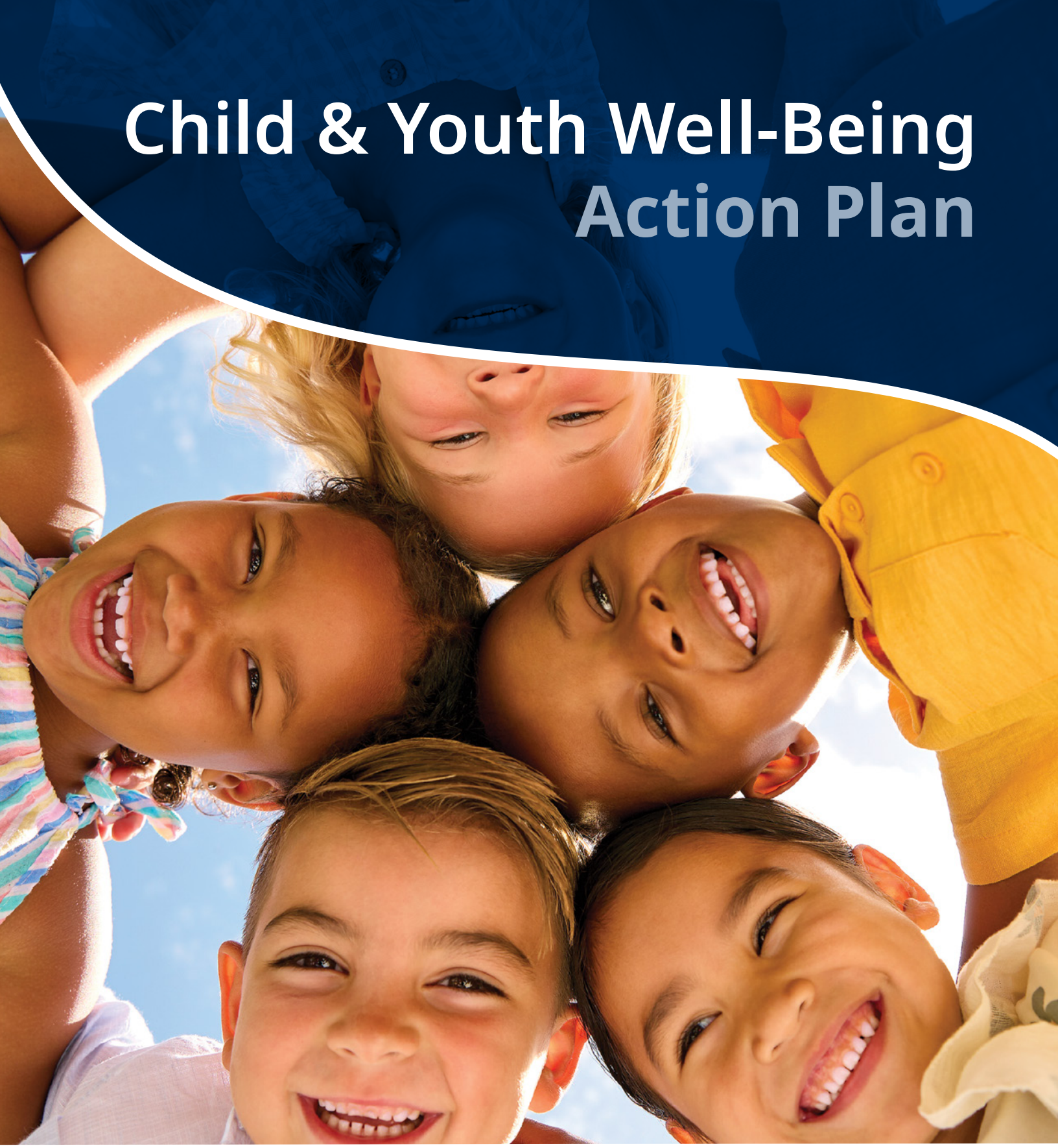


Child & Youth Well-Being Action Plan



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

June 2026

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Vision and Context

Improving Child and Youth Well-Being

The Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan and Outcomes Framework outline how the Government of British Columbia will work to improve outcomes for children and youth across the province. It reflects a shared understanding that child, youth, and family well-being is a collective responsibility requiring ministries, public systems, community partners, and other levels of government to work together. The Action Plan and Outcomes Framework provide the structure needed to align efforts, strengthen accountability, and guide sustained action.

This commitment follows the release of *Don't Look Away: How One Boy's Story Has the Power to Shift a System of Care for Children and Youth*, the Representative for Children and Youth's 2024 investigation into the tragic death of "Colby," a young First Nations boy. His story revealed profound systemic failures and reinforced that children's safety and well-being depend on a coordinated network of supports grounded in shared responsibility, cultural safety, and accountability.

The Action Plan is about creating the conditions for children and youth in British Columbia to grow up with good health and a strong sense of well-being. While people understand well-being in different ways, the Action Plan and Outcomes Framework focus on four connected areas:

- **Material well-being** – Reliable access to basic needs like food, clothing, and safe housing.
- **Physical health** – Good access to the supports, environment, and care that promote healthy growth and development.
- **Social, emotional, and cultural well-being** – A sense of belonging and connection to family, community, culture, language, and history and being supported in mental and emotional well-being.
- **Cognitive development and life preparedness** – Opportunities to learn, develop skills, and be ready for future success.

This Action Plan is designed to put us on a path toward improving outcomes for **all**, while focusing our attention and resources on children, youth, and families facing the greatest barriers. It is intended to align with and be informed by broader cross-government anti-racism commitments, while reinforcing that addressing racism and ableism within child and youth-serving systems is a shared responsibility that shapes how actions across all priority areas are designed, delivered, and assessed.

The Action Plan sets out the incremental steps required to transform the current system into one where every child, youth, and family in British Columbia is supported to thrive. This future system is defined by:

- Government systems that act early, work together, and remove barriers
- Advancing Indigenous self-determination and co-developed approaches to Indigenous child and youth well-being across a multi-jurisdictional landscape
- Public programs and services grounded in culture, belonging, and opportunity
- Prevention-focused supports and integrated crisis-responses
- Clear accountability, transparent measurement, shared responsibility, and continuous improvement across government and service providers

Improving outcomes for children and youth, especially those who face the greatest obstacles, requires long-term, coordinated effort across public systems. This work is happening at a time of fiscal pressure, making prevention and early support even more important. Government is acting now by strengthening services, improving how systems work together, and building long-term changes that will support children, youth, and families today and into the future.

Our Challenges

When families have what they need to support their well-being, children and youth are more likely to thrive. There is no single approach to supporting families, as each family and each community has unique strengths and needs.

At the same time, systemic racism, ableism, and other forms of structural discrimination shape how children, youth, and families experience access to services and opportunities in B.C., contributing to persistent inequities and shaping families' starting positions within public systems in health, safety, and long-term outcomes.

When families have access to resources that support their health, happiness, and stability, these act as protective factors that help mitigate challenges an individual child might face, supporting their future resilience, long-term well-being, and positive life outcomes. The government recognizes that resources are not simply material and financial, and that social resources are equally important. Social resources include access to professionals and opportunities to build supportive, reciprocal connections with extended family, friends, peers, and other community members.

Certain stressors can be overwhelming for families, making it hard to reach out and get the social connections and support they need. When parents and caregivers are consumed with dealing with crises such as housing insecurity or substance use challenges, children and youth in these families can suffer.

Research demonstrates that some circumstances place disproportionate strain on families and children including:

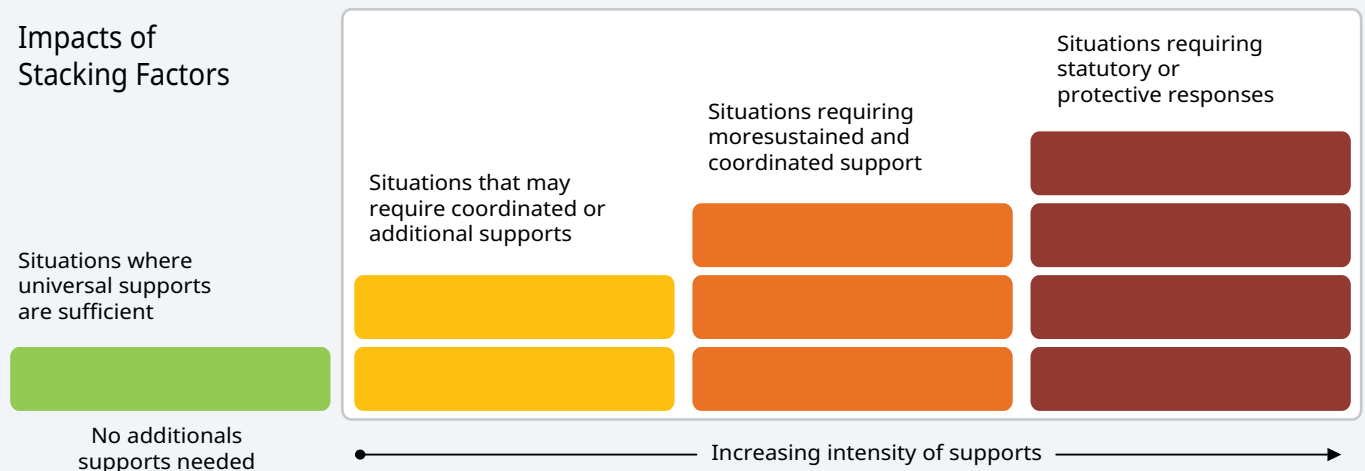
- Socio-economic pressures (including poverty, lack of affordable child care, inadequate housing or housing instability, and unemployment)
- Parental health concerns (including parental substance use, isolation, disability, and mental health challenges)
- Exposure to family or intimate partner violence (including gaps in transition supports and limited access to justice-related system resources)
- Fragmented or inaccessible service systems for children or youth who require support across multiple areas (including unmet supports related to learning, development, mental health, or substance use)
- Family justice system involvement

When these circumstances overlap or ‘stack’, they can compound the effects of inequity and place additional strain on families. Provincial

high school completion (graduation) data shows persistent gaps in outcomes for B.C. students whose families experience these circumstances. As multiple circumstances intersect, the gaps widen further as illustrated in the data below:

- 99% of youth from a family experiencing none of these circumstances complete high school
- 93% of youth from a family experiencing socio-economic hardship complete high school (-6%)
- 87% of youth with a disability or diverse abilities (complex needs) complete high school (-12%)
- 75% of youth with a disability whose family is experiencing socio-economic hardship complete high school (-22%)

The more circumstances a family experiences across these domains, the more likely the child or youth within that family will experience poorer outcomes. These patterns reflect the cumulative impact of intersecting structural barriers, not the individual characteristics of children or families.



This is not to say that families experiencing these circumstances will inevitably experience crisis. Rather, it highlights the opportunity to improve child and youth outcomes by providing coordinated services at a moment when they could most benefit from them.

Earlier, more coordinated and comprehensive support is needed well before families enter crisis. Children, youth, and families may benefit from early and preventive support not only in response to discrete challenges, but where structural conditions – including systemic racism and ableism – shape starting positions, trust in services, and intensify the effects of stressors over time.

