

MCFD 2025 ESTIMATES

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MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGIC SERVICES DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26

ISSUE: Minister's Mandate Letter/Service Plan/Strategic Framework

KEY MESSAGES:

- I am honoured to serve as Minister and I look forward to continuing my journey to support B.C.'s children, youth, young adults, families.
- In addition to enabling the vital day-to-day work of providing critical services and supports to British Columbia's vulnerable children and youth, and to their families, I look forward to delivering on the priorities outlined in our Service Plan, Strategic Framework, and my mandate letter.
- This year's service plan has shifted significantly from last year's plan to reflect the evolution of ministry direction and this government's mandate.
- The service plan aligns with the priorities outlined in my mandate letter and is consistent with the ministry's strategic framework; it highlights four key areas:
 1. **Indigenous reconciliation:** ensuring every opportunity is available for Indigenous Peoples to achieve self-determination while reducing the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in government care
 2. **Child and youth well-being:** designing a comprehensive child well-being plan and an outcomes framework that aligns services across ministries and agencies
 3. **Improving policies and practices** so that children and youth in the system of care realize **comparable outcomes to their peers**, and
 4. **Strengthening and aligning** children and youth with support and mental health needs services with the health system.

BACKGROUND:

The priorities outlined in our Service Plan, Strategic Framework, and my mandate letter involve:

- **Ensuring every opportunity is available for Indigenous Peoples to achieve self-determination while continuously reducing the overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth in the system of care. Including:**
 - Working alongside Indigenous Governing Bodies preparing to enter into the range of agreements that exist to enable the exercise of decision-making authority and jurisdiction over child and family services.
 - Continuing to co-develop options for a B.C.-specific funding model, in partnership with the 204 First Nations in B.C., Metis and Inuit, and in consultation with key Indigenous organizations to advance jurisdiction over child and family services.
 - Continuing to operationalize the Office of the Indigenous Child Welfare Director to further the commitment to reduce overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth in care, keep Indigenous children and youth connected to their families, culture and languages, and to provide advice and guidance within the Ministry on crucial Indigenous child and family service decisions.
 - Collaborating with Indigenous Peoples, service providers, and youth with lived experience to design responsive, trauma-informed, and culturally agile youth justice services that better support youth and promote public safety by responding to the needs of offenders, victims and the community.
- **Designing and implementing a comprehensive child well-being plan and an outcomes framework that aligns services across ministries and agencies. This work includes:**
 - Researching and engaging with First Nations, Modern Treaty Nations, Métis, urban Indigenous people, Indigenous organizations, multiple ministries and other key partners to obtain input for the development of the child well-being plan.
 - Continuing to develop an outcomes-based framework to establish shared measures for child and youth outcomes.
 - Collaboratively developing solutions that address barriers to information sharing between ministries and service providers so when children and youth are struggling, they, and their families, are connected to the supports and services they need.

- **Continuously evolving and improving policies and practices, so that children and youth in the system of care realize comparable outcomes to their peers, including:**
 - Continuing implementation of Specialized Homes and Support Services (SHSS) by implementing these services across B.C.
 - Ensuring that youth and young adults have the tools, resources, and social supports to transition successfully to adulthood and adult services and that they are supported to achieve their full potential.
 - Completing a comprehensive review of kinship care services to support the Ministry in planning for the future of kinship care by examining its role within the continuum of child welfare options and making operational recommendations for changes to existing programs and services.
 - Implementing a system of enhanced oversight for places where children in care or out of care reside and continuing to exercise oversight related to visits with children and youth in care and out of care.
- **Strengthening and aligning children and youth with support and mental health needs services with the health system. This work includes:**
 - Building upon previous engagement feedback to strengthen choice and flexibility for families of children with support needs.
 - Continuing to implement previous approved investments to enhance supports for children and youth with support needs, including enhancements to respite, expansion of the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Key Worker program, and early intervention therapies.
 - Continuing to support integrated models of child and youth mental health service provision, including through Integrated Child and Youth Teams, in several communities around the province.
 - Working with the Ministry of Health, engaging experts, Indigenous partners, and service providers to support and help guide the alignment of services for children and youth with support and mental health needs with the health system.
 - Leading the work to analyze recommendations provided through earlier engagements including strengthening early intervention, improving access to diagnostic services and overall care coordination.

- My mandate letter, our service plan, and the ministry's strategic framework underscore a commitment to collaboration across ministries, with Indigenous Peoples, and key stakeholders to ensure continuous improvement of child and family services, and to achieve meaningful and measurable outcomes for children, youth, and families.

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: MCFD's 2025/26 Operating Budget

KEY MESSAGES:

- The Ministry of Children and Family Development's (MCFD) 2025/26 budget increased by \$321.6 million to \$2,442.8 million. Budget highlights include:
 - A \$268.4 million year-over-year increase for child welfare, adoption and youth justice services. This increase consists of:
 - \$245.7 million for direct services,
 - \$10.4 million for wage increases to support front-line recruitment and retention, and
 - \$12.3 million to address historical wage mandates.
 - \$53.2 million for services for direct and supporting services to children and youth with support needs; this funding increases access to existing programs and invests in social sector wages to attract and retain more resources.

BACKGROUND:

- The MCFD operation budget for 2025/26 increased by \$321.6 million to \$2,442.8 billion. This is a \$15.2% increase over the 2024/25 budget, and provides for the following **initiatives**, also outlined below in Table 1:
 - Caseload Programs
 - A \$299.3 million year-over-year increase for CYSN and Child Welfare caseload programs. This increase consists of:
 - \$250.2 million investment to address increases to In-Care and Alternatives to In-Care Programs,
 - -\$4.7 million reduction in Post Adoption Assistance funding due to fewer families accessing the program.
 - \$53.8 million investment to address growth in Autism Individualized Funding Program and Medical Benefits Program.

- MCFD has realized a 17.5% increase in costs to deliver its caseload programs between 2023/24 and 2024/25. The projected increase to the end of 2025/26 is an additional 12.8%.
- Drivers of this cost increase include:
 - Increase in caseload volumes with significant volume increases realized in the Autism Individualized Funding and the Alternatives to In-Care programs.
 - Cost increases driven by inflationary pressures impacting procured staffed agency care contracts.
 - Higher proportion of children in care requiring staffed housed supports from the total number of children in care.
- Ministry and Social Sector Wage Increases
 - Government negotiated three-year labour agreements for 2023/24 – 2025/26 for internal employees and social sector service providers, which are commonly known as the Shared Recovery Mandate.
 - *Budget 2025* funds the cost-of-living adjustments for MCFD employees for 2024/25 which were not fully funded in *Budget 2024* when funding was provided for the three-year wage mandate.
 - \$14.0 million of this new funding for wage mandate increases consists of \$7.9 million for social sector staff working in contracted agencies, and \$6.1 million for MCFD staff.
 - In addition, \$12.3 million in new funding was provided to address step increases of front-line staff which were not funded through historical wage mandates.
- CYSN Enhanced Evaluation and Engagement funding decrease of \$4.1 million reflecting the closing of the two-year project funding provided for in *Budget 2023*

- Table 1: Funding by Initiative and Core Business**

		Budget 2024/25	Funding Initiatives				Total Change	Budget 2025/26
			Caseload	Wage Mandates	Minister Office	CYSN New Investments - Previous Budget		
Child Welfare and other Programming	Early Childhood Development & Child Care Services	\$45.7		\$0.8			\$0.8	\$46.5
	Child & Youth Mental Health Services	\$128.2		\$2.1			\$2.1	\$130.3
	Child Safety, Family Support & Children In Care Services	\$1,064.6	\$250.2	\$12.8			\$263.1	\$1,327.7
	Adoption Services	\$40.2	-\$4.7	\$0.6			-\$4.1	\$36.1
	Youth Justice Services	\$54.3		\$1.2			\$1.2	\$55.5
	Service Delivery Support	\$174.1	\$0.0	\$4.9			\$4.9	\$179.1
	Exec & Support Services	\$23.8		\$0.2	\$0.2		\$0.4	\$24.1
	Total Child Welfare Programs including Youth Justice	\$1,507.2	\$245.5	\$22.7	\$0.2	\$0.0	\$268.4	\$1,799.4
	Services for Children & Youth with Support Needs	\$590.2	\$53.8	\$3.5		-\$4.1	\$53.2	\$643.4
	Total	\$2,121.2	\$299.3	\$26.3	\$0.2	-\$4.1	\$321.6	\$2,442.8

- Funding increases were provided across all the MCFD **core business areas** except for Adoption services; funding from this core business was realigned into the other caseload core business lines.
- MCFD received funding increases across all the major **cost categories** as seen below in table 2.
- Table 2: STOB Changes**

STOB (in millions)	2024/25			Estimates 2025/26
	2024/25 Estimates	Estimates Restated	Change	
Salaries & Benefits	\$480.8	\$480.8	\$18.6	\$499.4
Operating Costs	\$69.9	\$69.9	\$0.3	\$70.2
Government Transfers	\$1,674.7	\$1,674.7	\$314.4	\$1,989.1
Other Expenses	\$30.0	\$30.0	\$0.0	\$30.0
Internal Recoveries	-\$46.1	-\$46.1	\$0.0	-\$46.1
External Recoveries	-\$88.1	-\$88.1	-\$11.7	-\$99.7
Total	\$2,121.2	\$2,121.2	\$321.6	\$2,442.8

- The ministry's staffing budget is \$499.4 million for 2025/26. The \$18.6 million increases cover the following initiatives:
 - \$12.3 million to address the step increases of front-line staff not funded through historical wage mandates.
 - \$6.1 million for wage increases to support recruitment and retention.
- The ministry's budget for operations and other expenses is \$100.2 million for 2025/26. Minor adjustments and budget realignments in the CYSN program has resulted in a \$0.3 million increase. For example, this funding supports costs to complete workforce retention surveys.

- The ministry's budget for government transfers is \$1,989.1 million for 2025/26. The \$314.4 million increase in government transfers is for the following initiatives:
 - \$257.2 million for contracted care providers who support child safety, family support and children in care services. This increase consists of funding for direct services.
 - \$7.9 million for wage increases to support front-line recruitment and retention.
 - \$53.7 million to services for children and youth with support needs and investment in social sector wages to attract and retain more resources in the sector.
 - \$4.4 million decrease to CYSN projects following conclusion of enhanced engagement, evaluation, and new investment work. This funding has been implemented in the categories of program increases, workforce plan, and Indigenous-Led CYSN service model(s) creation. This work has included engaging service providers, families, hosting symposium of academics, and funding Indigenous Governing Bodies to engage communities.
- Increases recoveries from federal government are associated with increased child protection services.
- Year over year funding for capital costs remains constant with MCFD having a budget of \$2.2 million in F2025/26 for the following assets:
 - \$2.0 million for vehicles, and
 - \$0.2 million for specialized equipment and office furniture and equipment.
- The specialized equipment capital budget is mainly used to maintain or refresh MCFD overnight facilities including the Burnaby Youth Custody Centre or Maples program.
- MCFD will see a further increase in 2026/27 of \$29.3 million for caseload programs.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Appendix A – MCFD Estimates and Supplements to the Estimates
- Appendix B – Budget Factsheet

- Appendix C – Resource Summary
- Appendix D – Resource Summary Changes By Core Business
- Appendix E – Voted Appropriations over time.
- Appendix F – MCFD Material Assumptions
- Appendix G – MCFD Contracts

Appendix A – MCFD Estimates and Supplements to the Estimates

MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

The mission of the Ministry of Children and Family Development is to work together to deliver inclusive, culturally respectful, responsive, and accessible services to support the well-being of children, youth, and families.

MINISTRY SUMMARY

(\$000)

	Estimates 2024/25 ¹	Estimates 2025/26
VOTED APPROPRIATION		
Vote 18 — Ministry Operations.....	2,121,197	2,442,836
OPERATING EXPENSES	<u>2,121,197</u>	<u>2,442,836</u>
CAPITAL EXPENDITURES ²	2,230	2,230
LOANS, INVESTMENTS AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS ³	(31)	(31)
REVENUE COLLECTED FOR, AND TRANSFERRED TO, OTHER ENTITIES ⁴	—	—

NOTES

¹ For comparative purposes, figures shown for the 2024/25 operating expenses; capital expenditures; loans, investments and other requirements; and revenue collected for, and transferred to, other entities are restated to be consistent with the presentation of the 2025/26 *Estimates*. A reconciliation of restated operating expenses and capital expenditures is presented in Schedule A.

² A listing of estimated capital expenditures by ministry is presented in Schedule C.

³ A summary of loans, investments and other requirements by ministry is presented in Schedule D.

⁴ A summary of revenue collected for, and transferred to, other entities by ministry is presented in Schedule E.

