# Our Path Forward

**The strategic direction of the ministry** is to invest in supports to help preserve families, while continuing to ensure the safety of children and youth. We will focus on identifying and addressing issues before a child comes into care. Working with other provinces, the federal government, service delivery partners, communities and Aboriginal leaders and organizations, the ministry will provide children, youth and families with the services and supports they need to thrive in safe, healthy and nurturing environments provided by a family or permanent caregiver.

## **An Aboriginal Focus**

Integral to the success of these efforts is reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples. The [Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action](#), Canada's endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the findings of the [Canadian Human Rights Tribunal](#) signify a profound shift in thinking and set the foundation for better collaboration. Working with Aboriginal leaders, other government ministries, the federal government and our service delivery partners, the ministry will embed the spirit and goals of reconciliation into all aspects of our work.

An Aboriginal focus will be applied to all programs and services. We will engage with Aboriginal leaders, communities and organizations to foster better relationships. Our child welfare system and early years programs will be refocused to better meet the needs of Aboriginal children and youth and their families. The ministry will engage Aboriginal communities and people on child welfare matters, with an emphasis on reducing the number of Aboriginal children and youth in care. This work will be essential for achieving true and lasting reconciliation with Aboriginal communities.

## **Supporting Families**

We will work with communities to build evidence based early childhood development, early intervention and prevention services that are shown to support families, improve outcomes and help keep families together. This includes culturally appropriate community-based child development programs, early assessment services, and access to services for children with special needs and mental health concerns. It also includes finding timely permanent placements for those children and youth who must come into care. These areas of focus, along with an emphasis on access to a full range of preventative services for Aboriginal families, will help build overall capacity in communities to address issues related to health and well-being and to respond to child welfare concerns.

### **Service Transformation**

We will collaborate with our partners to work towards developing integrated, community based child and family services, providing services where and when they are needed. Tools and supports will be developed to facilitate mobile and online delivery of services to provide 24/7 convenient, accessible and responsive services to children, youth and their families. We will also reduce the administrative burden on social workers, giving them more time to serve families.

### **Enhancements to Programs & Services**

We will improve our capacity to support children and youth receiving services by becoming more efficient and effective. This includes ensuring that the appropriate staffing complement, work tools, organizational structures and systems are in place to address cost pressures and workload.

The long-term shift from intervention and post-intervention services to prevention and early intervention services will not eliminate the need for a strong protection system for children and youth at risk, particularly where safety is a concern. When a child or youth does come into care, their care plan will be linked to their culture and language and outline a strategy to find them a permanent home. To support better outcomes, the ministry's residential system of care will be redesigned to meet a child or youth's distinct needs and to ensure caregivers have the expertise and resources to meet the needs of the children and youth in their care.

Ministry and cross government programs will provide the necessary supports to prepare youth leaving care and young adults who were in care to achieve a successful transition to adulthood and become productive members of society.

# Our Vision

Aboriginal & non-Aboriginal children and youth in British Columbia live in safe, healthy and nurturing families and are strongly connected to their communities and culture

# Our Goals & Objectives

Our goals and objectives set the foundation for how the ministry will achieve its long term vision. Each objective is underpinned by key strategies that outline focused areas of work for the next three years.

## Goals

The number of children and youth in care, and particularly the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and youth in the child welfare system, will be reduced

Children and youth are supported to reach their potential and grow up as successful young adults, able to contribute to the economy of British Columbia

Youth in care, or formerly in care, have improved well-being outcomes

## Objectives

Children and youth will be supported to safely remain with their families, extended families or be placed in permanent homes that promote a connectedness to their culture

Collaborate with our partners to develop integrated, community based child and family services

Enhance services, supports and systems to better serve all children and youth and their families and to improve outcomes for children and youth in care

# Objective 1

Children and youth will be supported to safely remain with their families, extended families or be placed in permanent homes that promote a connectedness to their culture

## Key Strategies

A complete list of actions accompanying each of the following key strategies can be found on [iConnect](#).