Responsibility for supporting families spans multiple ministries and community-based service providers, making coordination essential.

This creates a difficult landscape for families to navigate where services exist in silos and supports for different family members are often unconnected. As a result, families encounter structural barriers to accessing

services. Gaps in coordination can prevent a family from receiving the type or combination of services needed to positively change their circumstances and long-term outcomes. Through previous engagements, parents, caregivers, and families have described the system-level barriers that continue to limit timely and equitable access to needed services, including (but not limited to):

- Long wait times resulting from oversubscribed, unevenly distributed, or unavailable services
- Services are disjointed and leave gaps – criteria for each program are slightly different and families that need wrap around support are left falling through the cracks
- Limited access to culturally relevant and responsive supports, alongside experiences of systemic racism, stigma, and the fear of child welfare involvement, which can reduce trust in mainstream services
- Support models that are largely inaccessible until families reach – or are perceived to have reached – a point of crisis

Despite these barriers, families work persistently to seek out the supports they know they need but are often met by a complex system that responds only once challenges reach crisis.

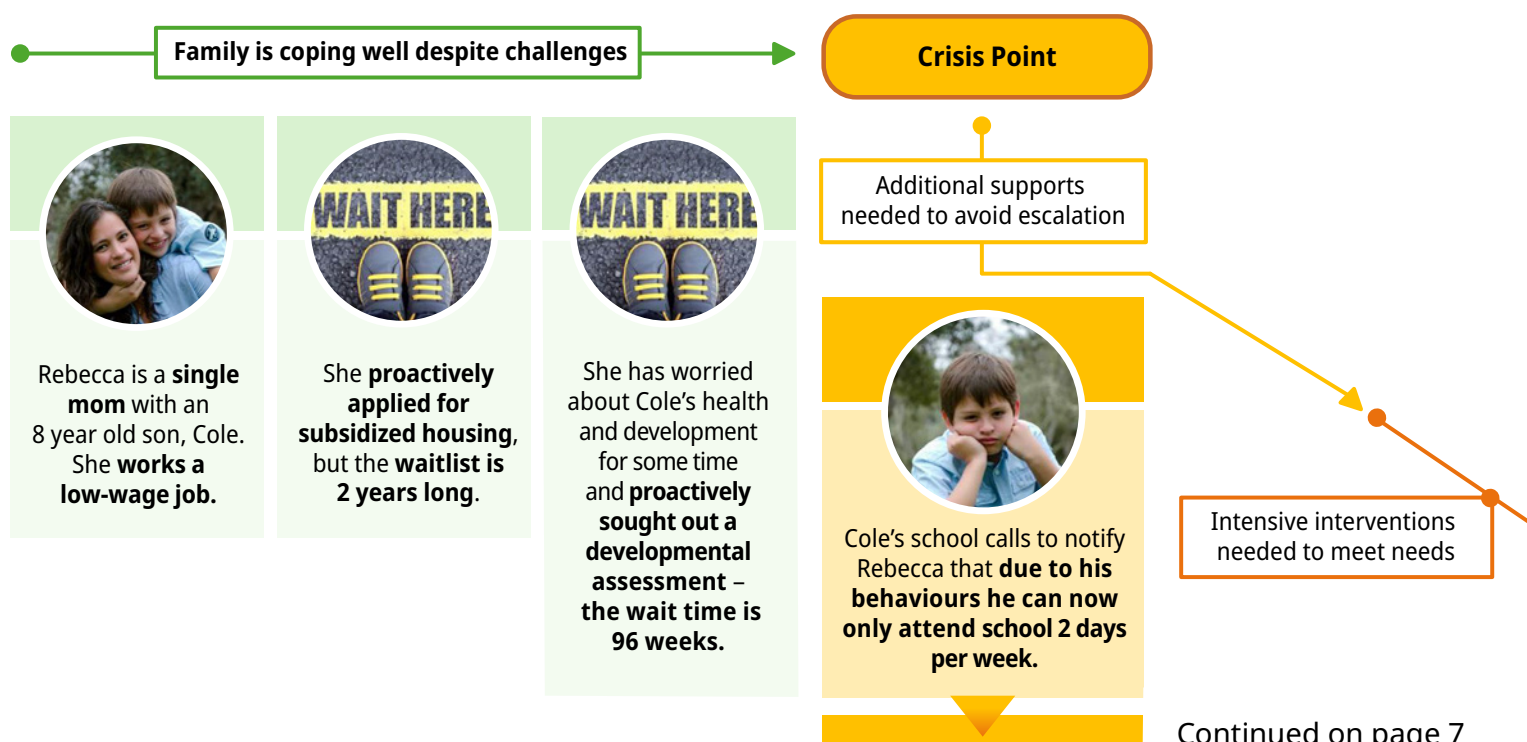
Meet Rebecca and Cole

Rebecca’s challenges began compounding long before a crisis emerged. As a single parent, she works hard to create a safe and loving home for her 8-year-old son, Cole. She is proactive and resourceful, and she knows when she needs help. Concerned about Cole’s development and behaviour, she placed him on the public waitlist for a developmental assessment—96 weeks long. She also applied for subsidized housing, where she was added to another lengthy waitlist.

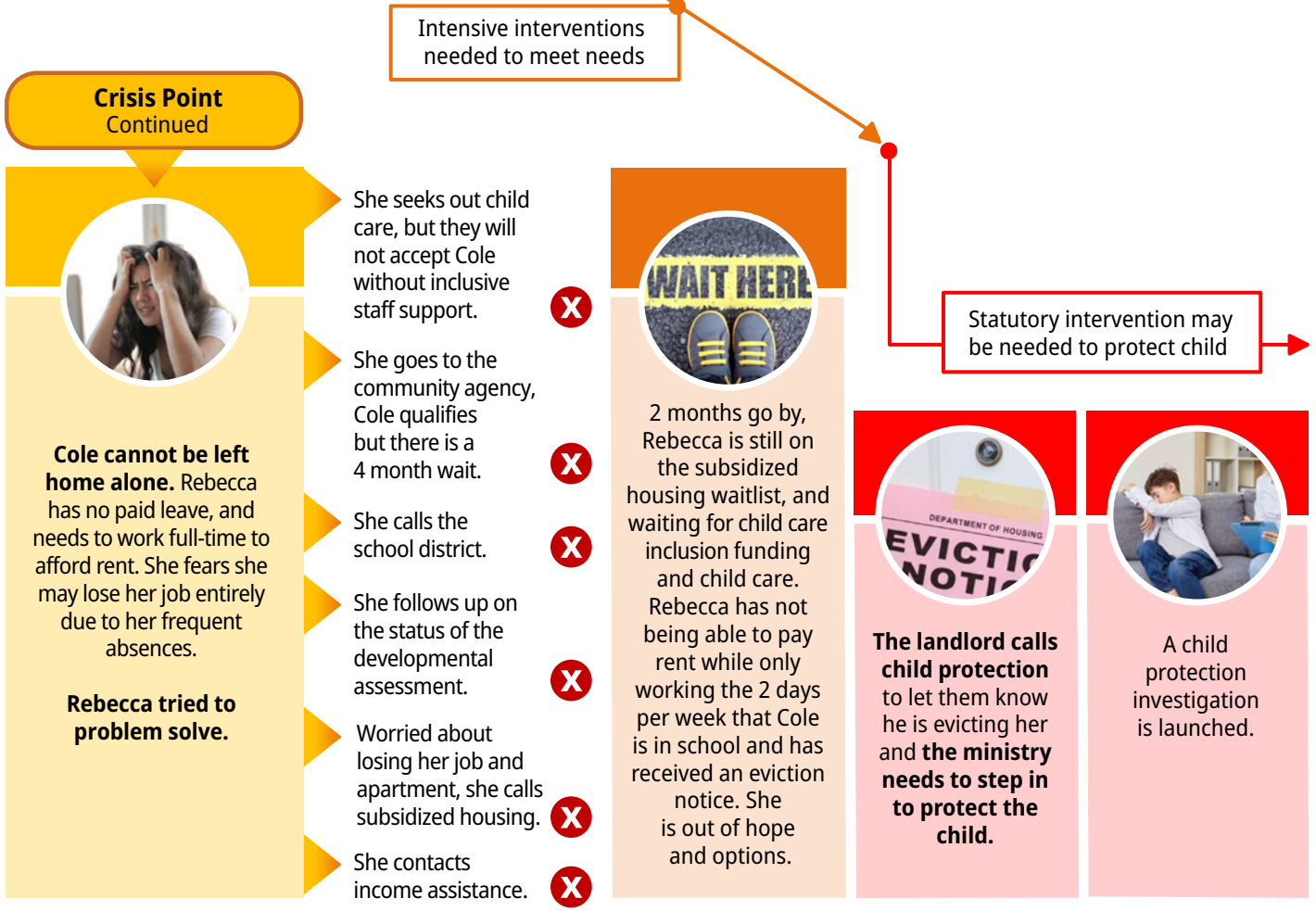
Things became more difficult when Cole began refusing to attend school, staying home two to three days a week. Rebecca now had to juggle caring for him full-time, helping with schoolwork,

and holding onto her job. Child care wasn’t an option because providers couldn’t support Cole’s behavioural needs. As she missed more shifts, her income became increasingly unstable.

The pressures kept stacking-- school instability, long waitlists, unpredictable work hours, lost wages, and overdue rent--slowly overwhelming Rebecca’s ability to keep everything afloat. As these challenges compounded, the family’s situation became more precarious. When she fell behind on rent again, they were evicted. Concerned that Cole no longer had a stable place to live, the landlord made a report to MCFD about his well-being.



Continued from page 6



We have learned from research, oversight reports, and reviewing leading practices across other jurisdictions¹, that service models exist that more effectively meet the needs of families like Rebecca and Cole.

These models address challenges experienced by families and many of the underlying factors that contribute to adverse outcomes. Some key design considerations include:

¹ This work was informed by input previously received from First Nations, Métis, & Inuit Peoples, and organizations in B.C. on topics related to legislative reform, prevention, through negotiation of jurisdiction, and more; external oversight bodies; ongoing tripartite jurisdictional work with B.C. First Nations; existing research and data related to child and youth well-being (including international studies); and through reviewing current B.C. government services, service delivery models, and structures

- **Families need the kind of help that brings services together and removes barriers:** Families often find themselves on multiple ministries' waitlists where no one considers their needs holistically or addresses their core issues.
- **Families are experts in their own lives:** Effective service models recognize that families are inherently knowledgeable about what they need and how they need it. Approaches that respect and build on these strengths create trust and support better outcomes.
- **Families need faster and more responsive help:** Even with prioritization tools in place, many essential services, such as housing supports, mental health care, and family preservation programs, operate within limited capacity. When a family is facing urgent challenges, delays created by these capacity limits can increase risk and push them closer to crisis. Families need urgent help in these moments: someone who can address immediate issues today and help them access the services they need without waiting for conditions to become unsafe. This includes the ability to navigate capacity constraints, coordinate across programs, and ensure that a family facing increasing instability, such as those at risk of losing housing, can receive timely, stabilizing help. Responsive, prioritized access can prevent crises, reduce harm, and give families a real chance to regain stability earlier.
- **Community partners play a vital role:** Government cannot replicate the inherent responsiveness and trust established within communities. Community-based service delivery partners, such as Aboriginal Friendship Centres, have deep relationships, trust, and cultural understanding. Community partners' ability to be nimbler, respond quickly and work holistically makes them essential partners in providing family-centred care.
- **Collaboration works best when someone is accountable for taking action:** Information sharing and interagency collaboration are important, but not enough on their own – it is most helpful when someone has accountability as the primary entity to intervene. Families need a clearly identified person or team responsible for bringing supports together and ensuring help is delivered.