5 (b) MCF Estimates 2025

VOTE 18 Ministry Operations

Description	Total 2024/25 Operating Expenses	50	51	52	54	Total Salaries and Benefits	55	57	59	60	63	65	67	68	69
Early Childhood Development	45,701	2,398	11	609	—	3,018	—	70	—	112	—	—	—	—	—
Services for Children and Youth with Support Needs	590,207	23,737	132	6,028	—	29,897	—	265	—	1,100	670	294	—	—	83
Child and Youth Mental Health Services	128,213	57,734	1,015	14,735	—	73,484	—	778	—	437	222	641	—	—	357
Child Safety, Family Support and Children in Care Services	1,064,630	160,184	3,415	40,729	—	204,328	—	2,918	23,949	246	1,213	50	83	22	84
Adoption Services	40,224	9,200	23	2,344	—	11,567	—	49	—	—	—	7	—	—	—
Youth Justice Services	54,295	30,268	876	7,691	—	38,835	—	285	—	27	—	112	—	—	831
Service Delivery Support	174,142	91,673	864	23,664	—	116,201	—	3,757	4,600	6,523	6,509	6,028	—	—	—
Executive and Support Services	23,785	17,484	12	4,492	102	22,090	—	410	2	—	9	1,217	—	—	—
Minister's Office	835	593	—	193	102	888	—	80	—	—	7	19	—	—	—
Corporate Services	22,950	16,891	12	4,299	—	21,202	—	330	2	—	2	1,198	—	—	—
Total	2,121,197	392,678	6,348	100,292	102	499,420	—	8,532	28,551	8,445	8,623	8,349	83	22	1,355

70	72	73	75	Total Operating Costs	77	79	80	Total Govt Transfers	81	83	85	Total Other Expenses	86	88	Total Internal Recoveries	89	90	Total External Recoveries	Total 2025/26 Operating Expenses
—	—	—	—	182	—	10	43,884	43,894	—	—	1	1	—	(570)	(570)	(1)	(1)	(2)	46,523
20	—	—	—	2,432	2,000	48,607	599,010	649,617	—	—	22	22	—	(36,801)	(36,801)	(1)	(2,284)	(2,285)	642,882
152	—	—	1,032	3,619	500	130	62,098	62,728	—	—	—	—	—	(8,768)	(8,768)	(660)	(115)	(775)	130,288
8	—	—	100	28,673	1,000	98,620	1,072,272	1,171,892	—	—	633	633	—	(1)	(1)	(148)	(77,666)	(77,814)	1,327,711
—	—	—	—	56	—	144	24,374	24,518	—	—	—	—	—	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(2)	36,138
131	—	—	—	1,386	500	299	32,489	33,288	—	—	1	1	—	(1)	(1)	(1)	(17,984)	(17,985)	55,524
1,853	—	1,494	1,353	32,117	500	—	1,853	2,353	—	—	29,163	29,163	—	(1)	(1)	(1)	(198)	(199)	179,634
—	—	21	79	1,738	—	—	830	830	—	—	160	160	—	(1)	(1)	(1)	(680)	(681)	24,136
—	—	—	—	106	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	994
—	—	21	79	1,632	—	—	830	830	—	—	160	160	—	(1)	(1)	(1)	(680)	(681)	23,142
2,164	—	1,515	2,564	70,203	4,500	147,810	1,836,810	1,989,120	—	—	29,980	29,980	—	(46,144)	(46,144)	(814)	(98,929)	(99,743)	2,442,836

Appendix B – Budget Factsheet



Ministry of
Children and Family
Development

Budget 2025 Overview:

Summary of Changes

The Ministry of Children and Family Development's (MCFD) 2025/26 budget increased by \$321.6 million to \$2,442.8 billion. Budget highlights include:

- A \$268.4 million year-over-year increase for child safety, family support and children in care services. This increase consists of:
 - \$245.7 million for direct services,
 - \$10.4 million for wage increases to support front-line recruitment and retention, and
 - \$12.3 million to address historical wage mandates.
- \$53.2 million for services for children and youth with support needs, including increasing access to existing programs and investing in social sector wages to attract and retain more resources in the sector.

CORE BUSINESS (in millions)	2024/25			Estimates 2025/26
	2024/25 Estimates	Estimates Restated	Change	
Early Childhood Development	\$45.7	\$45.7	\$0.8	\$46.5
Services for Children & Youth with Support Needs	\$590.2	\$590.2	\$52.7	\$642.9
Child & Youth Mental Health Services	\$128.2	\$128.2	\$2.1	\$130.3
Child Safety, Family Support & Children In Care Services	\$1,064.6	\$1,064.6	\$263.1	\$1,327.7
Adoption Services	\$40.2	\$40.2	-\$4.1	\$36.1
Youth Justice Services	\$54.3	\$54.3	\$1.2	\$55.5
Service Delivery Support	\$174.1	\$174.1	\$5.5	\$179.6
Exec & Support Services	\$23.8	\$23.8	\$0.4	\$24.1
Total	\$2,121.2	\$2,121.2	\$321.6	\$2,442.8

STOB (in millions)	2024/25			Estimates 2025/26
	2024/25 Estimates	Estimates Restated	Change	
Salaries & Benefits	\$480.8	\$480.8	\$18.6	\$499.4
Operating Costs	\$69.9	\$69.9	\$0.3	\$70.2
Government Transfers	\$1,674.7	\$1,674.7	\$314.4	\$1,989.1
Other Expenses	\$30.0	\$30.0	\$0.0	\$30.0
Internal Recoveries	-\$46.1	-\$46.1	\$0.0	-\$46.1
External Recoveries	-\$88.1	-\$88.1	-\$11.7	-\$99.7
Total	\$2,121.2	\$2,121.2	\$321.6	\$2,442.8

March 4, 2025

Child Welfare and Protection Investment

Budget 2025 provides a budget increase of **\$268.4 million to child safety, family supports, and children in care services**. This increase consists of \$258.0 million for direct services and \$10.4 million for wage increases to support front-line recruitment and retention. This funding **supports more than 12,000 children and youth** who are in the care of a family or community member, in permanent care arrangements or in ministry care, and provides for **sector wage increases** that will **support recruitment and retention**. Funding for MCFD's child welfare programs support:

- Increased oversight of the child protection system (see below)
- **\$245.7 million** for the ongoing child protection support, providing a home and care for children unable to live with the parents through:
 - Extended family or community members care arrangements,
 - Foster care, or
 - Post Adoption Assistance.
- **\$10.4 million** Social sector wage increases that provide stability in resources, which result in better services for B.C.'s children, youth, young adults, and families.
- **\$12.3 million** to address the step increases of front-line staff not funded through historical wage mandates.

Additionally, as part of the ministry's reset, MCFD is:

- **improving how child protection work** is delivered through process and practice improvements but also **more front-line and oversight staffing** levels.
- the continued **creation and implementation of an Associate Provincial Director of Child Welfare** to provide systemic practice oversight and guidance to Designated Directors (statutory decision makers) in the service delivery areas on child safety matters.
- a **new Child Safety Oversight and Practice Development team** to support the work of the Associate Provincial Director of Child Welfare and provide increased practice support and systemic oversight of services focusing on child safety and wellbeing for children, youth, and families in BC.
- committing to resource stability through government's rollout of the Shared Recovery Mandate, which provided over **17% wage lifts over 3 years**. These wages enable government to attract and retain resources which vital to ensuring the supports and safety needed for children, youth, and families through times of family difficulty.

Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) Investment

As MCFD fulfills its commitment to **deeper engagement** with parents and caregivers, First Nations, Indigenous Peoples, communities, experts and practitioners, and other stakeholders with lived experience to understand how **CYSN supports** can improve, government has invested an additional **\$53.2 million** annually in:

- **\$49.6 million** to support 5,500 families, including 2,700 new families of children or youth with an **autism diagnosis** through individualized funding.
- **\$3.6 million** funding for social sector wage increases that provide stability in the resources which result in better services for B.C.'s children and families.
- MCFD continues to roll out *Budget 2023's* CYSN new investments to those children, youth, and families that are underserved, with the two-year goal of:
 - Providing **an additional 90 foundational** program therapists across the province for programs such as infant development, early intervention, and school-aged therapies through investment in Childhood Development Centres or similar organizations in every community in the province.
 - Doubling the **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Key Worker** program.
 - **Expanding agency-coordinated respite** to all regions of the province.

Appendix C – Resource Summary (from Service Plan)

(\$000s)	2024/25 Restated Estimates¹	2025/26 Estimates	2026/27 Plan	2027/28 Plan
Operating Expenses				
Early Childhood Development	45,701	46,523	46,523	46,523
Services for Children and Youth with Support Needs	590,207	642,882	648,226	648,226
Child and Youth Mental Health Services	128,213	130,288	130,288	130,288
Child Safety, Family Support and Children in Care Services	1,064,630	1,327,711	1,351,069	1,349,553
Adoption Services	40,224	36,138	36,695	38,211
Youth Justice Services	54,295	55,524	55,524	55,524
Service Delivery Support	174,142	179,634	179,634	179,634
Executive and Support Services	23,785	24,136	24,136	24,136
Total	2,121,197	2,442,836	2,472,095	2,472,095
Capital Expenditures				
Service Delivery Support	2,230	2,230	2,230	2,230
Total	2,395	2,230	2,230	2,230
Other Financing Transactions				
Executive and Support Services				
(Human Services Providers Financing Program)				
Disbursements	0	0	0	0
Receipts	(31)	(31)	(31)	(31)
Net Cash Requirements (Source)	(31)	(31)	(31)	(31)
Total Disbursements	0	0	0	0
Total Receipts	(31)	(31)	(31)	(31)
Total Net Cash Requirements (Source)	(31)	(31)	(31)	(31)

¹ For comparative purposes, amounts shown for 2024/25 have been restated to be consistent with the presentation of the 2025/26 Estimates.

Appendix D – Resource Summary Changes by Core Business

Ministry of Children & Family Development				
RESOURCE SUMMARY COMPARISON- DETAILED CHANGES BY CORE BUSINESS				
2024/25 to 2027/28				
in \$Million				
Core Business Areas	2024/25 Estimates	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan	2027/28 Plan
Early Childhood Development	45.701	45.701	46.523	46.523
Services for Children & Youth with Support Needs	590.207	590.207	642.882	648.226
Child & Youth Mental Health Services	128.213	128.213	130.288	130.288
Child Safety, Family Support & Children in Care Services	1,064.630	1,064.630	1,327.711	1,351.069
Adoption Services	40.224	40.224	36.138	36.695
Youth Justice Services	54.295	54.295	55.524	55.524
Service Delivery Support	174.142	174.142	179.634	179.634
Executive & Support Services	23.785	23.785	24.136	24.136
MINISTRY TOTAL	2,121.197	2,121.197	2,442.836	2,472.095
Change - including Decisions for <i>Budget 2025</i> by Core Business:				
Early Childhood Development		0.822	-	-
Services for Children & Youth with Support Needs		52.675	5.344	-
Child & Youth Mental Health Services		2.075	-	-
Child Safety, Family Support & Children in Care Services		263.081	23.358	-
Adoption Services		(4.086)	0.557	-
Youth Justice Services		1.229	-	-
Service Delivery Support		5.492	-	-
Executive & Support Services		0.351	-	-
MINISTRY TOTAL	0	321.639	29.259	-
Resource Summary as of <i>Budget 2025</i> :				
Core Business Areas	2024/25 Estimates	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan	2027/28 Plan
Early Childhood Development	45.701	46.523	46.523	46.523
Services for Children & Youth with Support Needs	590.207	642.882	648.226	648.226
Child & Youth Mental Health Services	128.213	130.288	130.288	130.288
Child Safety, Family Support & Children in Care Services	1,064.630	1,327.711	1,351.069	1,351.069
Adoption Services	40.224	36.138	36.695	36.695
Youth Justice Services	54.295	55.524	55.524	55.524
Service Delivery Support	174.142	179.634	179.634	179.634
Executive & Support Services	23.785	24.136	24.136	24.136
MINISTRY TOTAL	2,121.197	2,442.836	2,472.095	2,472.095

Appendix E – Voted Appropriations Over Time

Ministry Historical Budget (in millions)				
Fiscal Year	Overall	YoY Lift Amount (\$)	YoY Lift Amount (%)	Cumulative Lift since 2016
2015/16	\$ 1,112.2			
2016/17	\$ 1,180.2	\$ 68.0	6.1%	\$ 68.0
2017/18	\$ 1,300.3	\$ 120.2	10.2%	\$ 188.1
2018/19	\$ 1,386.6	\$ 86.2	6.6%	\$ 274.4
2019/20	\$ 1,482.0	\$ 95.4	6.9%	\$ 369.8
2020/21	\$ 1,548.9	\$ 67.0	4.5%	\$ 436.8
2021/22	\$ 1,661.4	\$ 112.5	7.3%	\$ 549.2
2022/23	\$ 1,740.6	\$ 79.2	4.8%	\$ 628.5
2023/24	\$ 1,912.1	\$ 171.5	9.8%	\$ 799.9
2024/25	\$ 2,121.2	\$ 209.1	10.9%	\$ 1,009.0
2025/26	\$ 2,442.8	\$ 321.6	15.2%	\$ 1,330.6
2026/27	\$ 2,472.1	\$ 29.3	1.2%	\$ 1,359.9
2027/28	\$ 2,472.1	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 1,359.9

CYSN Historical Budget (in millions)				
Fiscal Year	CYSN Budget	YoY Lift Amount (\$)	YoY Lift Amount (%)	Cumulative Lift since 2016
2015/16	\$ 285.5			
2016/17	\$ 303.6	\$ 18.1	6.3%	\$ 18.1
2017/18	\$ 331.8	\$ 28.3	9.3%	\$ 46.4
2018/19	\$ 356.2	\$ 24.4	7.4%	\$ 70.8
2019/20	\$ 386.7	\$ 30.4	8.5%	\$ 101.2
2020/21	\$ 410.1	\$ 23.4	6.1%	\$ 124.6
2021/22	\$ 440.6	\$ 30.5	7.4%	\$ 155.2
2022/23	\$ 480.4	\$ 39.7	9.0%	\$ 194.9
2023/24	\$ 528.9	\$ 48.5	10.1%	\$ 243.4
2024/25	\$ 590.2	\$ 61.3	11.6%	\$ 304.7
2025/26	\$ 642.9	\$ 52.7	8.9%	\$ 357.4
2026/27	\$ 648.2	\$ 5.3	0.8%	\$ 362.8
2025/26	\$ 648.2	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 362.8