- 1 Provide resources and direct supports to families** and communities to ensure that children and youth have every opportunity to safely remain at home with their families
- 2 Focus on seeking permanent living arrangements outside the child welfare system** with a focused effort on improving permanency planning and cultural connections for Aboriginal children and youth already in care
- 3 Collaborate with Aboriginal, provincial and federal government partners** to address issues of funding and jurisdiction to ensure equitable and culturally safe child and family services for Aboriginal children, youth and families
- 4 Improve & strengthen services** to Aboriginal children, youth and their families by increasingly reflecting an Aboriginal perspective in policies, practices and services
- 5 Ensure all staff are provided training regarding individual Aboriginal identities and cultures**, including Aboriginal rights and the impacts of inter-generational trauma
- 6 Continue to improve communication**, build connections, and work to strengthen and revitalize mutually respectful relationships with Aboriginal partners, leadership, communities and families
- 7 Increase the number of Aboriginal staff** at all levels of the ministry
- 8 Work closely with the Ministry of Justice** to improve access to the justice system for Aboriginal people involved in the child welfare system

# Objective 2

Collaborate with our partners to develop integrated, community based child and family services

## Key Strategies

A complete list of actions accompanying each of the following key strategies can be found on [iConnect](#).

- 1 Improve outcomes for young children with special needs** by enhancing access, effectiveness and coordination of services
- 2 Work with cross-sector partners** to develop a system wide approach for supporting mental health and wellness for children and youth
- 3 Work with the Federal Government to support early learning and child care** programs and services in communities, including Aboriginal communities
- 4 Enable staff through technology & improved business processes** to increase the time available to provide direct client service delivery
- 5 Develop performance measures** on accessibility of child and youth mental health (CYMH) services with the intention of reporting on them next fiscal year
- 6 Continue to fund the creation of up to 13,000** new licensed child care spaces by 2020 to improve child care availability
- 7 Continue successful diversion practices** to support better outcomes for youth involved in the youth justice system

# Objective 3

Enhance services, supports and systems to better serve all children, youth and their families and to improve outcomes for children and youth in care

## Key Strategies

A complete list of actions accompanying each of the following key strategies can be found on [iConnect](#).

**1** **Prioritize recruitment, retention and training** in key areas

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**2** **Improve data collection and enhance use of data** to promote ongoing improvement to programs and services

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**3** **Continue implementation of a comprehensive quality assurance system** and support staff in the creation of a culture of continuous quality improvement

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**4** **Build public and sector confidence** in the work of the ministry through increased openness and transparency.

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**5** **Improve policies and practices related to the interface between social work and legal processes** to promote understanding and collaboration in the best interests of the child

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**6** **Align the residential system of care** to better meet the needs of children and youth, and to provide culturally safe supports that allow Aboriginal children and youth to thrive

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**7** **Work with cross-sector partners** to ensure consistent practice and provide appropriate services to better support and prepare youth and young adults transitioning to adulthood, helping them to lead healthy and productive lives

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# Measuring our Progress

We will measure our progress in moving to meet our goals and achieve our vision through monitoring the following key outcomes:

Performance Measure	Baseline	2017/18 Target	2018/19 Target	2019/20 Target
1. Rate of Children and Youth in Care (CYIC) per 1,000 (0-18) Population:				
a. All children and youth	8.1	8.0	7.9	7.9
b. Aboriginal children and youth	55.4	55.2	55.1	55.0
c. Non-Aboriginal children and youth	3.4	3.25	3.2	3.2
2. Percent of children assessed with a protection concern that can live with family or extended family				
a. All children and youth	84.4%	85.0%	85.3%	85.5%
b. Aboriginal children and youth	78.9%	80.0%	80.5%	81.0%
c. Non-Aboriginal children and youth	87.9%	88.3%	88.9%	89.1%
3. Percent of children and youth in care as of March 31 of each year who, after two or more months in care, were placed in a permanent home over the following 12 months				
a. All children and youth	19.6%	20.0%	20.6%	21.2%
b. Aboriginal children and youth	14.7%	16.0%	17.0%	18.0%
c. Non-Aboriginal children and youth	24.7%	24.7%	24.8%	24.9%
4. Average waiting time to receive services (*under development)	*	*	*	*
5. Average monthly number of contracted licensed child care spaces	98,432	106,000	108,000	110,000
6. First community sentence per 10,000 youth population	21.4	20.6	20.2	19.8
7. Percent of youth in care who turn 19 with a high school credential	47.4%	54.7%	55.2%	55.7%

[These outcomes are supplemented by the broad suite of data and measures contained in the [MCFD Performance Management Report](#)]