While there are pockets of innovation across government services, community responses, and service design, systems remain oriented towards fitting people into services as opposed to wrapping services around people. **With partners, we want to work together to change this reality.**

A Vision for Our Future

We envision a future where every child, youth, and family in B.C. is supported to thrive because:

- Government systems act early, work together, and remove barriers rather than create them
- Safety, culture, belonging, and opportunity form the foundation of every public service
- Prevention-focused supports are prioritized and integrated crisis-responses are provided when needed
- Indigenous families’ unique needs are recognized and met by culturally relevant and responsive services across a multi-jurisdictional landscape
- Accountability is shared and transparent, with clear outcomes, meaningful measurement, and continuous improvement across government and partners

Through action now, and continued work with the sector, we want to realize a new experience for Rebecca and Cole. We cannot assume a future state “service model” or “one size fits all” approach, particularly given the vast diversity of families and communities, but we envision a future that reflects the following shifts:

FROM (Today)	TO (Future System We Want)
Fragmented services shaped by siloed governance models are delivered by multiple ministries, each with its own mandates, criteria, and waitlists.	<i>One-family, one-system</i> orientation: shared accountability, integrated planning, and coordinated supports across government.
Access to help often requires situations to escalate to crisis; the system is reactive.	Prevention-focused: early, seamless help before crises escalate.
Systems that inadvertently create barriers (eligibility differences, siloed funding, contradictory policies).	Systems redesigned around user experience: simple, connected pathways with fewer barriers.
Government-led, program-by-program improvements.	All-of-government transformation guided by shared outcomes and evidence.

The Future Experience for Rebecca and Cole

In the future the Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan envisions, Rebecca's experience unfolds very differently.

Rebecca, a single mother working hard to support her eight-year-old son, Cole, begins noticing concerns about his emotional regulation, attention, learning, sensory responses, and increasing difficulty managing daily routines. School has become harder, conflicts are increasing at home, and she worries that something more may be going on. Instead of spending years moving between referrals, waitlists, and retelling her story, she reaches out to a local community-based child development centre – one she feels comfortable walking into because it is welcoming, culturally safe, and connected to the services her family needs.

Within days, she meets with an integrated early-help team that includes clinicians, family navigator, behaviour consultant, and professionals with expertise in neurodevelopmental conditions. They take time to understand Cole's strengths, challenges, developmental history, and family context. The team coordinates developmental screening and connects Rebecca with a developmental pediatrician to complete a comprehensive developmental assessment.

Rather than sending Rebecca between multiple providers and systems, the team coordinates appointments, gathers information once, and helps translate findings into practical next steps. For the first time, Rebecca feels like someone is holding the pieces together instead of expecting her to manage it all herself.

Once Cole's assessment is complete, the family navigator helps Rebecca understand what programs and supports they may be eligible for. Together, they complete the federal Disability Tax Credit application process, including gathering clinical information

and supporting documentation. They also help Rebecca submit paperwork for the province's disability benefit program, so she does not have to navigate forms and eligibility requirements alone.

As approvals begin to come through, financial support starts flowing directly to the family. Rebecca begins receiving the Disability Supplement to help offset the additional costs associated with supporting Cole's needs, and—where eligible—the family is connected to broader disability benefit supports. The additional monthly income creates breathing room: helping cover transportation, specialized activities, caregiver flexibility, and reducing the financial pressure that had been building for years. Rather than requiring Rebecca to become an expert in government systems, the system proactively helps her access the supports she qualifies for.

At the same time, the team works with Cole's school to adjust supports immediately rather than waiting for a diagnosis to unlock help. Instead of struggling to stay at school and being home several days a week, Cole remains connected to learning through an individualized plan focused on regulation, sensory supports, relationship-based approaches, and achievable expectations. Through partnership between the local child development centre and the school district, community-based therapists and behavioural supports can work with Cole during the school day and on school grounds. The early-help team and school meet regularly to adapt supports as Cole's needs change.

Because the family's financial and housing stress is recognized as part of the overall picture, the navigator also helps Rebecca access practical supports – including a rental top-up, family stabilization funding, and flexible respite while she adjusts her work schedule

and establishes routines at home. These supports prevent eviction and allow Rebecca to maintain steady employment. She no longer has to choose between caring for her child and keeping her job.

Rebecca is also connected quickly to a parent support group and counselling focused on caregiver stress, anxiety, and strategies to support children with complex regulation needs. Services are delivered through trusted community partners, reducing stigma and helping Rebecca build confidence and connection.

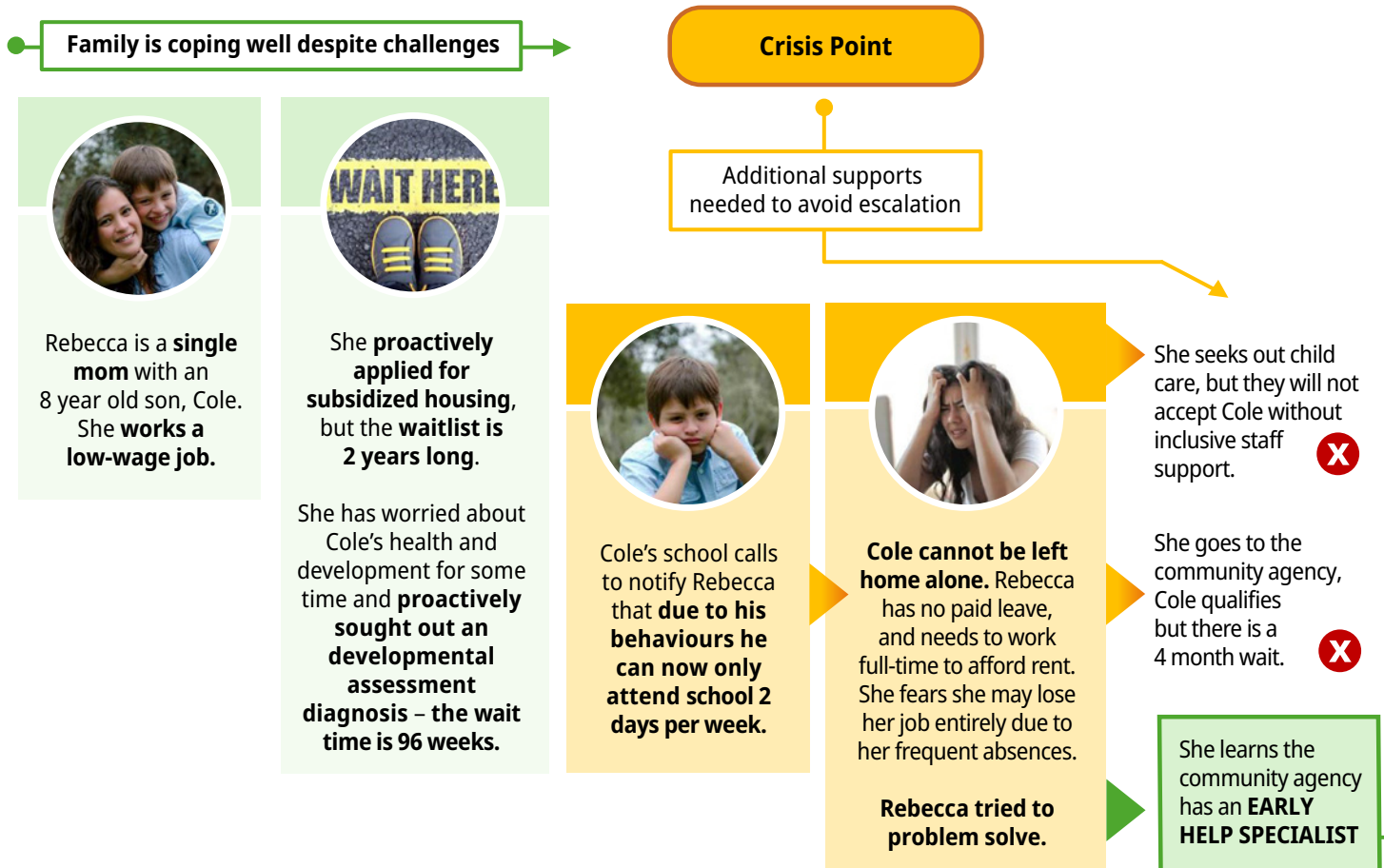
Within a few months, the difference is remarkable. Cole now has a coordinated plan that includes therapy

supports, behavioural supports, family coaching, and after-school programming designed around his strengths and needs. His confidence is improving, transitions are easier, and school feels manageable again. Rebecca reports fewer crises, greater stability at home, and a sense of partnership with professionals who communicate with each other – and with her.

Most importantly, she no longer feels alone. Instead of navigating fragmented systems on her own, supports work together around her family – early, coordinated, and designed to prevent crisis, reduce stress, improve financial stability, and help both Rebecca and Cole thrive.

Illustrative Example: The Art of the Possible

Current State



Community-based (agency hosted service)

Future State

Early Help Specialist Core Accountabilities:

1. Relationship
2. Immediate crisis supports
3. Prioritized access



"I have supports I can provide today."

"I won't share your information unless you give me your consent."

"I know you are waiting on supports, I can help you get them faster."

"I can help advocate for Cole at school."

"I don't work for government, I work for you."

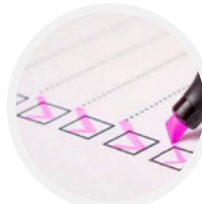
"I have lots planning supports we can use together on our phones and stay in communication."

With additional supports in place family is coping well despite challenges



The Early Help Specialist (EHS) Nadine welcomes Rebecca and assures her that she is there to help.

Rebecca outlines her fear of losing her apartment and her job-she says what she needs right now is to get her current month rent paid, and to get her son back in school.



Nadine says here's what I can do:

- Get rent paid
- Support a conversation with your boss about leave from work.
- Meet with the school and explore what's needed to get Cole back in school full time.



School tells Nadine that if Cole was able to get his developmental assessment, that they may be able to better accommodate his needs.

Nadine uses her prioritized access authority to move Cole to the top of the developmental assessment list.

Cole is assessed and is able to return to school.



Nadine helps Rebecca arrange child care to support her return to work.

With additional supports Cole is thriving at school. Rebecca feels confident that she can return to work to support herself and her son. Nadine assures her that she will be there to support Rebecca again if needed.