Child Safety, Family Supports and Child in Care Historical Budget (in millions)

Fiscal Year	Annual Budget	YoY Lift Amount (\$)	YoY Lift Amount (%)	Cumulative Lift since 2016
2015/16	\$ 502.0			
2016/17	\$ 536.9	\$ 34.9	7.0%	\$ 251.5
2017/18	\$ 603.4	\$ 66.4	12.4%	\$ 317.9
2018/19	\$ 646.1	\$ 42.7	7.1%	\$ 360.6
2019/20	\$ 682.7	\$ 36.6	5.7%	\$ 397.2
2020/21	\$ 731.9	\$ 49.2	7.2%	\$ 446.4
2021/22	\$ 780.9	\$ 49.0	6.7%	\$ 495.4
2022/23	\$ 835.8	\$ 54.9	7.0%	\$ 550.3
2023/24	\$ 935.2	\$ 99.4	11.9%	\$ 649.7
2024/25	\$ 1,064.6	\$ 129.5	13.8%	\$ 779.2
2025/26	\$ 1,327.7	\$ 263.1	24.7%	\$ 1,042.3
2026/27	\$ 1,351.6	\$ 23.9	1.8%	\$ 1,066.2
2027/28	\$ 1,351.6	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 1,066.2

Appendix F – MCFD Material Assumptions

Ministry Programs and Assumptions	Budget 2025 (Proposed for Budget Plan) *			Sensitivities
	Updated Forecast 2024/25	Plan 2025/26	Plan 2026/27	
Average children-in-care caseload (#)	4,832	4,826	4,816	The average number of children-in-care is decreasing as a result of ministry efforts to keep children in family settings where safe and feasible. The average cost per child in care is projected to increase based on the higher cost of contracted residential services and SHSS contracted services, and an increasing acuity of need for children in care. A 1% increase in the cost per case or a 1% increase in the average caseload will affect expenditures by \$4.1 million (excluding Indigenous CFS Agencies).
Average annual residential cost per child in care (\$)	\$ 167,157	\$ 210,790	\$ 221,302	

Ministry Programs and Assumptions	Budget 2024 (As included in Budget Plan)			Sensitivities
	Previous 2023/24	Previous 2024/25	Previous 2025/26	
Average children-in-care caseload (#)	4,860	4,822	4,767	The average number of children-in-care is decreasing as a result of ministry efforts to keep children in family settings where safe and feasible. The average cost per child in care is projected to increase based on the higher cost of contracted residential services and increasingly complex needs for children in care. A 1% increase in the cost per case or a 1% increase in the average caseload will affect expenditures by \$3.3 million (excluding Indigenous CFS Agencies).
Average annual residential cost per child in care (\$)	\$137,657	\$154,040	\$171,671	

1. What are the drivers for the change in per-child costs?

- Evolving composition of the children-in-care cohort** – More children and youth than ever before are staying connected to their families, communities, and cultures in Out-of-Care living arrangements with extended family or community members (not included in the material assumption calculation), permitting them to avoid being placed in foster care. As a result, a greater proportion of the number of children that come into care have more complex needs, requiring greater supports. While we are seeing the lowest levels of children and youth in care in 30 years, since 2019 we have seen the percentage of children-in-care within staffed housing increase from 19% to

27.5%. As staffed housing is much more expensive than placing children and youth in foster homes, it drives up the overall cost per child.

- **Complexity of care** – Over time, the ministry has observed a need for greater supports for children and youth in need of protection. The complexity in addressing the needs of these children and youth as they come into care has increased, raising the per child cost.
- **Specialized Homes and Support Services (SHSS)** - Costs are increasing as more of the staffed housing caseload transfers to the new SHSS model. It is estimated and forecasted that all staffed housing placements will be transferred to SHSS in 2025/26.

2. Why is this happening now?

Increased cost trend not new – For all the above reasons, MCFD has been reporting gradual increases in the material assumptions cost per child over the past five or more years. *Budget 2025* increases are pronounced for the following reasons:

Advice/Recommendations

Appendix G – MCFD Contracts 23/24

	Amount Billed	# of Vendor	# of Contract
North Fraser	\$.18	12	14
Vanc/Richmond	\$52.28	233	355
Vancouver Island	\$88.89	453	749
Coast/North Shore	\$5.50	132	195
East Fraser	\$142.36	383	640
Interior East Kootenay	\$119.00	582	1,097
Kootenay S.A.	\$.02	1	2
Kootenays	\$39.32	217	410
North Central	\$32.02	248	393
North Coast/Bulkley Nechako	\$35.47	74	143
North East Fraser	\$95.64	415	547
North Island	\$41.78	415	677
Northern SDA	\$53.58	81	171
Okanagan	\$82.71	558	955
Okanagan West Kootenay	\$2.33	11	16
Provincial	\$163.08	1,203	1,752
SOkanagan S.A.	\$.40	2	4
South Fraser	\$170.94	738	1,140
South Island	\$60.30	489	761
South Vancouver Island	\$50.73	158	245
Vancouver Coastal	\$184.67	250	396
Grand Total	\$1421.19	6,250	10,561

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Ministry Overall Staffing Levels

KEY MESSAGES:

- Supporting families to keep children and youth safe is the ministry's priority.
- The ministry is continuously recruiting direct service positions with the aim to ensure quality service to children, youth, and families.
- The ministry has made a commitment to child welfare jurisdiction and Indigenous Peoples' self-determination.
- The ministry has also committed to the continued evolution of MCFD services and practices.
- We are building a new vision for child wellbeing, focused on prevention, care and a new way of thinking, and that includes supporting employee wellbeing.
- MCFD's Workforce Plan (2025–2028) prioritizes attraction and recruitment, equity and belonging, health and safety, and ministry-specific goals to build a more engaged and resilient workforce. It addresses many of the recommendations from Representative for Children and Youth's No Time to Wait reports.
- Onboarding, training, and retention continue to be a focus for the ministry as outlined in the MCFD Workforce Plan and being considered as an input for the Child Wellbeing Plan in development.
- The ministry has teams focused on hiring direct service positions as well as improving staff developing programs and resources to better support employees' mental and physical health.

BACKGROUND:

MCFD EMPLOYEE OVERVIEW

Contact: Fisnik Preniqi, Assistant Deputy Minister and Executive Financial Officer,
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Cell phone: 250 507-9650
Date: March 7, 2025

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- MCFD has eight divisions. On December 31, 2024, the number of employees in the ministry is 5,597, out of which 5,187 (92.7%) are active.
- Service Delivery Division (SDD) makes up the majority of MCFD workforce and has 4,092 unionized positions, primarily consisting of 2,890 Social Program Officers. The number of excluded management positions is 165.
- The number of included employees in the Service Delivery Area (SDA) of SDD is 3,133 and number of excluded employees is 101. Other large classification groups in the division are 741 administrative support positions, 107 enforcement and corrections positions, and 91 nurse positions.
- On December 31, 2022, the ministry had 3,209 frontline FTEs and on December 31, 2024, 3,712 frontline FTEs for a net increase of frontline staff by 502 FTEs. This includes such roles as child protection, resource, adoption and CYSN workers, as well as CYMH clinicians and youth justice roles.
- As of December 31, 2024, 10% of all MCFD employees are eligible for unreduced pension. The rate for all SDD employees is 10%. The rate for employees in the administrative support job classification group is 14%, enforcement and corrections¹ job classification group is 20% and Nurses is 11%. The rate for social program officers (excluding growth) is 10%.
- The number of Indigenous employees (self-disclosed) in the 2024 Work Environment Survey (WES) for MCFD, which happens every two years, was 227 or 6% of responses.
- The Lower Mainland and Capital Region (Greater Victoria) have the highest employee concentrations with 42.4% and 18.6% of staff respectively.
- All BC Public Service employees must review and pledge a yearly [Standards of Conduct](#) oath. Other accountability practices include supervision, discipline, and labour relations, conflict of interest processes that can cover a broad range from additional training to dismissal, depending on the circumstances.

¹ For pension purposes, youth probation officers employed in a correctional centre are designated as public safety occupations and have a different plan design and early retirement ages than regular members.

HISTORICAL TRENDS

- There are long-standing difficulties recruiting and retaining staff in rural and remote areas.
- Labour market competition, inflation, and high caseloads continue to challenge the workforce.
- Recruitment challenges reflect national and provincial trends across the sector.
- The exit rates for staff in 2022 totaled 1,391 employees leaving the ministry. These rates are now lower, and the exit rate decreased to 792 employees leaving in 2024.
- Between December 2022 and 2024, there has been a 19% increase in ministry staffing levels, with year-over-year increases. Over the same period of time, the increase for frontline staffing levels has been 14%.

DIRECT SERVICE EMPLOYEES

- Direct service employees have some of the hardest jobs in BC, and the ministry is improving support to provide quality services to vulnerable children, youth, and families.
- The Provincial Mobile Response Team (PMRT) was implemented in 2014 to address short term staffing needs in remote and/or hard-to-recruit locations.
- Since 2019, MCFD hires travelling Child Protection Workers with a seven-day-on, seven-day-off schedule for specific communities, and a new 10-day rotational schedule was introduced in 2024.
- As of 2015 a volunteer program allows for employees to temporarily leave base positions for short-term child protection assignments in rural and remote communities at their current pay rate. This was expanded in 2024 to include Guardianship positions.
- Specific positions in hard-to-recruit areas of B.C. receive incentive payments since 2016. The next payment is scheduled for May 2025. A review of the Recruitment and Retention Incentive Program is underway.

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Date: March 7, 2025

- A Recruitment and Retention Incentive Payment of \$10,000 for Correctional Officers was implemented in 2023.
- In 2019, Social Program Officer (SPO) positions requirements were updated to include both experience and education for eligibility and then updated once again in 2023.
- In 2020, the SPO Growth Series duration has been reduced from two years to one to align with training needs, allowing faster transition to full capacity with full pay as well as temporary market adjustment and Recruitment and Retention Incentive Program (where applicable).
- A SPO 21 Child, Youth, and Family Support Worker (CYFSW) position was created in 2022 to bridge SPO Assistant and SPO R24 roles. At December 31, 2024, there are 135 Active CYFSW SPO 21s.
- A centralized hiring team in Human Resources was established in 2023 to support recruitment for priority positions and implement new talent acquisition strategies.
- The province has a provincial centralized screening centre that receives the majority of child welfare screening and intake reports, thus creating efficiencies and reducing workload demand in district offices.
- Streamlining administrative tasks and centralizing some administrative functions so workers can spend more time on social work and less time on paperwork.
- MCFD has prioritized face to face engagement with families by enhancing team structures, improving referral processes and leveraging technology to support work in rural and remote communities.
- The ministry supports unpaid practicums when an employee is enrolled in a preferred degree program as of 2024.
- There are seven SDAs in the province. Each SDA is led by an Executive Director of Service (EDS; Band 6). Each SDA is made up of a Local Service Area (LSA) where services are concentrated even further. Each LSA is typically led by a Director of Operations or DOO (Band 4) who oversee teams led by Team

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Date: March 7, 2025

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
PROVINCIAL DIRECTOR OF CHILD WELFARE
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: RCY Report, No Time to Wait – Part Two

KEY MESSAGES:

- Thank you to the Representative and RCY staff for the work that went into this report, and to ministry staff who contributed and shared their time and experiences.
- We agree that child welfare workers are passionate and extremely dedicated to the families they serve, and to supporting each other. This shone through in this report.
- Child welfare workers have some of the hardest jobs in B.C. and the ministry is always taking steps to ensure staffing levels meet the diverse needs of the children, youth, and families we serve.
- The ministry's strategic workforce plan addresses many of the report's recommendations, and in the last two years staffing levels have increased by nearly 20%, with year-over-year increases since the pandemic.
- We are building a new vision for child wellbeing, focused on prevention, care and a new way of thinking, and that includes supporting employee wellbeing.
- Our onboarding, training, and retention approaches are constantly evolving based on our Workforce Plan, what we learn from advocates like the RCY, and the Ministry's Child Wellbeing Plan, which will guide the Ministry's work to transform the way we provide programs and services.

If asked about mandatory registration of MCFD social workers?

- There are many implications which we need to consider such as impact on the existing and future workforce, as well as how this work aligns with broader cross government work around professional oversight.
- Our recent social work engagement on this topic revealed there were many who recommended making registration with the BC College of Social Workers mandatory for all social workers – but there was also considerable discussion about the need for flexibility, to ensure the system adequately

supports diversity, and the importance of recruitment and retention (particularly in rural and remote locations).

- Changes suggested by RCY in this report require discussions with BCGEU, the BC College of Social Workers and the BC Association of Social Workers and may require legislative changes.

If asked about recruitment:

- Recruitment and retention is a continuous priority for the ministry. In the last two years, the ministry had a nearly 20% increase in staffing levels, with year-over-year increases since the pandemic.
- We are working to identify challenges and opportunities specific to recruitment and retention. Many of the recommendations are incorporated into the updated ministry workforce plan, with work already underway to address them.
- Child welfare is continually evolving and continues to shift.
- This is reflected in the ministry's focus on keeping kids safe, cross government work, supporting families so fewer kids come into care, supporting out of care placements so children can remain within their communities, and working towards Indigenous jurisdiction in child and family services.

