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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Children and Family Development

### **YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH REPORT CITES PROGRESS, BENEFITS**

VANCOUVER – A review of British Columbia’s Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) Plan shows improvements in service delivery and continued support from stakeholders, said Children and Family Development Minister Tom Christensen.

Released today, A Review of Child and Youth Mental Health Services in B.C. looks at the effectiveness of the plan based on interviews, meetings and surveys with service providers, advocates, and family members. The review by an external consultant acknowledges the work that has been done to enhance services and build a broader continuum of support for children and youth in B.C. who are affected by mental health issues.

“This positive review of the province’s Child and Youth Mental Health Plan reflects the commitment and investment we and our partners have made to improve mental health services in B.C.,” said Christensen. “Over the last five years, we have placed greater emphasis on prevention, early intervention and strengthening family and community capacity. The report has given us a reason to feel a great sense of accomplishment and has offered recommendations to further improve services and build on the strong foundation created.”

Key successes highlighted include:

- FRIENDS, a school-based prevention program that increases resiliency in children by helping them learn how to cope with fears and anxiety. The program has reached an estimated 50,000 students in grades 4 and 5 and was expanded in September 2008 to include Grade 7 students.
- Progress on delivering culturally and spiritually relevant services to Aboriginal communities.
- Significant accomplishments in the implementation of evidence-based practice to improve the effectiveness of all child and youth mental health services.

Short- and long-term recommendations include a commitment to increase meaningful family engagement, further promote evidence based research and strengthen mental health promotion and risk reduction initiatives.

While the Ministry of Children and Family Development has an important leadership role in the child and youth mental health system in B.C., cross-ministry work, community agencies, health authorities, and health professionals all play a vital part in further improvements for child and youth mental health services. The report references the need for ongoing community and government partnerships to ensure CYMH programs and services are coordinated, cohesive, and easily accessible for those who need it, when and where they need it.

Christensen met with the Child and Youth Advisory Committee of the Mental Health Commission of Canada today to discuss the review.

“The British Columbia government is to be applauded as a leader in Canada both in its planning and its associated investments,” said Simon Davidson, chair of the Child and Youth Advisory Committee. “The report appropriately values the excellent work that has been done while appreciating the ongoing needs and challenges. We look forward to our continued working relationship with the province in helping them achieve further progress.”

Introduced in February 2003, B.C.’s CYMH plan was the first of its kind in Canada. To carry out the plan’s overall vision, the budget for CYMH services was doubled over the last several years to \$84 million annually, and almost 300 new staff were hired across the province. Today, nearly 20,000 children and youth receive MCFD outpatient and community mental health services annually – almost double the number that received services in 2004.

A copy of the review is available at: [www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental\\_health](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental_health)

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