Why This Matters for British Columbia

Improving child and youth well-being is not only good for families, it is also fiscally smart for B.C. In addition to improved life outcomes, evidence consistently shows that early, coordinated, prevention-focused supports avoid public costs and create measurable social and economic returns that ripple across generations:

- High-quality early childhood intervention and family supports generate a \$4–\$9 return on investment for every \$1 invested², driven by reductions in emergency health use, crisis housing, justice involvement, and income assistance.
- Youth mental health interventions deliver \$7–\$12 savings per \$1 invested through reduced hospitalizations, improved school completion, and higher lifetime earnings.³

- According to a December 2024 report from BC Rent Bank, \$1.9 million in emergency financial assistance resulted in \$27.5 million in combined renter and government savings in 2023–24, including approximately \$11.4 million in avoided government costs related to health care and child welfare involvement.⁴
- Avoiding a single child protection placement can avert \$100,000 per year, not including long-term social costs.⁵

A system that supports families early through integrated planning and stable supports strengthens community safety, reduces avoidable public expenditures, and increases labour force participation and long-term tax revenues. In short, what is good for children also strengthens B.C.'s economic and fiscal resilience, delivering measurable returns while improving outcomes for generations.

2 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2017

3 Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2016

4 B.C. Rent Bank. *Why Eviction Prevention Matters: 2023–24 Impact Report*. Vancouver: B.C. Rent Bank, December 2024.

5 B.C. Office of the Auditor General, 2015; Ontario FAO, 2020

Our Approach

Where to Begin and Focus Our Efforts

The Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan sets out a whole-of-government approach to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families in B.C. over the next five years. The Action Plan builds on supporting plans and strategies across government, including but not limited to: The B.C. Poverty Reduction Strategy, Safe and Supported: B.C.'s Gender-Based Violence Action Plan, Belonging in B.C. Homelessness Plan, B.C.'s Provincial Anti-Racism Action Plan and more.

Guided by what we have learned through years of engagement with Indigenous partners, service providers, and communities, the Action Plan is organized around five interconnected priority areas, or pillars, that reflect both immediate priorities and the foundation for long-term transformation. Together, these priority areas focus on strengthening families, protecting vulnerable children and youth, preventing and responding to violence, ensuring integrated and responsive systems, and advancing Indigenous self-determination. Each priority area is anchored in a commitment to equity, belonging, and cultural safety, so every child in B.C. can thrive.

Work will continue over the coming year to identify additional areas for action and opportunities for collaboration to strengthen and expand on these commitments, ensuring ongoing progress toward better outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Safe, Strong, and Healthy Foundations for Families

Families are the cornerstone of child and youth well-being. This priority area focuses on ensuring that families have the resources and supports they need to thrive, through strengthened food and housing security, access to affordable child care, stable incomes, and opportunities for skills development. It also emphasizes timely access to assessments and early supports, including for children and youth who require more coordinated, cross-sector support, and expanded mental health and substance use supports for both young people and parents. Together, these efforts create the conditions for children to grow up safe, healthy, and supported.

Preventing and Responding to Intimate Partner, Gender-Based, and Family Violence

This priority area focuses on creating safety, stability, and healing for individuals and families affected by violence. Actions include strengthening legal and policy frameworks to better protect survivors and hold perpetrators accountable, expanding access to trauma-informed and culturally appropriate supports such as safe housing and counselling, and advancing prevention initiatives through education, early intervention, and cross-government collaboration. The goal is to break cycles of violence, promote recovery, and build safer communities where everyone can live free from harm.

Integrated Services and Crisis Response

Children and families rely on multiple systems: education, health, social services, and justice. Too often, the lack of integration between them leads to fragmented support. This priority area focuses on building a truly coordinated service network by improving information sharing, creating integrated professional crisis response teams, and aligning programs and practices across ministries so that families experience a seamless, connected system of care.

Advancing Indigenous Self-Determination and Jurisdiction

At the foundation of system transformation is the recognition of Indigenous rights and self-determination in child and family services. This priority area focuses on supporting First Nations to exercise jurisdiction, co-developing a fiscal framework that enables this transition, and ensuring government systems are equipped to operate in a multi-jurisdictional environment. It also includes actions to strengthen family and cultural connections for Indigenous children and youth and to embed cultural safety, Elder involvement, and Indigenous oversight to child welfare practices in response to the disproportionate representation of Indigenous children and youth in the child welfare system. Additionally, it supports advancing Indigenous-led justice initiatives that strengthen community safety and support the healing of people involved in the justice system.

Supporting the recognition of the inherent Indigenous right to self-determination requires acknowledging the historical harms of Indigenous-specific racism. Indigenous-specific racism is systemic racism faced by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples rooted in access to or exercising their rights. Self-determination and jurisdiction advancement should include the awareness of historical and current impact of Indigenous-specific racism as it relates to child and family services for Indigenous communities in British Columbia.

Protecting and Uplifting the Most Vulnerable

This priority area focuses on ensuring that children and youth who are in government care or who may be at risk of entering the child welfare and/or the youth justice system, are safe, connected, and supported in ways that promote their well-being. Actions include strengthening family preservation and reunification resources, maximizing supports for youth transitioning from care, and improving oversight and accountability in out-of-care placements. The goal is to ensure every child and youth in various care arrangements experiences belonging, stability, and opportunity.

What Makes this Plan Different?

This Action Plan is designed to move quickly on what we know is needed now, evolve as new evidence emerges, and focus the full effort of government on improving outcomes for children and youth. Several features distinguish this approach:

We are not waiting to act.

- We are moving forward on targeted actions immediately by strengthening core services, improving access, addressing urgent gaps, and responding to what families and communities have told us they need now.

These early actions are grounded in existing evidence, lived and community experience, and frontline system insights, responding to current pressures while informing longer-term system change.

We are committing to continuous iteration with you.

- We know that the sum of today's actions is **not enough** to shift all the conditions affecting child and youth well-being.
- Implementation will follow a disciplined, repeatable cycle of action, learning, and improvement, with regular checkpoints to assess what is working, where barriers persist, and where unintended impacts are emerging.
- Ongoing engagement with children, youth, families, Indigenous partners, service providers, and communities will inform continuous learning and refinement over time.

Data, evaluation findings, and qualitative insights will be shared across ministries to support evidence-informed decision-making and timely course corrections.

We are strengthening whole-of-government coordination.

- This Action Plan builds on existing ministry mandates and accountabilities, while establishing clearer mechanisms for cross-government alignment, joint problem-solving, and shared outcomes for children and youth.
- Ministries will work through coordinated governance and implementation tables to align priorities, sequence actions, and address cross-cutting challenges that no single ministry can solve alone.
- Coordination will extend beyond crisis and high-risk situations to include early intervention, prevention, and system navigation, ensuring families experience services that are connected and responsive rather than fragmented.

This plan does not replace or interfere with ministry-specific plans and accountabilities.

- Every ministry continues to be responsible for its own mandates, strategic plans, legislation, and performance requirements.
- Nothing in this plan diminishes or overrides those responsibilities.

We are using a one-government Outcomes Framework to guide decisions.

- For the first time, government will use a shared Outcomes Framework to review **thousands of data points** and indicators across ministries, communities, and services to understand how children and youth are actually doing.
- This shared lens lets us assess whether efforts are improving well-being, and where further investment, coordination, or redesign is required.
- It ensures that our decisions are evidence-based, population-level, and aligned to collective results rather than siloed activities.

Inequities in child and youth wellbeing do not arise from single factors, but from where systems of power intersect – including race, disability, gender, language, poverty, and geography – shaping how families experience services and support. For some children and youth, multiple intersecting identities and circumstances overlap, further influencing their experiences, access to opportunities and outcomes. Overall,

We are building toward longer-term system change.

- Early actions are intended to deliver immediate relief and momentum, while generating the learning needed to inform deeper structural and policy changes over time.
- As evidence and system insights emerge, actions will be refined, expanded, or redesigned to strengthen impact and sustainability.

this work provides a shared direction that connects and complements the actions already underway across health, education, early learning, mental health and substance use, social supports, and community safety. Rather than creating a new structure, this plan **aligns and amplifies** what is already working, identifies where coordination is needed, and highlights where additional action is required.

How Will We Measure Progress?

The Action Plan outlines what government is doing to improve child and youth well-being. There are, of course, many other factors in a child's life outside of government systems that strongly influence well-being – their culture, family network, influence from peers, among others.

To understand whether progress is being made with respect to child well-being in B.C., it is essential to have general measures for child development that are evidence-based, clearly understood, and publicly reported. It is equally important to understand how the various factors in a child's life, good and bad, including government interventions, contribute to or hinder well-being. Only then can there be an evidence-based way to prioritize what helps children the most.

For this reason, government is also advancing a Child and Youth Well-being Outcomes Framework. The Framework will serve as the foundation for monitoring our progress and understanding how our children are really doing. It is the first of its kind in British Columbia, and it will help us not only understand how children and youth are doing today, but also understand what supports, changes, and investments will matter most for their future.

We will use broad, province-wide data to evaluate what is helping families, what needs to be strengthened, and where more support is urgently required. This will allow us to place resources where they will make the biggest difference, evaluate our progress, hold ourselves accountable, and make changes when needed.

While the Action Plan describes what government will do, the Outcomes Framework shows us how we will know if our actions are working. It provides a clear picture of what well-being looks like for children and youth in B.C., how it can be measured, and how it is shaped over time. This helps us:

- Build shared accountability across government, so every ministry and sector is working towards the same real-world improvements in well-being. We ask: Do we share the same understanding of how children and youth are doing across the province?
- Evaluate progress using evidence so decisions are guided by what is actually improving children's well-being. We ask: Are the steps we're taking making a difference?
- Understand what matters most so that investments focus on the factors most likely to create meaningful improvements in well-being. We ask: Where should we focus to make the biggest difference?

Together, these tools allow government to test assumptions, learn from results, and direct investments toward the supports that most improve children's lives.

In this way, B.C. is building a shared system of learning and accountability, one grounded in the real experiences of children and youth. More details about the Outcomes Framework, and how it will help us monitor well-being across the province, can be found in the appendix to this plan.

Action Plan

Action Plan Overview

The following pages outline a vision, strategies, and immediate actions for each priority area of the Action Plan. They also include key questions we will continue to explore in partnership with service providers, communities, rights holders, and families.

Safe, strong & healthy foundation for families

- Supporting food security, housing and income security, access to child care, and skills development
- Improving timely access to assessments and support services for parenting children and youth with complex needs
- Strengthening mental health and substance use services for children and youth
- Expanding mental health and addiction supports for parents and families with young children

Preventing & responding to intimate partner, gender-based & family violence

- Reducing violence through a focus on prevention
- Reviewing the provincial approach to support families experiencing violence
- Enhancing direct services for survivors of intimate partner, gender-based, and family violence

Integrated services & crisis response

- Integrating services to better support children, youth and families
- Improving information sharing
- Improving care coordination and integrated crisis response
- Implementing integrated community response service models

Advancing Indigenous self-determination & Jurisdiction

- Collaborating with First Nations to finalize the fiscal framework to support jurisdiction over child and family services
- Ensuring that government is positioned to effectively operate in a multi-jurisdictional service delivery environment in conjunction with Indigenous Governing Bodies who are exercising jurisdiction
- Participating in the negotiation of trilateral agreements that support First Nations jurisdiction over child and family services
- Strengthening family and cultural connections for children and youth interacting with the child protection system

Protecting & uplifting the most vulnerable

- Strengthening resources to support families at risk to keep children and youth safe at home
- Supporting young people with child welfare experience to transition successfully to adulthood
- Strengthening policy, practice, and training for child safety social workers
- Increasing safety, belonging and long-term well-being for children and youth in care
- Improving supports for children and youth who are street entrenched, disengaged, or not accessing services
- Strengthening screening and oversight of caregivers in the child welfare system
- Strengthening Youth Justice services

Safe, Strong & Healthy Foundations for Families

When families have what they need to support their well-being, it creates an environment where children and youth can thrive. A family that is healthy, happy, and stable can serve as a protective factor that helps mitigate other challenges an individual child might face.