BACKGROUND:

- Released on February 6, 2025, Part Two of *No Time to Wait* expands upon Part One (July 2024) in examining the workforce capacity child welfare services delivered by MCFD.
- *No Time to Wait* is a companion report to RCY's *Don't Look Away* report.
- Part Two of *No Time to Wait* features input from MCFD staff gathered through surveys and focus groups.
- Part One of the *No Time to Wait* report which included 12 "key measures". All 12 were formalized into recommendations in Part Two, and five new recommendations were added, for a total of 17 recommendations.
- The 17 recommendations fall under eight themes:
 - Qualifications and oversight
 - Staffing
 - Health and wellness

- Recruitment and retention
- Training and professional development
- Leadership and mentoring
- Experiences and perceptions of the Ministry
- Human resources metrics
- This report draws on multiple sources of information, including:
 - Key findings from previous reviews and RCY reports
 - Relevant academic and grey literature
 - A cross-jurisdictional scan of workforce capacity-related issues
 - MCFD longitudinal staffing data
 - Consultations with community partners
 - Surveys and focus group discussions of MCFD social workers, team leaders, and managers
 - Data from the Work Environment Survey (WES) specific to MCFD social workers and team leaders
- The Ministry's Workforce Plan addresses many of the recommendations.

Government Financial Information

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: **Social Work Oversight**

KEY MESSAGES:

- As the ministry responsible for the B.C. *Social Workers Act*, MCFD is committed to ensuring ethical, professional, and competent social work practice throughout B.C.
- We have heard many perspectives and opinions on this topic through our public engagement and the RCY's No Time to Wait Report – and we value this important input.
- The topic of mandatory registration for MCFD staff was raised in both the RCY report and in our engagement. There are a number of different ways to achieve this, and we are actively looking at different options for how this recommendation could be addressed.
- This work will focus on how and where we can make the most meaningful outcome and will consider the RCY's advice to implement any changes in a way that avoids disruption to a fragile workforce.
- This work is important and complex, and we want to work closely with the RCY and other partners on potential approaches to ensure we understand the impacts and implications of possible actions.

BACKGROUND:

- In February 2025, the BC Office of the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) released the second part of their review of MCFD's workforce 'No Time to Wait Part Two'. Recommendation #3 in the report suggests:
 - MCFD develop and implement a plan to require mandatory registration of all ministry child welfare workers with an independent professional regulatory body.
 - Legislation respecting this professional regulation be in place by June 30, 2026.

- Establishment or expansion of the regulatory body (or bodies) be in place by April 1, 2027.
- MCFD is responsible for legislation that governs social work oversight in B.C.
- Social workers in BC who operate a private practice or who work for an employer who is not exempted under the Social Worker Regulations are required to register with and are overseen by the BC College of Social Workers.
- Exemptions from registration exist for large, publicly accountable employers who have oversight structures in place.
- These exemptions include social workers who work for:
 - MCFD and Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSA)¹
 - Federal and municipal governments
 - An Indian band, a tribal council, a treaty first nation, the Nisga'a Nation or a Nisga'a Village
 - Boards of Education and Post-Secondary Institutions
- MCFD led a public engagement process on the topic of social work oversight in B.C. The goal was to gain an understanding of the diverse range of perspectives and priorities on this topic by gathering input from social work community, Indigenous partners, sector partners, and the public.
- As part of these discussions, there were many who recommended making registration with the BC College of Social Workers mandatory for all social workers – but there was also considerable discussion about the need for flexibility, to ensure the system adequately supports diversity, and the importance of recruitment and retention (particularly in rural and remote locations).
- The Social Work Oversight Engagement Report was posted by the Ministry in June 2024 and highlights three key areas for improvement that emerged from the engagement –accountability, access and quality.
- In July 2024, RCY released 'No Time to Wait' Part One that provided a review of MCFD's child welfare workforce.
 - The report made recommendations related to staffing, health and wellness, ministry culture, recruitment and retention, leadership

¹ Any agency, other than an adoption agency as defined in the Adoption Act, to whose staff is delegated any of all of a directors powers, duties or functions under the Child, Family and Community Services Act or the Adoption Act

and mentorship, training and professional development, and human resource metrics.

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Diversity and Inclusion

KEY MESSAGES:

- Direct service ministry employees have some of the hardest jobs in BC — that's why the ministry is making improvements to help them provide vulnerable families with the quality services and supports they need and deserve.
- The ministry is continuously recruiting direct service positions with the aim to ensure quality service to children, youth and families.
- The ministry is committed to ensuring the availability of resources that promote Indigenous cultural safety practices and support reconciliation efforts.
- The ministry continues to support Indigenous recruitment.
- The ministry is committed to removing barriers for employees from equity deserving groups.
- Ministry-specific strategies are being developed to support equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism.
- The ministry is aligning our ways of working with the Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework and made amendments to the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* and the *Adoption Act* upholding Indigenous jurisdiction over child and family services.
- The ministry has established the *Office of the Indigenous Child Welfare Director*, a new division that supports the commitment to jurisdiction and Indigenous Peoples' self-determination, as well as the continued evolution of MCFD services and practices.

BACKGROUND:

- MCFD has eight divisions. The majority of MCFD's employees work in the Service Delivery Division.

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Date: January 14, 2025

- To reduce barriers in hiring, the ministry has revised job profiles and expanded relevant credentials to accept a variety of degree types for positions in the ministry.
- To foster diversity, equity, and inclusion the following Communities of Practice (CoP) and Employee Resource Groups are available to employees: Gender Based Analysis + (GBA+); Accessibility; Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour; Indigenous Employees Network; Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, other diverse sexual orientations, and gender identities (2SLGBTQIA+) groups.
- The Public Service Agency developed a “Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse Employees in the Workplace” guide for supervisors, managers, and employees.
- To create a work environment where everyone belongs, the ministry developed Indigenous cultural learning and practices including All the Love in the World documentary, Witness Blanket, and Culture Saves Youths Lives
- The ministry is working on “Truth and Reconciliation” discussion forums with the intent to de-colonize ministry practices and policies and increase the cultural safety for Indigenous employees.
- The most current diversity data, from the 2024 WES, shows the ethnicity most self-declared was “White” followed by “Another Ethnicity” (e.g., Arab, Black, Iranian, Latin American, West Asian).
- The number of Indigenous employees that self-disclosed in 2024 slightly decreased from 2022.
- The ministry has also created and delivered training on the following topics:
 - Annual training on the history of 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples in Canada and foundations of 2SLGBTQIA+ Inclusivity in partnership with QMUNITY.
 - Accessibility webinars on neurodiversity and International Day for Persons with Disabilities.

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Date: January 14, 2025

- Words Matter, Unconscious Biases and Microaggressions, GBA+ Introduction to Intersectional analysis, Racism and Anti-Racism and Understanding Disabilities and Accommodations.
- MCFD is committed to creating more flexible training and offerings for inclusivity using a variety of mediums and methods to build awareness and remove barriers for employees from equity deserving groups. Actions and outcomes for these strategies will be announced in the Workforce Plan to be published in February 2025.

CROSS REFERENCE:

- 3.1 – Staffing Levels

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Date: January 14, 2025

MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGIC SERVICES DIVISION
ESTIMATES ADM BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26

ISSUE: progress on recommendations in *Don't Look Away* - the Representative for Children and Youth's systemic review released in July 2024

KEY MESSAGES:

- The Office of the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) released *Don't Look Away* in July 2024.
- This report includes an investigation into the death of an Indigenous child in care in 2021 and the resulting conviction of his former caregivers. The report also includes a systemic review of BC's child welfare system.
- It calls upon MCFD and social serving ministries to consider what can be learned from this child's death and to consider - *how one boy's story has the power to shift a system of care for children and youth*.
- This report is similar in scale and complexity to major systemic reviews such as the Gove Inquiry (1996) and Hughes Review (2006).
- The report includes 19 systemic ("collective responsibility") recommendations that are aimed at improving the quality of life of the children, youth and families and 34 "Quick Impact Recommendations".
- Government's commitment to the intent and spirit of this report is reflected in the media release issued on the day of the report's publication in July 2024 and reiterated in my 2025-26 mandate letter as well as MCFD's 2025-28 Strategic Plan, 2025-26 Service Plan and current Workforce Plan.
- Important actions to strengthen oversight and accountability have been taken since this child's death, but additional effort is required to improve outcomes for children, youth and families served by my Ministry and our partners.
- Addressing the recommendations in *Don't Look Away* will take time but we are committed to making changes that create a lasting and positive impact.
- MCFD and our partner social serving ministries have already begun to assess opportunities and action work to better support the children, youth, and families of this province.

Contact: Marnie Mayhew
 Cell phone: 250-361-5514
 Date: April 11, 2025

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BACKGROUND:

- MCFD has been **working with partners** to address recommendations that were included in *Don't Look Away*. We have -
 - Convened a cross-government Deputy Minister Project Board on Child Well-Being and an Assistant Deputy Minister Working Group on Child Well-Being. These groups are chaired by senior officials in my Ministry. Both groups have met regularly for the past several months to prioritize and action joint work that will contribute to improved quality of life for the children, youth and families of this province.
 - Led the development of a child and youth well-being plan that will become the provincial standard. In our early work - we have drawn from information shared in *Don't Look Away* and other RCY reports, the extensive experience of our own Ministry and the reflections of our partners. A public engagement site will launch shortly that will invite input from interested parties about a proposed action plan.
 - Led the development of an outcomes framework to ensure that services and supports are improving the lives of our province's most vulnerable children, youth and families. This will improve our collective ability to make informed decisions about the supports and services that contribute to positive outcomes and will increase our accountability to the people of this province.
 - Worked with our partner ministries to develop a comprehensive inventory of the supports and services that are available to the children, youth and families of this province. This inventory will be used to identify service gaps and opportunities for streamlining, improved access and future enhancement.
 - Received provisional approval from the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Digital and Data for \$7.9M to proceed with our project for Child Safety IMIT Enablers.
- MCFD has also initiated **actions within our own organization** that will lead to more consistent practice, more effective operations, and improved service including -

Advice/Recommendations

Contact: Marnie Mayhew
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 Date: April 11, 2025

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- Developing interim public resources for Kinship care providers to inform prospective care providers about the Ministry's out-of-care support and services.
 - Modernizing child protection oversight through improved data integration.
Government Financial Information
Government Financial Information
 - Updated policy and practice guidance and completed IMIT enhancements to support staff to complete and document visits with children and youth in care in one place. A report was also developed in the fall of 2023 to support staff at all levels of the ministry to know in real-time which visits have been completed. Oversight for child and youth visits has been happening each quarter since June 2023.
 - Completing a review of our Provincial Central Screening service and implementing a pilot project with Abbotsford Police to submit reports to PCS online (reducing call wait time for police and getting reports to PCS more quickly).
 - Releasing information management system enhancements and improvements that allow for more responsive service delivery.
 - Initiating more than 20 projects that align with recommendations in *Don't Look Away*. This includes projects that will help improve the overall well-being of those we serve, address violence, enhance accountability and support families.
 - Continuing important work that supports the resumption of Jurisdiction.
- Our work has been and will continue to be informed by those we serve and by others with specialized expertise as well as the intent, vision and themes of *Don't Look Away*.

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

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 Date: April 11, 2025

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: 2019 OAG Report on Contracted Services for CYIC Response Update

KEY MESSAGES:

- The Ministry is committed to transform the network of care, with progress well underway in implementing the new Specialized Homes and Support Services (SHSS) model to better meet the needs of the children and youth.
- In response to the 2019 Office of Auditor General's (OAG) report, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) accepted all recommendations and is actively working to implement these recommendations in collaboration with Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies, Indigenous communities, children, youth, families and care providers.
- Major changes have been made to ensure improved outcomes for children, including new standardized contracts, reporting and performance requirements, information management systems to support regular monitoring and reporting, and increased accountability measures such as expanded financial audits.
- The Ministry is committed to the implementation of SHSS and expects to implement all four SHSS service types by the end of 2025, with full monitoring and reporting in place in 2026.
- The Ministry is committed to the full implementation of SHSS and welcomes ongoing oversight over the delivery of improved services for children, youth, and families.

BACKGROUND:

- In June 2019, the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia published a report titled "*Oversight of Contracted Residential Services for Children and Youth in Care*".
- The report assessed the MCFD's management of contracted residential services and presented four recommendations for the ministry to work in partnership with Indigenous Child and Family Services Agencies (ICFSAs) to:

- Create, implement and communicate a strategy for contracted services.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities related to policy development, information sharing, communication and monitoring for the delivery of contracted services.
- Establish a quality assurance framework for contracted services.
- Improve its management and oversight of contracts for contracted services.
- In response, the ministry is undertaking the following commitments through:
 - **Standardized contracts** with consistent costs for service/staffing models. This will allow for predictable cost growth and improve forecasting and management of capacity.
 - **Better provision of individualized care** with a process to individualize care outside of a contract's set costs – where the supplemental funding directly relates to the unique needs of individual children. These processes are standardized and monitored directly against how funds support the child.
 - **Services designed around child outcome** e.g. improve self-reported mental health (child specific), with reduction in placement moves or breakdowns. Service providers are held accountable for provision of quality care. Reporting is standardized and can be accessed at individual level at any time, at contract level and when needed, and at set intervals for system level reporting.
 - **Monitoring and accountability** to ensure every child will have an individualized plan, informed and monitored by a circle of accountability which includes social worker, adults in the child/youth's life, professionals providing care to child/youth. The plan utilizes Integrated Case Management and provides inputs for monitoring day-to-day wellbeing and progress against set goals. It allows for monitoring quality of care provided by the caregiver and system level data to monitor the network of HSS services.
 - **Quality procurement processes** to ensure service providers are prequalified against pre-established criteria and the list of pre-qualified providers can be accessed when needed.

- **Services interact as a network** to drive down overall use of care system and services are accessible to children in care (e.g. respite, stabilization do not require a child to come into care to access). For this reason, all communities need access to a minimum capacity of suite services for system to be responsive and function as designed.
- **Services are responsive** to the needs of the child and family and will no longer be funded as “bed-filled, bed-funded”. The SHSS model allows for a service to operate with predictable costs without fluctuating funding.
- **Improving and clarifying roles and responsibilities** to ensure social workers will fulfill social work obligations, while contract managers will centrally manage contract administration. The standardization of services establishes a process to access supplemental supports and removes contract negotiations from the system.

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL DIRECTOR
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Critical Injuries

KEY MESSAGES:

- Any serious injury to a child or youth deserves a prompt response to support their well-being.
- MCFD's Reportable Circumstances policy requires reporting of critical injuries of children and youth served by MCFD or and Indigenous Child and Family Services Agency (ICFSA).
- A critical injury is one that may result in the death of a child or youth, or cause serious or long-term impairment of their health.
- Examples include injuries resulting from motor vehicle accidents, attempted suicides, sexual assaults, overdoses and serious trauma for any other reason.
- A critical injury of a child or youth who has received or whose family has received a service from MCFD or an ICFSA within the preceding 12 months is reported within 24 hours of MCFD or an ICFSA having been informed of the injury.
- An individual report is required for each critical injury. One child or youth may have multiple reports over time.
- Critical injury reports are distributed automatically to the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) and to the Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia (PGT) when the PGT is the property guardian for the injured child or youth. The RCY and the PGT both publically report on their analyses of reported injuries.
- Critical injury reports enable MCFD and ICFSAs to respond to the needs of individual children and youth, to support clinical supervision or staff and to monitor and respond to trends in injuries reported.

BACKGROUND:

- Critical Injury reports are completed by staff (e.g. child protection workers, guardianship workers, practitioners) across MCFD services, including Child & Family Services, Adoption, Child & Youth with Support Needs, Youth Justice, and Child and Youth Mental Health, along with practitioners at ICFSAs.
- Table 1 is a breakdown of number of children and youth who were the subject of one or more Critical Injury RC, as well as the total number of reported Critical Injuries, that occurred in the current fiscal year to date (FYTD 2024/2025; comprising nine months from April to December 31, 2024). Each child or youth can have multiple reports.
- Table 2 is a breakdown of reported Critical Injuries that occurred in the current fiscal year to date (FYTD 2024/2025; comprising nine months from April to December 31, 2024) and indicates report category, care status of the child, Indigeneity, and the source of the report (Ministry or ICFS Agencies).
- Table 3 provides numbers of Critical Injury Reportable Circumstances by fiscal year (FY). It includes Critical Injury RCs from April to December for the current FY.
- Reported Critical Injuries increased each year between FY 2019/2020 and FY2023/2024. The largest increases were in accidental injuries, mainly due to increased accidental overdose injuries, and in emotional trauma injuries..
- Current analysis suggests that these increases may be due to multiple factors including the effects of the toxic drug crisis and ongoing substantial training and support on reporting of Critical Injuries and other Reportable Circumstances provided to the service delivery teams.

STATISTICS:**Table 1: FYTD 2024/2025 (April to Dec 2024)¹ Critical Injury Reportable Circumstance Incidents and Number of Children/Youth by Category**

Critical Injury Category ²	Total Children/ Youth ³	Total RCs
<i>Accidental</i>	361	498
<i>Attempted Suicide</i>	160	265
<i>Emotional Trauma</i>	516	555
<i>Victim of Violence</i>	296	405
Total	1,187	1,723

Source: ICM and Branch RC Tracking Spreadsheet.

Notes:

1. FYTD 2024/2025 represents the first nine months of the fiscal year. RCs submitted after January 14th, 2025 for incidents occurring prior to 2025 are not captured in these totals.

2. Reports reflect CFS, CYSN, Adoptions, Children and Youth Mental Health, and Youth Justice data.

3. Totals of children/youth for each category add up to greater than the total number of children with critical injuries since children and youth can have RCs in multiple categories.

Table 2: FYTD 2024/2025 (April to Dec 2024)¹ Critical Injury Reportable Circumstance Incidents by Category and Care Status

Critical Injury Category ²	Indigenous ⁴		Care Status ⁵		All
	Yes	No	In Care	Not in Care	
<i>Accidental</i>	313	184	354	144	498
<i>Attempted Suicide</i>	114	151	136	129	265
<i>Emotional Trauma</i>	357	198	266	289	555
<i>Victim of Violence</i>	269	136	302	103	405
Total	1,053	669	1,058	665	1,723

Source: ICM and Branch RC Tracking Spreadsheet.

Notes:

1. FYTD 2024/2025 represents the first nine months of the fiscal year. RCs submitted after January 14th, 2025 for incidents occurring prior to 2025 are not captured in these totals.

2. Reports reflect CFS, CYSN, Adoptions, Children and Youth Mental Health, and Youth Justice data.

4. There was 1 child/youth with unknown Indigeneity, which entailed an Accidental Critical Injury RC.

5. In-Care status follows legal definitions and does not include children and youth in Out-of-Care options, Respite Care, and Youth Agreements.

Table 3: Critical Injury Reportable Circumstance Incidents by Fiscal Year

2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025 (April-Dec) ³
1,219	1,712	2,146	2,188	2,342	1,723

Source: ICM and Branch RC Tracking Spreadsheet.

Notes:

1. Reports reflect CFS, CYSN, Adoptions, Children and Youth Mental Health, and Youth Justice data.

3. FYTD 2024/2025 represents the first nine months of the fiscal year. RCs submitted after January 14th, 2025 for incidents occurring prior to 2025 are not captured in these totals.

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL DIRECTOR
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Child Fatality Information

KEY MESSAGES:

- Anytime a child dies, it is a heart-breaking tragedy.
- When a child in care dies, or a child who has received services within the past 12 months dies, the Provincial Director of Child Welfare and Indigenous Child Welfare Director are informed within twenty-four hours.
- A Reportable Circumstances report is sent to the Provincial Director of Child Welfare; a copy is sent to the Representative for Children and Youth; and when the death involves a child in care by Continuing Custody Order, a copy is sent to the Public Guardian and Trustee.
- The British Columbia Coroners Service (BCCS) reviews the deaths of all children age 18 and under in B.C. to better understand how and why children die, and to use those findings to prevent other deaths and improve the health, safety and well-being of all children in the province. The BCCS determines the classification of each child death. Classifications of death are either natural, accidental, suicide, homicide or undetermined.
- Whenever a child in care dies, MCFD conducts a practice review.
- If an adult up to 20 years of age, who was in the care of the director until turning 19 years of age, dies, MCFD also conducts a practice review.
- If a child dies who is not in care but has received services, the Ministry conducts an analysis of the circumstances to determine if a practice review is required. Where questions about the circumstances or practice arise from this analysis, a practice review may take place.

BACKGROUND:

- MCFD updates fatality information for children in care and children served by the Ministry every six months and posts this information in June and December on the Ministry's public website.

- Children in care under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) includes children:
 - in care of a CFCSA director through an agreement made with a parent;
 - in care of a CFCSA director through a removal; and
 - in the custody of a CFCSA director through a court order.
- Children receiving services includes children who received within 12 months of their death services from the Ministry or an Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies. These services include:
 - any service under the CFCSA, such as voluntary services to support a family or services provided in a protection response to make the family safe for a child;
 - any service under the *Youth Justice Act*;
 - mental health services for children; and
 - services for children and youth with support needs (includes medically fragile children and youth).
- The current public posting includes fatality information from January to June 2024 (6 months). The information will be updated in June 2025 to reflect fatality information from January 2024 to December 2024.
- Before MCFD's fatality statistics are publicly posted, the BCCS reviews and confirms each category of death.
- The classification of a fatality may change as a death is investigated or new information becomes available.
- MCFD also analyses information about deaths by fiscal year. Statistics are provided below.

Most Recently Publicly Posted Child Death Information:

Deaths of children in care:

Between January 1 to June 30, 2024, 6 children in care died. The BCCS has *currently* classified the deaths as follows:

- 2 Accidental
- 1 Natural

- 0 Suicide
- 0 Homicide
- 3 Undetermined/open
- 0 Undetermined/closed

The Ministry's analysis of the BCCS' data confirms the following:

- 1 of the 2 deaths classified as Accidental is opioid/fentanyl related. Accidental deaths may include motor vehicle accidents, drowning, choking, poisoning, unsafe sleeping practices, house fires or drug overdoses.
- The legal statuses of the children/youth were: 2 Continuing Custody Orders, 1 Interim Custody Order, 2 Removals and 1 Voluntary Care Agreement.
- Of the 6 children/youth who died 4 identified as Indigenous: 3 First Nations children and 1 Métis child.
- Of those children who identified as First Nations or Métis, their death classifications are: 1 Accidental, and 3 Undetermined/open.

Deaths of children who had received services (not in care) in the previous 12 months:

Between January 1 and June 30, 2024, 40 children who had received services from the Ministry died. The BCCS has *currently* classified the deaths as follows:

- 10 Accidental
- 15 Natural
- 2 Suicide
- 2 Homicide
- 11 Undetermined/open
- 0 Undetermined/closed

The Ministry's analysis of the BCCS' data confirms the following:

- Of the 10 Accidental deaths:
 - 1 death, classified as Accidental, was an opioid/fentanyl overdose - confirmed by BCCS.
 - 5 of the 10 Accidental deaths are pending toxicology results.

- The remaining 4 Accidental deaths were children and youth who died in other types of accidents: 2 motor vehicle accidents, 1 drowning, and 1 unsafe sleeping practice.
- 2 Suicide deaths: Both deaths were due to hanging/asphyxia with none of the youth identified as Indigenous.
- 2 homicides are under police investigation. Both decedents identified as Indigenous.
- Of the 40 children who died, 16 identified as Indigenous – 13 First Nations and 3 Métis.
- Of the 16 children who identified as Indigenous, classification of death was: 3 Natural, 5 Accidental, 0 Suicide, 2 Homicide and 6 Undetermined/open.
- Of the 15 children who died of Natural causes, which is 38% of the total number of not in care deaths for this period, all 15 were receiving services from Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN). Natural causes may be due to life threatening or terminal illnesses; the children have medically complex needs and may have genetic disorders.

STATISTICS:

Fatalities of Children in Care By Calendar Year

Year	Natural	Accidental	Homicide	Suicide	Undetermined		Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Totals
					OPEN	CLOSED			
*2024	1	2	0	0	3	0	4	2	6
2023	4	8	0	1	2	0	9	6	15
2022	5	9	0	1	1	0	10	6	16
2021	3	3	1	1	1	1			10
2020	2	11	0	1	1	0			15
2019	5	7	1	1	0	0			15 ⁱⁱ
2018	4	4	0	2	3	0			13
2017	4	5	0	0	3	0			12
2016	4	0	1	1	0	0			7 ⁱⁱ
2015	1	4	2	3	1	0			11
2014	6	3	0	3	0	1			14 ⁱⁱ

*Data for 2024 represents January 2024 to June 2024

Fatalities of Children Receiving Services (Not in Care) By Calendar Year

Year	Natural	Accidental	Homicide	Suicide	Undetermined		Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Totals
					OPEN	CLOSED			
*2024	15	10	2	2	11	0	16	24	40
2023	43	21	7	12	9	0	27	65	92
2022	56	27	6	6	15	0	42	70	112ⁱⁱ
2021	38	28	5	9	7	1			90ⁱⁱ
2020	51	13	2	11	1	6			84ⁱⁱ
2019	52	18	3	11	0	5			91ⁱⁱ
2018	66ⁱⁱⁱ	23	2	7	0	2			101ⁱⁱ
2017	60	26	7	12	2	0			108ⁱⁱ
2016	62	23	0	8	1	1			96ⁱⁱ
2015	77	14	4	11	3	4			115ⁱⁱ
2014	38	11	6	5	1	5			67ⁱⁱ

***Data for 2024 represents January 2024 to June 2024**

ⁱ In the “Undetermined” category, “open” indicates a case is still under investigation by the Coroner; “closed” indicates the Coroner’s investigation is complete and due to insufficient evidence or an inability to determine, the death cannot reasonably be classified as natural, accidental, suicide, or homicide.

ⁱⁱ This total includes fatality/fatalities where there is no Coroner classification of death because the fatality occurred outside the province or country.

ⁱⁱⁱ This total includes a child in care under the Adoption Act who received services within 12 months of death.

Data source: Child Welfare Branch, Office of the Provincial Director

CROSS REFERENCE:

- **Note 5.1 – Critical Injuries**

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION, AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

**ISSUE: Preventative Supports Provided to Families by the
 Ministry of Children and Family Development**

KEY MESSAGES:

- A guiding principle of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) states that a family is the preferred environment for the care and upbringing of children and youth.
- If there are safety and well-being concerns about a child, every possible step is taken to provide effective supports to keep the child or youth living at home.
- Unless a child or youth is in immediate danger, all protective less disruptive measures must be fully explored prior to consideration of removal, including providing supports to the family.
- It is important to note that MANY government services contribute to family preservation efforts. These include:
 - Access to affordable childcare (Ministry of Education and Child Care);
 - Employment income assistance (Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction);
 - Housing supports (Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs); and
 - Adult substance use services (Health Authorities, First Nations Health Authority)
- It is also important to note that services that support the wellbeing of children (e.g., child and youth mental health services, youth substance use services, child and youth with support needs therapies) also indirectly contribute to the wellbeing of the family.