We envision a future where a family will experience...

- Secure access to food, housing, child care, and income support that allow them to focus on their well-being rather than daily survival.
- Timely, coordinated assessments and early interventions that reduce frustration and give parents confidence that their child's needs are understood and supported.
- Mental health and substance use supports that are easy to access, culturally safe, and available when challenges first emerge and not only in moments of crisis.
- A stable, predictable network of community-based services that strengthens family stability and reduces the unaddressed pressures that can otherwise lead to crisis.

We will take action now to address immediate gaps in service and seize opportunities to streamline approaches, but more work will be required. Together, we need to explore:

- How can we get families the core services they need faster, through channels they trust?
- How can we better identify the families that are heading toward crisis?
- How do we ensure we operate with clear mandates and a shared understanding regarding who should intervene and how – ensuring strong governance in prevention and crisis?
- How do we support families that are waiting for help?

We're taking action to ensure safe, strong and healthy foundations for families by:

1. Supporting food security, housing and income stability, access to child care, and skills development

Families do better when their basic needs are met. When food, housing, child care, and income are stable, parents can focus on their children and not on getting through the day.

But when these essentials are uncertain, pressure can build quickly and affect a child's health, learning, and sense of security. This strategy strengthens the supports families



Actions:

- **Continue working with the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), federal partners, and local First Nations organizations to support early learning and child care programs** led by communities with their local cultures, languages, traditions, practices and laws.
- **Continue StrongStartBC to strengthen early learning and family support.** StrongStartBC early learning programs play a role in family and child well-being by providing high quality early learning experiences, stronger parent and caregiver support, and early identification of needs. This helps families connect with interventions and assessments sooner, creating community connections that reduce isolation and strengthen belonging.
- **Improve youth access to individualized employment services** through the Foundry Work and Education Program, which supports youth in achieving employment and education goals while addressing challenges such as health, mental illness, homelessness, and substance use.
- **Provide employment and mental health support through WorkBC** to youth in and from care and to single parents (e.g. financial assistance, counselling sessions, and help with dependent care) to promote resilience for youth and single parents.
- **Fund youth employment initiatives** to build skills and work experience (e.g. Next Step with the YWCA) supporting transitions to independence.
- **Enhance the recruitment of internationally trained health professionals** to build workforce capacity and meet the needs of families in British Columbia.
- **Expand dual credit, work experience, and career skill development in K-12** to help youth successfully transition to post-secondary education and meaningful employment, preparing youth for future success.
- **End the spousal claw back on disability assistance,** ensuring couples are treated fairly and equitably to help couples maintain financial independence and remove barriers that have discouraged people from forming relationships.

2. Improving timely access to assessments and support services for parenting children and youth with complex needs

Early identification and timely support are critical for children with complex needs. Families are most often noticed and supported by everyday professionals (doctors, nurses, teachers, early childhood educators, child care providers, etc.), who recognize changes and help connect them to supports before challenges become more complex or disruptive.

By strengthening access to primary care, public health, early learning, and school-

based supports, and by recruiting and retaining these key professionals, families get help sooner, reducing disruption and uncertainty and avoiding crisis.

This strategy creates a coordinated system so that no matter where families enter the system – health settings, early learning, or education, they receive timely assessments, responsive services, and the support needed for their child’s well-being.

Actions:

- **Improve access to maternal and child public health services** by increasing public awareness and improving provincial policy guidance on services and supports available to all families across the province.
- **Implement the redesigned Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) Service Model** replacing the outdated model with a modernized, hybrid model of care including a disability supplement for low-income families caring for children with support needs and a non-income tested new benefit for families caring for children with the most complex needs.
- **Maintain progress in modernizing the At Home Program Medical Equipment and Supplies Benefits** providing medical equipment, supplies, travel support, dental, optical, and orthodontic benefits to eligible children supporting children’s health and family stability.
- **Integrate new Nursing Support Services into the BC Children’s Hospital Centre for Health Complexity** to create greater continuity and quality of care for children and youth with complex health care needs beginning in 2027.
- **Ensure Provincial School Outreach Teams** continue to offer specialized educational capacity and supports.
- **Enhance coordination among existing K-12 Provincial Outreach Programs** to reduce fragmentation and create an easier and more integrated service delivery experience for children and youth with support needs, their families, and schools.



- **Continue to support the Child and Youth with Support Needs workforce expansion** through multi-year investments. Since 2023, more than 90 FTEs have been hired in communities across the province to support early intervention therapies.
- **Continue to improve access to inclusive child care for children with support needs**, supporting growth and an experience of belonging through social inclusion with their peers, as outlined in B.C.'s Inclusive Child Care Strategy.
- **Develop new Individual Education Plan (IEP) guidelines and resources** to clarify roles and responsibilities for, and support meaningful consultation between, school staff and parents/caregivers to better meet the learning needs of students with disabilities and diverse abilities.
- **Provide early literacy screening from Kindergarten to Grade 3** with initial actions that include: supporting schools to scale up early literacy screening to include students from kindergarten to grade 3; developing a B.C. made early literacy screening tool for kindergarten to grade 3 students in English and French; and providing teachers with professional learning supports to bolster literacy instruction during the early years and literacy interventions at all points in a student's K-12 learning journey.
- **Implement targeted actions to strengthen teacher recruitment and retention** with a focus on Indigenous teachers and teachers in rural and remote areas of the province, as outlined in the Stronger BC Future Ready Action Plan.

3. Strengthening mental health and substance use services for children and youth

Young people need mental health and substance use supports that are easy to reach and connected across health, education, and community settings. When services are coordinated and available early, challenges are less likely to grow into crises, and families don't have to navigate support alone.

Strengthening community hubs, school-based teams, and safe spaces for youth creates a network of caring adults who can recognize when a young person is struggling and help them access support quickly. Together, these actions build a system that promotes safety, belonging, and timely care for children and youth.

Actions:

- **Expand Foundry Services** to increase accessible, integrated health and social supports for youth aged 12 - 24 and their families.
- **Continue wraparound mental health and substance use support for children and youth from early years to age 19.** Integrated Child and Youth Teams have been implemented in 20 school districts across the province, making it easier for young people and their families to connect to the care they need, when and where they need it—at school and in the community.
- **Explore Community Third Space Programs** to foster belonging in children and youth, including inclusive opportunities for recreational activities, drop-in hours for youth in a safe space, and support for children and youth when they ask for help.
- **Work with Indigenous peoples, system partners, and people with lived experience to realign and improve services for children and youth with support and mental health needs,** including by reducing silos and duplication.
- **Develop a Provincial Child, Youth and Young Adult Substance Use and Wellness Framework** focused on age-appropriate prevention and early intervention for children and youth ages 0 to 24.
- **Develop a best-practice Suicide Prevention & Life Promotion Toolkit for schools.** This will focus on deepening understanding of youth suicide, life promotion and self-harm, including priority populations, risk factors, and protective factors, and implementing evidence-informed prevention, intervention, response and postvention strategies and protocols that promote mental health and well-being and reduce suicide risk.
- **Support student safety and mental health by offering free online training on digital safety, privacy, and cyberbullying,** for students, families, and school staff, and building digital literacy and cybersecurity skills across all grade levels through B.C.'s education curriculum to improve online well-being and reduce cyberbullying risks.

4. Expanding mental health and substance use supports for parents and families with young children

Parents' mental health plays a central role in a child's early well-being. When parents face challenges like anxiety, depression, or substance use, it can affect daily routines and the stability young children depend on. Many families want support early, but services are not always easy to reach. This

strategy focuses on expanding mental health and substance use supports for parents and caregivers, making help more accessible through trusted health and community services so families can get support sooner and young children can grow up in safe, stable, and nurturing environments.

Actions:

- **Improve access to maternal and child public health services** by increasing public awareness and improving provincial policy guidance on services and supports available to all families across the province.
- **Expand the Road to Recovery Initiative** to help support parents struggling with substance use issues to access services and stabilize family well-being.



Illustrative Family Experience: Maria's Story

When Maria and her two young children moved to a new community after leaving her relationship, they were overwhelmed. Rent was rising, child care waitlists were long, and Maria was struggling with anxiety that made everyday tasks feel impossible. Her three-year-old son, Mateo, had recently been identified for possible developmental delays, but the assessment process felt confusing and disconnected.

Before, Maria might have faced these challenges alone, navigating multiple agencies, repeating her story, and waiting months for help. But things unfolded differently this time.

A community service worker connected her to a family stabilization fund, which helped her secure safe housing and cover the immediate costs of food and essentials. She was also helped to find a culturally grounded child care program with an inclusive spot for Mateo, supported through expanded child care accessibility initiatives.

Within weeks, Maria met with a coordinated early intervention team. Instead of separate assessments and referrals, the team—speech and occupational therapists, a pediatrician, and an early childhood educator—all worked together to contribute to a single, shared plan. For the first time, Maria felt that Mateo's needs were understood and that she had partners walking alongside her.

Alongside child development support, Maria was connected to a trauma-informed family law navigator who helped her understand her rights, access protection orders, and navigate court processes. These supports reflect key recommendations from Dr. Kim Stanton's review⁶, which calls for more coordinated, survivor-centred justice responses.

At the same time, Maria was able to access trauma-informed mental health support through a local community provider. Appointments were available quickly, and the counsellor helped her manage anxiety and build confidence in her parenting. When financial pressures eased and child care became reliable, Maria was able to enroll in a WorkBC training program, opening a pathway toward stable employment.

Six months later, the changes were palpable. Mateo was thriving in child care, and his speech therapy was well underway. Maria reported fewer crises, more stability, and a deep sense of relief knowing that when challenges arise, she won't have to navigate them alone. Her family's well-being is no longer dependent on day-to-day survival, but supported by a coordinated, accessible network of services designed to help families build strong, healthy foundations.

6 Stanton, K. (2025). Independent systemic review: *The British Columbia legal system's treatment of intimate partner violence and sexual violence*. Government of British Columbia. Retrieved from: [dr_kim_stantons_june_2025_final_report_-_independent_systemic_review_the_british_columbia_legal_systems_treatment_of_intimate_partner_violence_and_sexual_violence.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov2/othergov/br_columbia/legalsystems/treatment_of_intimate_partner_violence_and_sexual_violence.pdf)

Preventing & Responding to Intimate Partner, Gender-Based & Family Violence

Preventing and responding to intimate partner, gender-based, and family violence requires a trauma-informed, coordinated approach that addresses both immediate needs and long-term solutions. Current efforts focus on strengthening legal frameworks, improving survivor supports, and advancing prevention strategies to reduce violence and its impacts. The Province is advancing systemic work to address gender-based violence through initiatives underway in *Safe and Supported: B.C.'s Gender-Based Violence Action Plan* and in response to Dr. Kim Stanton's review of the justice system's treatment of intimate partner violence and sexual violence, with the goal of creating a safer, more supportive environment that strengthens protections and improves outcomes for children and youth.