BACKGROUND:

- When there has been a safety concern, or a self-identified need for support, and a family has become involved with the child welfare system, there are a range of supports and services available:

- Voluntary Youth Support Services, such as safe houses, outreach services and supported living arrangements which are intended to be short term in nature with the goal of reunification with family;
 - MCFD Support Services through contracted agencies, which offer a wide range of support services, such as respite, intensive in-home parenting programs that can educate parents through modeling, homemaker supports, and parent and youth mediation; and,
 - Services to high-risk expectant parents.
- The Ministry also continues to work on expanding our Specialized Homes and Support Services (SHSS) which are intended to support family preservation. Services offered as part of SHSS, such as specialized respite care and short-term stabilization, are aimed at supporting children and youth living with their parents, kinship caregivers, and other caregivers. The intention of all services in the network is to avoid family breakdown and/or support children/youth and their families to successfully reintegrate back into the family home.

CROSS REFERENCE:

- **Note 6.3** – Kinship Care
- **Note 6.4** – Contracted Care/SHSS

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Overview of Foster Care

KEY MESSAGES:

- Foster care remains an integral part of the child welfare system.
- Foster care is a family-style living arrangement where a child or youth in care lives in the foster caregiver's home. Foster care is one of the options used when a child cannot continue to live at home for a temporary or extended period of time.
- Foster caregivers care for children and youth who cannot safely live with their own families, whose families have asked for help with parenting during times of crisis, or whose families need specific or periodic help in caring for their children or youth.
- Foster caregivers receive monthly financial maintenance support for each child or youth in care who lives in their home. Specialized caregivers who support children with significant or complex needs receive additional service payments; rate levels (1-3) are determined by the caregiver's specific knowledge and skills.
- In addition to standardized monthly payments, additional one-time or ongoing payments are available to meet the child or youths individual care needs.
- The Ministry works in partnership with the BC Foster Parents Association and other community organizations to support caregivers and to continuously improve the standard of care for children and youth.

BACKGROUND:

- Foster homes operate under a contractual agreement with the director under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA)*.
- The Ministry conducts a full assessment of each prospective foster caregiver and their home before they can be approved to provide care. The Centralized Services Hub screens all prospective foster caregivers, including criminal record

checks and child welfare checks.

- If a prospective caregiver meets the initial screening requirements, a thorough assessment is conducted to verify their ability to care for children and youth. An assessment of the home environment is also completed using the Environment of Care Checklist to determine if the home is safe and can meet a child or youth's individual needs.
- Ministry approved caregivers are assigned a resource worker who provides ongoing support and monitoring of the caregiver and their home. Visits with the caregiver occur once every 90 days or more frequently when needed. The Environment of Care Checklist is required to be updated annually during a family care home review and when a caregiver moves to a new home.
- Foster caregivers receive a monthly payment called the Foster Family Care Rate that covers the costs of caring for a child or youth. As of December 31, 2024, Foster Family Care rates were \$1,531.70 for children aged 0 to 11 and \$1,711.50 for youth aged 12 to 18. Monthly payments increase each year in alignment with Children's Special Allowances increases the Ministry receives from the federal government.
- The different types of foster homes are:
 - Regular care: Foster care provided by a person who is not known to the child or youth;
 - Specialized foster care: Foster care provided to a child or youth with support needs (cognitive or physical support needs, or emotional or behavioural issues); and,
 - Respite or relief care: Care provided to a child or youth for a short period so that parents (respite care) or foster caregivers (relief care) can have a few days rest and prepare to continue to meet the needs of the child or youth.
 - Restricted care: Foster care provided by a person who is related to or known to the child or youth.
 - Beginning October 15, 2024, restricted caregiver assessments are now completed using the more appropriate and culturally responsive Kinship Assessment Tool (KAT).
- There are three levels of Specialized Care, depending on the support needs of the child or youth. In Specialized Care, a service payment is provided in addition to the Foster Family Care rate. This service payment recognizes the

special parenting skills and extra time required to meet the support needs of the child or youth. Service payments are not taxable.

- Foster caregivers are assessed as eligible to provide level one, two or three care based on their education and training, child-related experience, knowledge, and demonstrated skills.
- Children or youth requiring more skilled and intensive care are at higher levels of Specialized Care. The maximum number of children or youth in care allowed in these homes is determined by level:
 - For level one: 6 children or youth in the home (including the caregiver's own children or youth and children or youth in respite/relief);
 - For level two: 3 children or youth in care; and,
 - For level three: 2 children or youth in care.
- Service payments are \$591.90 per child or youth for a level one home; \$1,473.74 for one child or youth in a level two home; and \$2,347.67 for one child or youth in a level three home. Service payments for level two and level three homes are dependent on the number of children or youth in the home.
- The number of foster homes has been decreasing. Available information suggests that a reduction in the number of children or youth in care, the retirement of foster caregivers and foster caregivers who have adopted the children or youth in their care are all factors contributing to the decrease in foster homes.
- To support the retention of current foster caregivers, the ministry collaborates with community partners (caregiver support agencies and the BC Foster Parents Association) to offer virtual and in-person learning opportunities. These offerings are open to all foster caregivers and provide an opportunity for them to connect with other caregivers and also learn alongside MCFD and Indigenous Child and Family Services Agency workers. As of December 2024, there have been over 86 distinct learning opportunities offered (nearly 400 hours) to over 2,500 caregiver participants since program start in 2023.
- To facilitate the onboarding of new foster caregivers, the ministry has a priority home study initiative run by the Central Caregiver Retention and Recruitment Team (CRRT) to address the queue of applicants requiring screening and home study. The team coordinates information sessions for

new applicants, collects applications, facilitates screening at the Central Services Hub, and then completes or facilitates the completion of home studies. Since April 1, 2023, and until December 2024, this initiative has resulted in the completion of 338 home studies.

CROSS REFERENCE:

- **Note 6.3** – Kinship Care

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Kinship Care

KEY MESSAGES:

- When a child can no longer live safely at home, the ministry places a priority on finding a care giving arrangement for the child with someone known to them.
- Kinship care options, such as out-of-care arrangements, are less intrusive than other care arrangements and allow them to stay connected to their extended families, community and culture.
- Kinship care arrangements can help minimize the trauma of removal and disconnection for children, youth, and their families. Kinship care arrangements support Indigenous and Métis families to care for their own members consistent with *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*.
- Kinship care includes some limited in-care options, but approximately 95% of children are in out-of-care placements where someone other than ministry staff is responsible for the day-to-day care of the child.
- Kinship and foster care providers receive the same monthly maintenance payments and basic supports (e.g. respite, cultural support).
- Children in out-of-care placements with significant and complex needs may qualify for the Enhanced Out-of-Care program, which can provide significant funding to ensure a child or youth can remain in the kinship placement.
- The use of out-of-care arrangements is increasing at a similar rate to decreases in the number of children in government care. This means that while more children are remaining connected to their families' communities and culture through out-of-care, the overall number of children unable to remain at home due to safety concerns is not significantly decreasing.
- In alignment with the Representative for Children and Youth's *Don't Look Away* report, the ministry is conducting a comprehensive review of kinship care to ensure the system continues to improve and meet the needs of children, youth and their families.

BACKGROUND:

Three main elements are part of kinship care arrangements:

- A child or youth is unable to live with their parents due to safety issues,
- The child or youth is cared for by someone they know, such as a grandparent, a family member, or someone with an established relationship or cultural connection to the child or youth; and
- MCFD or an Indigenous Child and Family Services Agency (ICFS Agency) provides financial support. Some categories also have direct worker oversight.

Kinship care arrangements under the *Child Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) include both restricted care for children in care, and out-of-care (OOC) arrangements. Restricted care is identical to other foster care placements, except that the person who is acting as the foster caregiver is a family member, family friend, or known community member. “Restricted” simply means the foster caregiver is restricted to only care for the child or youth in care they have a kinship relationship with.

Out-of-care arrangements are preferred when a child or youth cannot live safely at home. The number of children and youth in OOC arrangements continues to rise, while the number of children and youth in care declines. OOC arrangements can be temporary or permanent:

- Temporary OOC arrangements are Extended Family Program (EFP) agreements, and interim and temporary custody orders to a person other than a parent.
 - EFP agreements are entered into voluntarily by the care provider and the parent, who retains guardianship and temporarily shares parenting rights and responsibilities with the care provider. While this arrangement is intended to be temporary, the agreement is made under the *Family Law Act*, which does not provide a maximum time limit on the arrangement.
 - Interim and temporary custody orders are court orders which can occur as part of a child protection response following a removal of child or youth from their parents. Interim and temporary custody

orders must follow time limits set under the CFCSA, and when these are reached the child or youth must either return to their parents, be brought into care, or a permanent transfer of custody to the kinship care provider must be entered into.

- Permanent OOC arrangements are permanent transfers of custody when it has been determined that reunification with a parent is not possible. This can be following an EFP agreement or temporary custody order (under s.54.01 of the CFCSA) or following a continuing custody order (under s. 54.1). These court orders make the care provider the permanent guardian of the child or youth until the age of 19, with the ministry continuing to financially support the arrangement.

All Kinship care types receive identical monthly maintenance payments (currently set at \$1,531.70 for children aged 0-11 and \$1,711.50 for those aged 12-19). The following are some differences in supports available to different types of arrangements:

- EFPs are eligible to apply for the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) and other federal programs that are tied to CCB eligibility, while other OOC arrangements are not.
- Eligibility for SAJE post-majority supports varies based on the type of OOC arrangement, when it was obtained, and the length of the arrangement.
- Permanent OOC arrangements do not receive dental, optical or extended medical support from the ministry.

Don't Look Away includes a recommendation for a full review of kinship care with a focus on providing comprehensive equitable OOC supports. The RCY has set a target date of July 2025 for this review; the ministry has started work on this initiative.

The Enhanced Out-of-Care (E-OOC) program, which was implemented in April 2023, provides additional support to children and youth in OOC arrangements with significant and complex needs to prevent children from having to come into government care. The year one evaluation of E-OOC was completed in April 2024 confirming that it has prevented placement breakdown for eligible children and

youth but was undersubscribed. The ministry is reviewing options to ensure E-OOC options are accessed for children and youth in need of these supports.

MCFD implemented the new Kinship Assessment Tool (KAT) on October 15, 2024, replacing previous assessment tools, in alignment with recommendations from the Don't Look Away report by the BC Representative for Children and Youth (RCY). The KAT is a less prescriptive, less intrusive, and a more culturally safe assessment tool for care providers than those being used previously.

The Child in the Home of a Relative (CIHR) program is an income assistance-based financial assistance program run by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction that supports children to live with relatives when their parents cannot care for them. The program was at one time considered to be a foundational kinship care program, administered in partnership with MCFD, but stopped receiving applications in 2010 and now has a very limited number of youth served.

CROSS REFERENCE:

- **Note 6.3** – Foster Caregivers

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Overview of SHSS Implementation and Contracted Care

KEY MESSAGES:

- We want children and youth to get the services they need, when and where they need them. Services must be accessible for all children and youth, based on their needs and regardless of their circumstances.
- Specialized Homes and Support Services (SHSS) provides services and contracted staffed care to children, youth, and their families within the province's network of care.
- SHSS includes specialized long-term care, emergency care, specialized respite, and low-barrier stabilization services.
- Some of these services are available to children and youth with no involvement or experience with the ministry, and all are designed to help keep families together, strengthen placement stability, and support healthy development wellbeing.
- SHSS contains a clear strategy for quality contracted care with well defined outcomes for children, standardized contracts and performance expectations, and systems that allow for effective monitoring and reporting.
- The ministry is on track to transition all existing and new contracted care services to the SHSS model by the end of 2025, with the quality assurance framework fully operationalized in 2026.
- The ministry's collaborative work with Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSAs) continues, as we look to support them in their development of a framework of care that responds honours Indigenous rights to self determination.

BACKGROUND:

- SHSS has been central to the ministry's response to recommendations from the Office of the Auditor General's (OAG) "Oversight of Contracted Services for Children and Youth in Care" report in 2019.
- Calls to actions from the OAG, Representative for Children and Youth (RCY), and Indigenous communities prompted the ministry to improve contracted agency services for children, youth and families.
- SHSS design was developed based on research and in partnership with service providers, Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies, Indigenous Rights Holders and Indigenous communities, and the voices and lived experiences of children, youth, former youth in care, families, care providers, advocates and experts to address the calls to actions.
- SHSS responds to the call to actions with major system changes that support the implementation of a standardized service model that includes:
 - A clear strategy for the use of staffed home care with standardized contracts.
 - Improved comprehensive performance measures and reporting that allows for increased monitoring and oversight.
 - Standardized roles, responsibilities and qualification requirements.
 - Information Management and Information Technology investments to support standardized information sharing and tracking.
 - Increased accountability measures including expanded financial audits.
- Phased implementation of SHSS has focused on two key activities:
 - Transition of existing contracts: The ministry is currently working with service providers throughout the province to transition their contracts to the SHSS model with a Service Delivery Area (SDA) by SDA approach. This includes the transition of over 400 existing contracts.
 - Solicitation of new SHSS Service Providers: New contracts have been awarded leveraging a list of prequalified suppliers solicited through a province-wide procurement process known as Call for Responses (CFR) posted on BC Bid in 2023. All Service Providers with relevant experience have equal opportunity to respond to the CFR for potential

inclusion on the Qualified Service Provider List (QSPL) with increased opportunities for smaller agencies and Indigenous service providers.

- SHSS implementation prioritizes the transition of existing services and addressing urgent needs for additional services. To optimize the model subsequent work to ensure access to all service types across the province is required.
- Iterative early implementation to transition current contracts to SHSS began in two geographic areas of the province (North Fraser and Okanagan) in 2023 and was completed in May 2024.
- Feedback and observations in early implementation have been used to model the system and identify areas for quality improvement that continue to be addressed. This includes recent updates to streamline transition service model discussions with service providers, improvements to SHSS contracts, and further clarity on budget requirements, contract deliverables and roles responsibilities.
- Ongoing training and engagement with Ministry staff and service providers to support implementation of SHSS, participation in CFR and ongoing performance management and reporting continues throughout implementation.
- The remaining geographic areas will sequentially move from the legacy service design to the SHSS service design and contracts by the end of 2025 and the quality assurance framework will be fully operationalized in 2026.

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE OF THE INDIGENOUS CHILD WELFARE DIRECTOR
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Overview of the Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies

KEY MESSAGES:

Indigenous Child and Family Service (ICFS) Agencies provide direct services under the Child, Family and Community Services Act (CFCSA) to Indigenous children, youth, families and communities throughout BC.

ICFS Agencies are guided by the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standard Indicators (AOPSI) and MCFD policies when providing child safety, resources, guardianship, and post-majority services to Indigenous children, youth, young adults, families, and communities throughout BC.

The 25 ICFS Agencies represent approximately 117 First Nations communities of the 204 First Nation communities in BC, as well as urban Indigenous and Metis children, youth, and families, and currently serve 49% of the Indigenous children in care. The remaining 86 First Nation communities are served by MCFD excluding those First Nations that have Coordination Agreements.

The ICFS Agencies have a Partnership Forum table that meets quarterly.

The Partnership Forum table was formed in 1996 to discuss and resolve matters concerning practice, training, funding, legislation, programs, and policies. Partnership Forum has Terms of Reference (2017), and the agenda is agreed upon by the three partners prior to the quarterly two day in person meetings. There is also a monthly Partnership Forum table that started during the pandemic and continues to date. This monthly table is to ensure urgent matters are brought forward, providing an opportunity for engagement on practice and policy matters, as well as maintaining relationships.

The Partnership Forum consists of the following attendees:

- 25 ICFS Agency Executive Directors and the Our Children Our Way ICFSA Secretariate team
- Assistant Deputy Minister and Indigenous Child Welfare Director (ICWD)
- Aboriginal Services Branch (ASB) Deputy Director and 2 ASB Directors
- 2 Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) Managers
- Special Guests such as our MCFD Minister and Executive who are invited to Partnership in Victoria (March)

BACKGROUND:

In BC, through delegation agreements, the Office of the Assistant Deputy Minister and Indigenous Director of Child Welfare provides authority to ICFS Agencies to undertake administration of all or parts of the CFCSA depending on the level of delegation within the ICFS Agencies. Staff in the ICFS Agencies are delegated under the CFCSA by the Designate (Deputy Director) to provide direct services to Indigenous children and families in their communities and in urban settings.

There are 25 ICFS Agencies in British Columbia:

- 15 are delegated to provide child safety services:
 - Services include child safety and the responsibility of guardianship services for children in care under all legal status.
 - One of the ICFS Agencies providing child safety services also has Adoption delegation.
- 7 are delegated to provide guardianship services:
 - service is specific to the guardianship of children in continuing custody.
- 3 are delegated to provide voluntary services:
 - including family support services, voluntary care agreements, support needs agreements, establishing residential resources.

Included in the now 15 delegated ICFS Agencies providing full child safety services is the newly (2024) C6 delegated Denisiqi Child and Family Services in Williams Lake. In the 7 Guardianship delegated ICFS Agencies is the newly delegated Island Métis Family Services Society on Vancouver Island. Currently, 3 Guardianship ICFS Agencies are working with ASB to expand their services to full child safety or C6 delegation. 2 Child Protection ICFS Agencies are working with ASB to expand their geographical service area to further meet the needs of Indigenous children, youth, families and communities. 1 C6 ICFS Agency is transitioning to their Indigenous Authority on Vancouver Island.

ICFS Agencies providing services on-reserve or in community (land based) under the CFCSA receive funding from both the province and the federal government. MCFD provides sole funding to 6 urban ICFS Agencies.

The Our Children Our Way Society Secretariat receives annualized funding through both the province and the federal government.

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL DIRECTOR
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Overview of Quality Assurance Programs

KEY MESSAGES:

- Quality Assurance programs support practice and service improvements for Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and Indigenous Child and Family Service (ICFS) Agencies in the following service areas: child safety, family service, guardianship, resources, youth transitioning to adult services, adoption, children and youth with support needs, child and youth mental health, and community youth justice.
- The programs measure adherence to legislation, policy, and practice guidance, promoting transparency and accountability through public reporting of key activities.
- Recent improvements to the Quality Assurance programs include the following:
 - Involvement of Indigenous Peoples, leaders, lived experience experts, and knowledge keepers in program design and delivery to support accessible and culturally informed services free from stigma and racism.
 - Recognition and use of Indigenous perspectives on evidence, effectiveness, success, and impact.
 - Use of both quantitative and qualitative information to evaluate outcomes and improve services, connecting data to practice.
 - Alignment with MCFD strategic planning and the quality assurance branch programs and services model.
 - All complaint calls are acknowledged and documented, regardless of who makes the contact. Individuals contacting MCFD's Complaints Program receive support to have their concerns addressed, including referrals to other programs or supports if necessary.

BACKGROUND:

Quality Assurance Programs consist of eight key services:

- *Child and Family Practice Reviews* are conducted when a child, youth, or young adult who has accessed MCFD or delegated ICFS Agency services dies or is critically injured to help address specific questions about what supports or services were provided before the death or injury. Actions may be developed to support practice or service improvement.
- *MCFD Practice Evaluations*, conducted at the provincial level, assess compliance with legislation and policy, with results—including qualitative data—informing actions to improve practice and service delivery.
- *ICFS Agency Practice Audits* are conducted regularly to measure compliance with legislation and policy for all delegated services provided by the agency. Results, which include qualitative data, may inform actions to improve practice or service delivery.
- *Complaints program* offers a formal mechanism that ensures that children, youth, young adults, and families who receive services from MCFD or who believe they should receive MCFD services have an opportunity to express their concerns. Complaints specialists promote collaboration between complainants and employees to help them work towards a resolution of the person's complaint concerns. Individuals making a complaint may choose to engage in a complaints resolution process or request an Administrative Review.
- *Administrative Reviews* provide an examination of the complaint issues by a review authority who has not been involved in matters related to the complaint. The review authority will draw conclusions based on the information gathered and may make recommendations to support practice and service improvement.
- *Foster Caregiver Reviews* are completed at the request of a foster caregiver after a foster home investigation or quality of care review has resulted in a serious sanction, like the cancellation of a contract.
- *Self-Report Audit Tool* is an online questionnaire used by contracted care agencies to send caregiver screening and assessment results to MCFD for verification, enhancing enforcement of standards and improving caregiver qualifications and care quality.

- *Accreditation program* implements the MCFD Accreditation policy by ensuring contracted service providers receiving \$500,000 or more annually from MCFD, or MCFD and Community Living BC are accredited by approved bodies. Accreditation covers governance, administration, health and safety, client rights, and more, aiming to enhance service quality and the safety and well-being of those accessing services.

QA supports transparency by publicly posting audit and practice evaluation reports and summaries of child and family practice reviews twice a year, providing full administrative review reports to those involved, and sending outcome letters to individuals involved in complaint resolutions and caregiver reviews.

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
PROVINCIAL DIRECTOR OF CHILD WELFARE
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Monitoring visits with children in care as per policy

KEY MESSAGES:

- Regular contact with children and youth in care is imperative to ensure their overall safety and well-being. Visits are fundamental to building relationships between practitioners and the children and youth they serve.
- As outlined in ministry policy, practitioners should maintain in-person, private contact with children and youth in care every 90 days at a minimum, with more frequent visits when vulnerabilities are present that could impact safety and wellbeing – such as mental health concerns, substance use concerns, complex support needs or children who are less visible in their community.
- Since June 1st, 2023, visit oversight has occurred on a monthly and quarterly basis to ensure all children and youth were seen, with follow-up taken where needed.
- In 2024, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) completed an independent third-party review of visits of children and youth in care. The review found that 99.8% of visits had been completed. The ministry has accepted the opportunities noted in the review and is working to implement them.
- An IT solution and an associated Corporate Data Warehouse report was launched in the Fall of 2023, for staff to document their visits with children in care. This system improvement enabled “real time” electronic monitoring and reporting on visits with children and youth rather than manually tracking visits on a quarterly basis. Further upgrades were completed in August of 2024 improving applet functionality and user options.

BACKGROUND:

- Annual “real time” tracking to ensure children and youth in contracted care agency placements were visited within a 90-day period began in 2018.

- In 2020, due to the Covid pandemic, there were heightened concerns for the visibility of children and youth in care resulting in an expansion of the annual “real time” 90-day visit tracking to include all children in care in any placement type.
- In June of 2023, the frequency of visit tracking increased from annually to quarterly, starting with June 1st to August 31st and continuing for every quarter thereafter.
- An enhancement of the electronic database used to document child and family information was released in October of 2023, which enables clear and consistent documentation of visits with children and youth in care. Additionally, an associated report in the Corporate Data Warehouse was created and launched in December of 2023, to support oversight and real time monitoring of the status and type of visits occurring. The report shows information for all children in care and notes whether the 90-day visit was completed, is due or overdue by individual child.
- Use of the child visit applet allows workers, team leaders and leadership to accurately monitor compliance with the 90-day visit policy, including the frequency and type of visits.
- Workers in Indigenous Child and Family Services Agencies (ICFSA) are also recording all child visit information in the new applet. Staff in ICFSA also have access to the new reporting features in the Corporate Data Warehouse.
- Oversight and individual follow-up with each Service Delivery Area and ICFSA occurs on a regular basis with additional reporting when requested.
- Communication with staff (MCFD and ICFSA) on when and how to use the applet has occurred through orientations for both staff and team leaders, development of a practice guide, clarification of policy, and a dedicated iConnect resource page for child and youth visits. Additionally, a formal self-directed training course was developed and launched in October of 2024 that is accessible by both MCFD and Indigenous Child and Family Service Agency staff.

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

Partnership and Indigenous Engagement Division

Agreements Snapshot

Section 92.1 snapshot as of April 2025:

- 6 Active new 92.1 Agreement tables currently
- 11 Anticipated 92.1 Agreement Tables upcoming
- 4 current 92.1 Agreements requiring amendments
- 117 Information-sharing Agreements signed

Signed Section 92.1 agreements:

1. Binche Whut'en - signed September 18, 2024; effective December 17, 2024.
2. Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations - signed November 15, 2023; effective February 15, 2024.
3. Simpcw First Nation - signed and effective April 12, 2022.
4. Tl'etinqox Government - signed September 13, 2024; effective December 12, 2024
5. Tla'amin Nation - signed and effective May 23, 2024.
6. Toquaht Nation - signed September 20, 2024; effective December 19, 2024.
7. Tsilhqot'in National Government – communities include: ʔEsdilagh First Nation, Tl'esqox, Tsideldel First Nation, Xeni Gwet'in First Nations Government, and Yunešit'in Government; signed March 2025; comes into force July 1, 2025

Intergovernmental Communications

Amendments:

The team has recently completed 92.1 Agreement amendments to:

- GNN – to align with their law
- Tl’etinqox – to align with TNG Coordination Agreement

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

Information Sharing Agreements:

- 117 information sharing agreements under section 92.1 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA) have been signed.
- The information is sent to First Nations on a quarterly basis and includes information about their children-in-care, children in the custody of a person other than a parent under a Director’s supervision, and/or under other CFCSA orders.
 - Information includes the names and dates of birth and CFCSA legal statuses of the Indigenous community’s children, and
 - The names of the parents for all of the above children, except for children under voluntary care or support needs agreements.

Coordination Agreements snapshot as of April 2025:

Five signed coordination agreements:

1. Splatsin (March 2023) - clauses re-negotiated 2024/2025.
2. Cowichan Tribes (June 2024)
3. Sts’ailes First Nation (September 2024)
4. Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations (September 2024)

5. Tsilhqotin National Government (April 2025) – one year term only. Will require re-negotiation.

Intergovernmental Communications

Intergovernmental Communications

Coordination Agreements Signed across Canada:

- 16 total Coordination Agreements signed
 - 3 in AB
 - 5 in BC
 - 1 in MB
 - 1 in Northwest Territories
 - 3 in Ontario
 - 1 in Quebec
 - 1 in Saskatchewan (first agreement signed with Cowessess First Nation)
 - 1 in Yukon

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
PARTNERSHIP AND INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Overview of First Nations Jurisdiction

KEY MESSAGES:

- MCFD's goal is to support children and youth to remain safely with their families and connected to their culture and communities.
- BC was the first province in Canada to enact legislation that expressly recognizes that Indigenous Peoples have an inherent right of self-government, including self-determination specific to child and family services.
- BC First Nations have several pathways available to them under the federal Act, the CFCSA, and the BC *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act) to support them in achieving their goals regarding children and families.
- Since 2017, MCFD's Partnership and Indigenous Engagement Division has been actively engaged in discussions with First Nations and Indigenous governing bodies (IGBs) regarding increased involvement, decision-making authority, and jurisdiction in relation to child and family services.

BACKGROUND:

- On January 1, 2020, the federal legislation – *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth, and families* (the "federal Act") – came into force, affirming the inherent right of self-government and jurisdiction of Indigenous Peoples in relation to child and family services.
- On November 24, 2022, BC Bill 38, *Indigenous Self-Government in Child and Family Services Amendment Act*, amending the *Adoption Act* and the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA), was passed into law.
- On November 25, 2022, most of the clauses of the *Indigenous Self-Government in Child and Family Service Act* came into force.