We envision a future where a family will experience...

- Safety and healing through trauma-informed, culturally grounded services that meet them where they are.
- A justice system that responds swiftly and respectfully, prioritizing survivor and child safety and perpetrator accountability.
- Community-led prevention programs that stop violence before it begins.
- Seamless access to housing, counselling, legal support, and practical assistance—without retelling painful stories.

We will take action now to address immediate gaps in service and seize opportunities to streamline approaches, but more work will be required. Together, we need to explore:

- How do we ensure survivors can access seamless, trauma-informed supports without repeatedly retelling their story?
- How can we strengthen cross-sector coordination so legal, child welfare, policing, health, and community services respond as one system?
- What mechanisms will ensure culturally grounded, community-led healing services are sustainably funded and scaled province-wide?
- How do we improve early identification of risk—before violence escalates—and build effective prevention pathways across schools, communities, and health settings?
- How do we ensure survivor safety planning is consistent, timely, and centred on the needs of children?

We're taking action to prevent and respond to intimate partner, gender-based, and family violence by:

1. Reducing violence through a focus on prevention

Preventing violence starts long before a crisis. Children, youth, and families are safer when communities have strong, culturally grounded programs that build healthy relationships, challenge harmful attitudes, and support

healing. When prevention is woven through schools, community organizations, and Indigenous-led initiatives, we can interrupt cycles of harm and reduce the risk of violence before it begins.

Actions:

- **Support domestic violence intervention programs** (e.g., Caring Dads) to prevent escalation and support safe family relationships.
- **Through the PEACE program, continue investing in Violence is Preventable (VIP) programs** (in place since 2004) which are a free, confidential, school-based violence prevention program for students in grades K-12 that was developed and is currently delivered by PEACE Program counsellors who know too well the crucial need for violence prevention and education initiatives in a school-based setting. The VIP program:
 - Increases awareness and knowledge of the impact experiencing violence can have on children and youth
 - Challenges attitudes about silence and misperceptions about violence against women
 - Facilitates partnerships between schools and communities to respond to the emotional, social, academic, and psychological needs of children experiencing domestic violence
 - Supports educators, counsellors, and administrators to increase effective, sustainable support services for children and youth in schools
- **Support Indigenous community-driven healing initiatives**, such as the Giving Voice Project, a grant program envisioned by the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation's Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women (MACIW) and delivered by the Province to support community-led projects that provide opportunities for healing and aim to stop violence by changing behaviours and attitudes and mobilizing communities.
- **Support the First Peoples Cultural Council (FPCC) to support First Nations cultural practices and coming of age ceremonies** to prevent and heal from gender-based violence. This includes planning, carrying out and documenting community-based cultural practices and events that celebrate the roles, relationships and responsibilities within a community, and help to create a sense of belonging and build relationships to take action against gender-based violence that disproportionately affects Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people.

2. Reviewing the provincial approach to support improved response for families experiencing violence

When violence occurs, families need systems that respond quickly, consistently, and with compassion. Strengthening laws, policies, and cross-government coordination helps ensure that survivors do not face conflicting advice

or gaps in support. This strategy focuses on clarifying roles, improving accountability, and ensuring that every part of the system works together to protect children and support survivor safety.

Actions:

- **Advance cross-government approach to strengthen how families experiencing violence are supported.** Building on the recommendations from the independent systemic review of the legal system's treatment of sexual and intimate partner violence, government will work with justice and community partners to develop a comprehensive policy framework. This work will provide clear, consistent guidance to everyone involved in supporting survivors while respecting the independence of each role.
- **Review the *Family Law Act (FLA)*** to ensure it upholds child-centred decision-making and represents the child's views in parental assessments and reports.

3. Enhancing direct services for survivors of intimate partner, gender-based, and family violence

Survivors need safe places to turn and supports they can rely on, especially during moments of crisis. By enhancing access to trauma-informed, culturally safe services, housing, counselling, legal supports, and coordinated response teams, we help survivors rebuild stability for themselves and their children. This strategy strengthens the

services that meet families where they are so no one has to navigate violence alone. Indigenous-specific approaches to addressing violence aim to align the priorities of the Indigenous Women's Justice Plan and the Declaration Act on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Action Plan.

Actions:

- **Continue the Safe Supports Project** to explore ways to improve the experience of families who have been impacted by intimate partner violence (IPV) as they navigate the family law system. The project includes family court support worker services in five primarily rural, remote and Northern locations to provide wraparound services to survivors who have, or are considering commencing, *Family Law Act* matters in Provincial Court. The Safe Supports project also includes an information gatherer role to support survivors of IPV in accessing court information and records relating to their own court matters across family, criminal and child protection proceedings.
 - **Family Court Support Workers** – Family Court Workers operate in three community-based anti-violence organizations in rural and remote regions of the province. The Year Two Interim Evaluation of the Safe Supports Family Court Support Workers is complete and demonstrates that the program continues to provide meaningful support to survivors of family violence as they navigate the family legal system.
 - **Information Gatherer** – Safe Supports and other projects are looking at improving the ways that survivors of violence can access their own court information across criminal and family law proceedings. The Year Two Interim Evaluation of the Safe Supports Information Gatherer indicates that the role is valued for reducing the complexity and stress of obtaining court documents.
- **Continue the implementation of Sexual Assault Centres in four communities** to provide trauma-informed medical care, forensic services, counselling, and police interviews in a single safe place. A coordinated, multidisciplinary response means survivors don't have to navigate multiple systems or retell their story repeatedly, reducing trauma and improving safety. When services work together from the start, risks are identified earlier and supports are connected more quickly.
- **Enhance the Canada-BC Housing Benefit (CBCHB) for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence** (including women and their children and 2SLGBTQI+ people) to secure and maintain rental housing in the private market.
- **Continue the Family Information Liaison Unit** to support families of Indigenous missing and murdered people, including helping obtain information from law enforcement and coroners services. Originally established to support families of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, it was expanded in 2023 to include Indigenous missing and murdered men and boys.
- **Continue to support Indigenous-led and community-based social services and supports** to provide trauma-informed, culturally safe, relevant services that address a range of holistic wellness needs for those who are in crisis, at-risk or have experienced violence, trauma, and/or significant loss.

- **Continue support through the Building B.C.: Women’s Transition Housing Fund**, to deliver and operate new transition, second stage and long-term affordable housing spaces for women and children in the province.
- **Enhance the capacity of Women’s Transition Housing and Supports Programs across the province** to support survivors with funding for critical response grants and to improve accessibility for gender diverse people and/or those with disabilities.
- **Continue assisting housing and shelter service providers in establishing training and protocols** to identify and support individuals accessing shelter and supportive housing services who have/are experiencing gender-based violence.
- **Support Métis Nation BC to continue its gender-based violence initiatives for Métis women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people**, including expanding access to counselling, supporting regional events focused on community healing, providing necessities and comfort kits for individuals fleeing violence, and a pilot project on prevention and breaking the cycle of violence by focusing on services for Métis men who are survivors and/or perpetrators of violence.
- **Continue funding to support the Society for Children and Youth** to deliver legal services to children and youth across the province who are experiencing problems relating to family law, child protection, and many other legal issues.

Illustrative Family Experience: Natalie’s Story

When Natalie arrived at the emergency room with her young daughter, she was terrified, not only because of the violence she had experienced, but because she feared what would happen next. In the past, she might have been sent home with a pamphlet and a number to call. This time, the hospital’s social worker provided her with the option to attend the local Sexual Assault Centre, where a victim service worker and nurse examiner met them within an hour.

Instead of navigating separate police interviews, medical appointments, and housing applications, the Centre coordinated everything. A Domestic Violence Unit helped

Natalie obtain an emergency protection order and the family was moved the same night into transition housing, where both mother and child received trauma-informed supports grounded in cultural safety.

Over the next few months, Natalie attended counselling, connected with an Indigenous-led healing program, and secured stable housing through a second-stage program. Her daughter received child-friendly therapeutic supports and began to feel safe again. For the first time, Natalie said she felt believed, protected, and supported by a system that didn’t leave her to manage the crisis alone.



Integrated Services & Crisis Response

Families experiencing compounded vulnerabilities—such as housing instability, mental health challenges, family law issues, or unmet developmental needs—often find themselves navigating several systems at once. When these systems do not work together, risks can escalate quickly: missed appointments turn into school absences, unmanaged stress turns into crisis, and children fall through the gaps. A coordinated system ensures that families receive early, wraparound support before vulnerabilities compound further, improving well-being and reducing long-term public costs.



We envision a future where a family will experience...

- A connected service system where information flows appropriately, reducing the need to navigate alone.
- Coordinated crisis responses that surround them with the right support at the right moment.
- Professionals who communicate, plan, and problem-solve together and with the family.
- Simple, family-centred government services that only require families to tell their story once.

We will take action now to address immediate gaps in service and seize opportunities to streamline approaches, but more work will be required. Together, we need to explore:

- What governance, protocols, and data-sharing agreements are needed so families only have to share their story once?
- How do we ensure integrated crisis responses are available consistently across all communities, not just where pilots currently operate?
- How can we streamline processes so professionals from multiple sectors can work together in a timely way and without administrative or information sharing barriers?
- What tools, technology, and workforce supports are required for coordinated service planning to become the norm?
- How do we ensure integrated responses include cultural safety, community involvement, and strong accountability mechanisms?

We're taking action to create integrated planning and crisis response by:

1. Integrating Services to Better Support Children, Youth and Families

Improving outcomes for children, youth, families and adults requires services that work together around people's needs — not government structures.

That is why the Province will launch targeted engagement to better understand how people experience social services today, and how those services could be more integrated, coordinated and easier to access. Government will engage with Indigenous partners, service providers, frontline workers and community organizations.

This work will be supported by a comprehensive review of programs and services across government to identify opportunities to reduce duplication, strengthen connections between services, and improve how people access support.

The goal is to better organize programs around the major life events and transitions when people need support - whether that means accessing disability supports, returning to work, finding stability, or building independence and well-being.

Government will review what is heard through engagement, assess the findings from service mapping, and determine next steps to improve integration across the social service system. This work will also build on progress already underway through Connected Services BC to create a more coordinated digital gateway for people to access services.

Ultimately, this work is about reorganizing government around people's needs, rather than expecting people to navigate multiple programs, ministries and bureaucratic processes on their own. It is also about ensuring frontline workers have the tools, information and authority they need to help people get the right support, sooner and with fewer barriers.

2. Improving information sharing

When the adults in a child’s life—teachers, social workers, caregivers, nurses, Elders, and community partners—do not have the information they need, serious warning signs can be missed. In several tragic cases in B.C., including Colby’s, the absence of timely information left schools unaware

of risks, prevented early intervention, and meant no single professional could see the full picture of what a child was facing. Stronger, safer information sharing helps ensure that the people closest to a child can act quickly, work together, and prevent harm before it escalates.

Actions:

- **Strengthen safe, proactive information sharing with those who play a central role in a child’s daily life, so that:**
 - School districts are informed when a child or youth in care or an out-of-care placement may need additional support or monitoring. This ensures teachers and school staff, who see young people every day, can respond early when something changes.
 - The child welfare system can reduce unnecessary data sharing with public bodies and focus on information that protects safety and well-being.
- **Complete privacy impact assessments and necessary information-sharing protocols required to enable the use of a child’s Public Health Number (PHN) to access Children and Youth with Support Needs services** to facilitate improved reporting and monitoring.
- **Build a clearer picture of the pathways families take when they experience gender-based violence** by examining cross-ministry service patterns. Understanding these patterns allows government to prevent crises earlier, improve coordination, and make sure families receive support at the moment they need it, not after harm has occurred.



3. Improving care coordination and integrated crisis response

Families in crisis often face many challenges at once, and no single service can meet every need. When professionals can plan together across health, justice, education, child welfare, and community services, families receive

quicker, more coordinated support. This strategy strengthens the tools and teams that respond during high-risk moments, helping ensure families are met with a unified, timely response wherever they live.

Actions:

- **Support Situation Tables and Intervention Circles** to bring together community agencies and service providers to collaboratively respond to individuals and/or families facing acute risk.
 - The Situation Table is a collaborative triage model. The Table's goal is to prevent harm by connecting vulnerable individuals or families facing instances of Acutely Elevated Risk (AER) to appropriate services. AER refers to situations where there is significant community interest at stake, a probability of harm occurring, a high intensity of potential harm, and a multidisciplinary nature to the elevated risk.
 - Intervention Circles are a First Nation-led collaborative approach that brings together Elders, Knowledge Keepers, community members, and human service agencies through weekly gatherings to support vulnerable individuals. Community partners work together to identify the most appropriate supports, develop personalized plans, and connect vulnerable individuals to services in a timely and coordinated manner.
- **Continue to support Interagency Case Assessment Teams (ICAT) across the province** to collaboratively review highest risk cases of intimate partner violence with the goal of increasing safety and preventing further harm. The goal is achieved through collaboratively identifying risks, legally and ethically sharing risk-related information and creating risk management plans to increase safety for survivors, children and others at risk.
- **Operate Family Justice Centres and Justice Access Centres** across the province with staff available to assist with issues related to separation or divorce. Services include screening for family violence, access to legal information, referrals to community support organizations and legal advice. Providing early access to screening for family violence, legal information, parenting education courses, and consensual dispute resolution services in all provincial court family law matters reduces toxic conflict, negative impacts of adversarial litigation and increases financial stability through timely resolution of parenting through child/spousal support.

- **Operate Indigenous Justice Centres** across the province to provide culturally appropriate information, advice, support and representation to Indigenous people primarily focused on criminal law and child protection. Indigenous Justice Centres take a holistic approach to client and community wellness by facilitating client connections to supports such as housing, mental health and substance use treatment, and employment services.
- **Implement Connected Services BC (CSBC)**, a connected services experience to improve how people and businesses access and receive government services, including:
 - Information sharing across government to increase access to services and supports, strengthening coordination across government and community partners to ensure families experience a connected system of care.
 - Making safety screening clearer and faster for individuals working with vulnerable children and simplify processes for community professionals to uphold their legislative duty to report child safety concerns.
 - Technology that will be shared across program areas to support efficiency and access to services, and data tracking to understand the needs and outcomes of children, youth and families.
- **Provide public-facing information and deliver webinars on the legal duty to report child abuse and neglect**, with a focus toward healthcare providers, public health agencies, education professionals, and community-based organizations.



4. Implementing integrated community response service models

Communities are strongest when services work together around families instead of in separate silos. Integrated community models bring health, child development, cultural supports, crisis response, and family services into a single coordinated approach. By meeting

families where they are, through Indigenous-led programs, child advocacy centres, community-based child development and early-help models, we reduce stress, improve safety, and ensure children and youth receive the support they need as early as possible.

Actions:

- **Continue to support the BC Network of Child and Youth Advocacy Centres (CYAC)**, which provides a coordinated, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive response to child abuse, ensuring children, youth, and families are safely connected to the services they need, by
 - Supporting the development of a proposal to create a regional CYAC in the Lower Mainland;
 - Supporting the CYAC Network, particularly in its efforts to enhance Indigenous cultural safety; and
 - Supporting the development of provincial level partnerships and policies that benefit the Network and local CYACs.
- **Explore and pilot an early-help family support service model** that provides timely, risk-reducing assistance to families before concerns escalate.
- **Enhance investments in a community-based child development service model** that supports whole families through connection to crisis support, family navigation, respite, behavioural and mental health services, and pediatric intervention and therapies. Coordinating care around families, to reduce stress and improve developmental outcomes.
- **Continue to fund Indigenous-led, community-based integrated Child and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) service delivery partnerships**, like the Indigenous CYSN Mobile Service model developed in partnership with Denisiqi Services Society, First Nations, and local Child Development Centre, to ensure families of children and youth with support needs receive coordinated, culturally grounded supports and extend outreach to remote communities.

Illustrative Family Experience: Jonah's Story

When 15-year-old Jonah began missing school, spending long days wandering around the community, the challenges facing his family had already been building over time. His mother, Tessa, was doing her best to navigate concerns about Jonah's mental health, learning needs, and growing isolation, but like many families facing multiple pressures, each new challenge layered onto the last.

The school was worried about attendance. Their family doctor saw signs of anxiety. A youth worker noted increasing disconnection. Each service was paying attention and trying to help within its role, but without a complete picture of what the others were seeing. Tessa, managing unstable housing and unpredictable work hours, found herself carrying the weight of coordinating different supports, despite the best intentions of the professionals involved. These stacked pressures intensified, making it harder for her to respond as Jonah's behaviour escalated.

When Jonah did not come home one night, the complexity of his situation became more visible. This time, instead of responding separately, the school activated a regional Integrated Response Table, a tool that many communities already use to bring partners together when concerns escalate. Mental health providers, child welfare workers, police, health services, and youth outreach came together to safely share information, align their understanding, and build a coordinated plan. It wasn't that collaboration hadn't been happening; rather,

this mechanism allowed everyone to connect the dots in a way that individual services, working hard but separately, could not. For the first time, all the professionals supporting Jonah sat at the same table, shared information safely and appropriately, and created a unified plan, one that did not place the burden on Tessa to navigate multiple systems alone.

A youth outreach worker located Jonah later that day and helped him connect with a trauma-informed youth shelter. Within 48 hours, the integrated team arranged counselling, a safety plan, an assessment for potential learning needs, and supports to stabilize the family's housing situation.

By bringing together the pieces that many caring professionals had been holding on their own, the team transformed a complex situation that required urgent coordination into one that was manageable for Jonah and his mother. For the first time, Tessa felt that she wasn't carrying this alone, that the system around her was sharing responsibility, seeing the whole picture, and working together in ways that strengthened her family's well-being.



Advancing Indigenous Self-Determination & Jurisdiction

We are taking concrete steps to reduce the systemic issues within the child welfare system that leads to the overrepresentation of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children and youth in the child welfare system and continuing to support Indigenous self-determination and jurisdiction over child and family services.

We envision a future where a family will experience...

- Services grounded in Indigenous laws, culture, and communities, respecting the right of self-determination of Nations as it pertains to exercising authority over child welfare.
- Supports delivered in partnership with communities, respecting each individual Nation's expertise as it relates to child welfare and the inclusion of Elders and Knowledge Keepers that honour identity, belonging, and connection to land as each individual Nation sees fit.
- Clear pathways to culturally safe services that uphold Indigenous rights.
- A child and family system that honours the central role of community in raising children.

We will act now to address immediate gaps in service and seize opportunities to streamline approaches, but more work will be required. Together, we need to explore:

- How do we ensure provincial practice, policy, and legislation support and coordinate with Indigenous laws, governance, and decision-making as First Nations exercise their Indigenous laws?
- What approaches best honour community-defined pathways to self-determination while respecting diversity across Nations?
- How do we build cultural safety, Elder involvement, and Indigenous oversight into all aspects of child and family services?



We're taking action to advance self-determination & jurisdiction over child and family services by:

1. Collaborating with First Nations to finalize the fiscal framework to support jurisdiction over child and family services

Supporting First Nations to exercise jurisdiction requires stable, fair funding. This strategy focuses on working government-

to-government to build a fiscal framework that makes self-determination real, sustainable, and community-led.

Actions:

- **Update the service level agreement with the federal government** to align with fiscal changes resulting from jurisdiction.
- **Co-develop a B.C.-specific fiscal framework in partnership with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, and in consultation with key Indigenous organizations, to support and move forward with jurisdiction** over child and family services to First Nations.
- **Continue leading fiscal negotiations with First Nations** to establish mutually beneficial agreements, while identifying fiscal risks and issues.

2. Ensuring that government is positioned to effectively operate in a multi-jurisdictional service delivery environment in conjunction with Indigenous Governing Bodies who are exercising jurisdiction

As more First Nations exercise jurisdiction, the provincial system must be ready to work alongside Indigenous Governing Bodies in a respectful, coordinated way. This strategy prepares government staff, policies,

and systems to operate within multiple governance structures, ensuring services remain culturally safe, consistent, and supportive for children and families.

Actions:

- **Finalize the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)'s draft strategy to guide engagement with the federal government** on implementation of the federal Indigenous child welfare legislation.
- **Develop a ministry implementation plan to support Indigenous self-determination** by upholding jurisdiction through multiple pathways.
- **Implement MCFD's change management framework** to build change capacity across the ministry to ensure successful adoption of changes resulting from a new multi-jurisdictional service model.
- **Implement policy and training to support staff working in multi-jurisdictional** child and family service delivery to ensure culturally safe and effective services across governance structures.

3. Participating in the negotiation of trilateral agreements that support First Nations jurisdiction over child and family services

Trilateral agreements between First Nations, B.C., and Canada are a key pathway for Nations to fully exercise their authority over child and family services. This strategy supports honest partnership, shared learning,

and clear processes so more Nations can move forward with jurisdiction at their own pace and in the way that reflects their community's vision.

Actions:

- **Collaborate with Indigenous communities to transform the child welfare system** to enhance cultural safety and family stability.
- **Communicate information about the pathways to self-determination to First Nations**, provide support and guidance to communities as they pursue available pathways for self-determination and jurisdiction over child and family services.
- **Engage and participate in dialogues with First Nations to maximize the number of negotiated agreements** that support First Nations jurisdiction over child and family services.

4. Strengthening family and cultural connections for children and youth interacting with the child protection system

Indigenous children thrive when they stay closely connected to their families, cultures, languages, and communities. This strategy strengthens oversight, cultural practice, and

Elder involvement across the child protection system to ensure that every Indigenous child is supported in ways that honour identity, belonging, and Nation-based teachings.

Actions:

- **Ensure Indigenous oversight, Elder involvement, and culturally grounded practice** are embedded to support children, youth and families interacting with the child protection system.
- **Work to close the equity gap for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners** through full implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan.

Illustrative Experience: A Nation's Journey

When concerns were raised about the well-being of a community member's children, the Nation took the lead from the start. A family wellness worker and two Elders visited the home, not to investigate, but to understand. They spent time listening, learning about the family's challenges, and grounding the process in the Nation's laws, teachings, and responsibilities to its children.

Under the Nation's direction, provincial service providers offered support without taking over decision-making. The Nation identified housing instability and the father's untreated trauma as primary concerns. Together, they developed a community-led plan that included housing upgrades,

parenting support, cultural mentoring, and access to Nation-run healing programs. Extended family members stepped in to provide temporary care, keeping the children connected to culture, identity, and land.

For the family, the difference was profound: instead of fear and shame, they felt supported and respected. The children remained within their community, surrounded by familiar faces. The Nation later shared that this case demonstrated exactly why Indigenous jurisdiction matters. It keeps families together, builds community strength, and restores approaches grounded in their own laws and teachings.

Protecting & Uplifting the Most Vulnerable

We are working to advance safety, healing, and improved long-term outcomes for children and youth involved in the child protection and youth justice systems through immediate improvements, system reform, and accountability. We will know that this work has been successful when children and youth involved with the child protection system and/or justice involved youth, are supported to realize comparable outcomes to their peers.



We envision a future where a family will experience...

- Early, practical supports that keep children and youth safely at home whenever possible.
- Safety, belonging, and long-term well-being.
- High-quality, culturally grounded placements that ensure children feel safe, supported, and believed in.
- Clear pathways for youth transitioning from care into adulthood.
- Restorative interventions are delivered that repair harm to victims and communities, as well as hold youth accountable.

We will take action now to address immediate gaps in service and seize opportunities to streamline approaches, but more work will be required. Together, we need to explore:

- What steps are required to enhance quality, cultural safety, and oversight across all care placements?
- How can guardianship workers be further enabled to continue promoting the well-being of children and youth in care across all aspects of their lives—including education, cultural attachment, mental health, and belonging—while strengthening their role as advocates for long-term outcomes?
- What is needed to ensure youth transitioning from care have stable housing, holistic supports, and clear pathways to education and employment?
- How do we better support youth who are street-entrenched, disengaged, or falling through service gaps?

We're taking action to protect & uplift the most vulnerable by:

1. Strengthening resources to support families at risk to keep children and youth safely at home

All families want to keep their children safe, but stress, violence, or unmet needs can make that hard. When families get practical, timely help, and when supports reflect culture and community,

they are more likely to stay together safely. This strategy focuses on giving families earlier, more meaningful support so children can remain at home whenever it is safe to do so.

Actions:

- **Continue implementing trauma-informed clinical and care models** across the child welfare system.
- **Continue clarifying and implementing the requirement to pursue least disruptive measures** to keep children safely at home.
- **Review and update guidelines and training for child welfare workers working with families experiencing intimate partner violence and/or family violence**, including working with the survivor and child while holding the person using violence accountable.
- **Inform and orient staff about the availability and use of discretionary funding** to provide timely, family-centered needs-based and practical assistance to families in crisis situations.

2. Supporting young people with child welfare experience to transition successfully to adulthood

Youth leaving care often face adulthood without the supports their peers rely on. A steady place to live, help with education, and someone to turn to during big transitions can

make all the difference. By surrounding young people with consistent, meaningful support, we give them a stronger, safer start as they build their adult lives.

Actions:

- **Continue the SAJE (Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment) program** helping youth from care move into adulthood with supports that reduce isolation and increase stability.
- **Continue waiving tuition fees for youth who have experienced care under the CFCSA**, removing financial barriers so education and training can become real opportunities for security and independence. Access to post-secondary learning opens doors to long-term stability, stronger income, and a sense of possibility – outcomes that can transform the trajectory of a young person's life.
- **Continue the work of the Public Guardian and Trustee** to support legal and financial wellness training for young people with child welfare experience

3. Strengthening policy, practice, and training for child safety social workers

The decisions made by child safety and guardianship workers carry enormous responsibility. Clear policies, strong training, and consistent practice ensure staff can

work effectively with families, Nations, and communities. This strategy builds the tools and knowledge workers need to protect children while supporting family and cultural connections.

Actions:

- **Develop and implement overarching guidelines for documentation practices** for staff delivering child safety and guardianship services.
- **Identify key critical child safety and guardianship practices and develop a process for real-time oversight** to ensure oversight of critical safety measures to reduce risk and promote consistent, high-quality support for children and youth in care.
- **Deliver training webinars to child safety workers and team leaders on including family members and Nations** in the development of family plans and use of least disruptive measures.

4. Increasing safety, belonging and long-term well-being for children and youth in care and support cultural connection, permanency and developmental needs through legislative changes and improved policy and training for guardianship workers.

Children and youth in care deserve safe, stable homes and strong cultural and family connections. This strategy strengthens oversight, supports guardianship workers,

and improves how we track well-being so every young person in care receives consistent, high-quality support and has the opportunity to thrive.

Actions:

- **Support guardianship workers through policy and training to** enable them to continue their work to support cultural connection, safety, permanency, and developmental needs, improving long-term outcomes for children and youth.
- **Establish indicators and tools to monitor life outcomes and quality of care** for young people interacting with the child welfare system, ensuring services meet children's needs, track progress over time, and guide continuous improvement in well-being, stability, and opportunities for youth in care.

5. Improving support for children and youth who are street-entrenched, disengaged, or not accessing services

Some children and youth face significant barriers that leave them disconnected from the very systems meant to support them. These may include young people who go absent from home or care placements, youth who are not attending school or are increasingly disengaged, and those who avoid services because past experiences have taught them not to trust the system. These

young people are often the most vulnerable yet the least likely to receive timely help. Improving support for children and youth who are absent, disengaged, or not accessing services means creating responses that can reach them early, meet them where they are, rebuild trust, and keep them connected to safety, caring adults, and the supports they need.

Actions:

- **Continue to provide low-barrier youth shelters** to provide immediate safety, reduce the risk of exploitation, and offer stable, supportive environments that help youth reconnect with trusted adults and essential services. These shelters serve as a lifeline for youth in crisis, catching them when they are most at risk and helping them stabilize and move toward long-term support.
- **MCFD's Provincial Centralized Screening (PCS) continues to respond immediately** to all urgent guardianship concerns and missing youth using existing tools while streamlining internal processes and strengthening pathways. The ministry continues to onboard police and RCMP to the non-urgent web application and is also exploring a separate reporting template for caregivers to share non-urgent updates about children and youth in care, supporting better information-sharing and coordinated follow-up. CSBC, in partnership with MCFD, is exploring the expansion of the PCS Non-urgent web app capabilities to caregivers.
- **Develop a Youth Justice Resource Hub** as a central location for resources for youth justice staff and community-based service providers including ongoing and supplemental learning opportunities and improved communication to enable better access to services that promote rehabilitation, reintegration, and long-term well-being.
- **Enhance restorative justice services**, including Indigenous-led restorative justice services, by implementing a new provincial service model that increases opportunities for youth to take accountability, repair harm, restore relationships, and reintegrate into the community.
- **Continue to fund and support the Gang Intervention and Exiting Program** in the Lower Mainland, which helps youth over the age of 12 who are at risk of gang activity. The program provides safe, trusted support to help young people step away from violence, rebuild stability, and work toward long-term positive goals. By surrounding youth with consistent adult guidance, cultural and community connection, and practical help, it offers a path toward safety and a healthier future.



6 Strengthening screening and oversight of caregivers in the child welfare system

Children and youth in care rely on caregivers to provide stable, nurturing homes. Strong oversight helps ensure those homes are safe, culturally grounded, and able to meet a child's

needs. This strategy improves screening, monitoring, and accountability so every caregiver is equipped and supported to provide high-quality care.

Actions:

- **Conduct an audit of caregiver compliance** in contracted homes to ensure caregivers meet required standards for screening and approval to support, improving safety, quality of care, and the consistency of supportive environments for children and youth.
- **Improve monitoring and oversight of out-of-home placements** to identify risks earlier, provide timely intervention, and ensure children and youth remain in placements that support stability, emotional security, and healthy development.
- **Create and implement a foster/care provider portal along with IT and Technology enhancements** to strengthen accountability, support more informed placement decisions, and ensure caregivers have the necessary competencies to provide safe, culturally grounded, and supportive care.
- **Continue leading a comprehensive review of kinship and out-of-care arrangements** to ensure they meet the needs of the children, their families, and caregivers.

7. Strengthening youth justice services to be more coordinated, accountable, and youth-centered as well as trauma-informed, culturally relevant and grounded in restorative practice and safety

Young people involved in the justice system need supports that focus on safety, accountability, and healing, not punishment alone. This strategy strengthens restorative,

culturally relevant, trauma-informed services that help youth take responsibility, repair harm, and build a safer, more stable future for themselves and their communities.

Actions:

- **Develop a new Youth Justice Service Framework**, informed by significant engagement with the B.C. First Nations Justice Council, Métis Nation BC, service providers and youth with lived experience, that envisions a coordinated, accountable and youth-centred justice system that increases public safety and optimizes life opportunities for justice involved youth.
- **Develop a Key Priorities Action Plan with input** from the BC First Nations Justice Council, Métis Nation BC and MCFD staff.
- **Initial investment priorities** focus on:
 - Indigenous led, culturally relevant services and supports
 - Restorative justice services
 - Diversion programming
 - Mental health and substance use support
 - Transition planning and support for successful reintegration of justice involved youth
 - Services that are evidence-based and trauma-informed, delivered by well-trained staff

Illustrative Family Experience: Leila’s Story

At 16, Leila had already experienced multiple foster placements and felt increasingly disconnected from school, friends, and her cultural community. Her anxiety was growing, and she often skipped meals because she didn’t feel safe in her group home. When her new guardianship worker met her, it was clear she needed stability—not another placement.

The worker brought together a care team: her school counsellor, a Foundry clinician, an Elder from her Nation, and a housing navigator. Together, they created a youth-centred plan that focused on safety, stability, and long-term belonging. Leila moved into a

Supported Youth Transition housing program where she had her own room, steady meals, and adults she trusted.

Through the SAJE program, she accessed financial supports, life-skills coaching, and tuition waivers that allowed her to enrol in college-level upgrading. Weekly cultural programming through her Nation’s youth group reconnected her with language, ceremony, and a sense of identity she thought she had lost. Six months later, Leila said she finally felt like she had “a team that wasn’t giving up on her”—and for the first time, she could imagine a future where she wasn’t just surviving but thriving.

Conclusion

Our Path Forward

This Action Plan represents the beginning of a long-term, collective effort to transform how British Columbia supports children, youth, and families. Across all five priority areas, the direction is clear: earlier help, stronger coordination, culturally grounded services, and a system that removes barriers rather than creating them.

Our north star is a province where every child grows up safe, connected, and supported. Where families can access what they need without navigating crisis, and where systems work together as one. Achieving this vision will require continued partnership with Indigenous Nations, communities, service providers, and families themselves.

As we learn, measure progress, and adapt, we remain grounded in a simple, shared goal: that every child and youth in British Columbia has the opportunity to thrive.





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