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Date: February 26, 2025

- On January 15, 2024, and March 7, 2025, additional clauses came into force through regulations co-developed with First Nations.

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications



- MCFD supports Indigenous communities to increase involvement, authority, and resume jurisdiction over child welfare through the pathways they choose, including:
 - Community agreements under s. 92.1 (2) of the CFCSA, which pertains to consultation and cooperation with an Indigenous community on child safety work with their families such as assessments, investigations, development of care plans, and placement decisions when Indigenous children come into care.
 - Delegation enabling agreements under s. 92 of the CFCSA, where a director enters into an agreement that delegates any or all the director's power, duties, or functions, to Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSA) to deliver family support services and child protection to Indigenous communities.
 - Joint and consent-based decision-making agreements, setting out how the Province and IGBs share decision-making about child and family services under the CFCSA and sections 6 and 7 of the Declaration Act.
 - Exercising jurisdiction through processes set out in the federal Act, including those under:
 - Section 20(1), where the IGB provides notice of its intention to exercise its legislative authority without a coordination agreement to the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and the province or territory in which the community is located; or
 - Section 20(2), where the IGB submits notice to the Minister of ISC and each province or territory in which the Indigenous community wishes to exercise jurisdiction to enter into a tripartite

coordination agreement in relation to child and family services.
Once agreement is reached, or after a year of reasonable efforts,
the Indigenous law will have the force of federal law.

- o Self-governing agreements negotiated with the First Nation, BC's Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and Canada, such as treaties or reconciliation agreements. These agreements may also be bilateral between the First Nation and Canada only.
- MCFD's Partnership and Indigenous Engagement Division has concluded a number of agreements and is currently negotiating agreements, including:

Signed Agreements

Agreement Type	Community or IGB	Effective Date
92.1 Community Agreements	Binche Whut'en First Nation	December 2024
	Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nation	February 2024
	Simpcw First Nation	April 2022
	Tla'amin Nation	May 2024
	Tl'etinqox Government	December 2024
	Toquaht Nation	December 2024
Coordination Agreements	Cowichan Tribes	August 2024
	Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nation	Taking effect April 2025
	Splatsin	March 2023 Renegotiation ongoing
	Sts'ailes First Nation	September 2024
Bilateral Interim Coordinating Agreement	Tsq'escen	December 2024
Memorandum of Understanding	Office of the Wet'suwet'en	October 2018

Intergovernmental Communications

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

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**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
PARTNERSHIP AND INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT
AND FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Jurisdiction Funding Model

KEY MESSAGES:

- Through the Declaration Act Action Plan, we have committed to co-developing 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 (Action 4.16).
- To meet this commitment, MCFD is co-developing a funding model that is transparent, equitable, and responsive to the needs of First Nations resuming jurisdiction.
- B.C. is the only province currently undertaking a funding model co-development effort.
- Each Nation is at a different stage of their jurisdiction journey, and a funding model must be flexible to meet each Nation where they are at.
- In response to feedback from co-development partners, the implementation timeline was extended with the aim of increasing First Nation participation.
- Co-development has already been under way since fall 2023, and it resumed in January 2025 after a pause for interregnum.

BACKGROUND:

- In January 2020, the federal *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* was brought into force. The federal Act provides for tripartite coordination agreements as a mechanism for First Nations to exercise their inherent jurisdiction over child and family services.
- Section 20(2)(c) of the federal Act provides that coordination agreements address fiscal arrangements, relating to the provision of child and family services by an Indigenous governing body, that are sustainable, needs-based and consistent with the principle of substantive equality.

- In 2021, B.C. began negotiating its first coordination agreement with an Indigenous governing body in B.C. under a fiscally neutral interim funding approach. That interim funding approach is still being used today.
- In November 2022, the Tripartite Working Group consisting of MCFD, Canada, and the First Nations Leadership Council released an initial discussion paper “Developing a New Funding Model and Approach for B.C. First Nations Children & Families”. This initial discussion paper was preliminary work and outlined possible approaches and draft guiding principles for a funding model.
- In September 2023, MCFD released a subsequent discussion paper, “Building a Funding Model to Support First Nations Jurisdiction over Child and Family Services in B.C.” This September 2023 discussion paper represented a first step in co-developing B.C.’s funding model.
- Throughout Fall 2023, MCFD held engagement sessions with First Nations and Indigenous partners on the funding model. These sessions were grounded in the September 2023 discussion paper. Representatives from Indigenous Services Canada and/or Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada attended the engagement sessions as observers.
- Throughout 2024 MCFD held more intensive bi-weekly co-development sessions with distinctions-based groups of First Nations and Indigenous partners on the details of a proposed funding model.
- There were two in-person workshops with co-development partners and key Indigenous organizations, and MCFD released an Interim What We Heard Report to capture feedback up to April 2024.
- To date, feedback from First Nations and Indigenous organizations has been:
 - That the process is too rushed, and did not allow for enough collaboration.
 - The model needs to move away from the existing protection/prevention language and dichotomy and expressed the need to eliminate on/off reserve dichotomy and geography-based funding.
 - The model should prioritize and enable prevention services with funding that provides option to meet the unique and varied needs of First Nations by taking various cost drivers such as geography, remoteness and scope of services into consideration.

- Data sharing, which is critical for strategic planning and service tailoring, should be effective and seamless.
- Concern that MCFD needs to connect with more First Nations.
- Some First Nations who are currently exercising jurisdiction, or planning to do so shortly, expressed that MCFD should expedite funding model implementation.
- Co-development reconvened in January 2025, following the Fall 2024 pause for the provincial interregnum with a focus on increasing First Nation participation and addressing concerns raised throughout the initial co-development phases.

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

- B.C. is the furthest ahead among the provinces and territories to develop a long-term funding model for jurisdiction and currently the only province actively working with First Nations to co-develop one.

CROSS REFERENCE:

- **Note 7.1 - Overview of First Nations Jurisdiction**

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
PARTNERSHIP AND INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Métis Nation BC and Métis Commission

KEY MESSAGES:

- MCFD continues to meet with Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) to support and assist them in achieving their goals of increased involvement in and authority over child and family services for Métis children, youth and families.
- In June 2018, MNBC, Métis Commission for Children and Families of BC (the Métis Commission) and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) signed a Joint Commitment document that commits the parties to collaboratively work toward MNBC authority over child welfare for Métis children and families in BC.
- MCFD has worked in collaboration with MNBC and the Métis Commission to determine a path forward for Métis people in BC to achieve increased involvement in and authority over child and family services.
- In August 2023, MCFD and MNBC discussed exploring a community agreement and information sharing agreement under section 92.1 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA). MCFD is continuing discussions with MNBC on the appropriate mechanism to increase MNBC involvement in and authority over child and family services for Métis children, youth and families.
- MNBC has distinguished themselves from the Métis Commission and MCFD is solely in conversation with MNBC regarding increased authority over Métis children, youth and families.
- MCFD has renewed their relationship with MNBC and in January 2025 reconfirmed the new working relationship through a revised Terms of Reference to address systemic issues affecting Métis children and families involved in the child welfare system.

BACKGROUND:

- Since the signing the Joint Commitment document in 2018, the federal *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*

was brought into force in January 2020. Amendments were also made to the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFSCA) in 2019 and 2022 which provide additional potential options and pathways for increased involvement in and authority over child and family services.

- MNBC is generally regarded as the political voice for Métis people in BC. Walter Mineault is the President, Colette Trudeau is the Chief Executive Officer and Colleen Hodgson is the Executive Director, Children and Families/Citizenship.
- The Métis Commission is the designated representative under the *Child, Family and Community Service Regulation* (CFCSR) for receipt of notices of hearings. Suzanne Patterson is the Interim Executive Director of the Commission.
- In February 2020, MNBC submitted a notice of intent to exercise jurisdiction under section 20(2) of the federal Act and requested to enter into a tripartite coordination agreement discussion with BC and Canada.

Intergovernmental Communications

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE OF THE INDIGENOUS CHILD WELFARE DIRECTOR
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Indigenous Child Welfare Director

KEY MESSAGES:

- The new Indigenous Child Welfare Director (ICWD) position furthers our commitment to reduce the overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth in care, keep children and youth connected to their families, culture and languages, and will provide advice and guidance on crucial Indigenous child and family service decisions.
- The ICWD will also work to support Indigenous jurisdiction through upholding the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and harmonizing the rights and laws of Indigenous Peoples with provincial laws.
- By changing the way we work, we are responding to the Child Welfare section of the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and supporting improved outcomes for Indigenous children, youth and future generations.

BACKGROUND:

- On Nov. 24, 2022, Bill 38 *Indigenous Self-Government in Child and Family Services Amendment Act* was passed into law making amendments to the Adoption Act and the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA).
- This included the provision to create an Indigenous Child Welfare Director within the ministry – long advocated for by Indigenous partners, including the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) and Métis Nation BC (MNBC).
- Co-development of the ICWD began with initial engagement in Spring and Summer of 2023. We worked with First Nations, Modern Treaty Nations, MNBC, FNLC, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, ICFSAs, and other Indigenous organizations to identify their goals and priorities for the role. A second round of engagements started in early 2024 to co-develop materials to support creation of the ICWD.
- On September 30, 2024 Jeremy Y'in Neduklhchulh Williams began his role as the ICWD.

- The ICWD's role includes three main areas of responsibility:
 - Practice Oversight & Support: The ICWD will be responsible for enhancing and improving oversight of practice for Indigenous children, youth, and families. They will also be responsible for supporting and deepening culturally safe and trauma-informed practice grounded in Indigenous worldviews and cultures.
 - Partnerships & Advisory: The ICWD will be responsible for working in partnership with Indigenous Peoples to be guided by communities' priorities for child and family services.
 - Indigenous Jurisdiction: The ICWD will be responsible for working across MCFD to provide guidance on how policies, processes, practices, and operations can be aligned with and better support Indigenous jurisdiction.
- This important role provides leadership and advice for services to First Nations, Metis, and Inuit families delivered under the Child, Family and Community *Service Act* (CFCSA) and directly support the implementation of jurisdiction, has long been called for by Indigenous Peoples across our province and is an important step forward in our jurisdiction journey.

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
PARTNERSHIP AND INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: First Nations Leadership Council

KEY MESSAGES:

- The First Nations Tripartite Children and Families Working Group (TWG) was established to support systemic reform to improve First Nations child and family well-being in British Columbia.
- The TWG was formed in 2016 and includes representation from FNLC, the federal government, and Ministries of Children and Family Development (MCFD), Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR) and Attorney General (AG).
- The TWG has made valuable contributions to:
 - Implementing the federal Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families;
 - Increasing engagement and communications with First Nations in BC; and,
 - Informing a funding model to increase accountability and transparency to First Nations regarding the funding that goes to services to support First Nations.
- This has informed the work of a new Fiscal Framework Development Team mandated to support the TWG's commitment to co-develop a new funding model. This project is currently under way.
- On September 18, 2024, the Rising to the Challenge Accord (the Accord), was co-developed by FNLC and MCFD, affirming a shared commitment to a new approach to child and family well-being.
 - The Accord recognizes and upholds that First Nations have the inherent right to self-determination, including jurisdiction over First Nations children and families.

BACKGROUND:

- In May 2016, BC made a number of commitments at the BC First Nations Children and Family Gathering, which was held with representatives from the Province of British Columbia, Canada and the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) to discuss the current state of child welfare, including:
 - Work with Canada and the FNLC to build new jurisdictional and funding frameworks that would support improved outcomes, as well as empower First Nations who are interested to exercise their own jurisdiction over child welfare; and
 - Establish a tripartite working group to guide the work of the Province, Canada and the FNLC.
- In fall 2016, the TWG was formed and consists of representation from the Province of BC [Ministries of Children and Family Development (MCFD),
Advice/Recommendations the Government of Canada, and FNLC.
- The TWG signed a Terms of Reference, an internal communications protocol, a Reconciliation Charter, and an updated 2020/2021 Workplan. The TWG also established two sub- committees in the areas of child welfare practice and fiscal relations/funding.
- The two sub-committees paused their meetings in 2021/2022 to get a better understanding of the governance structure and to determine if the sub-committee meetings were achieving the intended outcomes.
- In 2021/2022, FNLC contracted Ference and Company to undertake a review of the fiscal sub-committee and support the revision of the Service Level Agreement, which is a bi-lateral funding agreement between Canada and the Province of BC.
- Work with Ference and Co. concluded in the Spring of 2022 and a new Fiscal Framework Development Team (FFDT) was formed with representatives from Indigenous Services Canada (from both the BC region and Headquarters), MCFD and FNLC.
- The FFDT is mandated to support the TWG's commitment to work together to explore and co-develop a funding model applicable to First Nations child and family well-being in BC that adopts the principles of long-term, sustainable, and

needs-based funding to support jurisdiction and improved long-term outcomes for children, youth, and families.

- The FFDT developed a Discussion Paper, Developing a new Funding Model and Approach for BC First Nations Children and Families, that was shared with First Nations Chiefs in November 2022 as start of an engagement process with First Nations.
- In September 2023, MCFD developed and released a further discussion paper titled Building a Funding Model to Support First Nations Jurisdiction over Child and Family Services in BC. The September 2023 discussion paper was developed with input from the FFDT but was not a fully co-developed product.
- The September 2023 discussion paper was a first step in the process of co-developing a new funding model with rights holders, Indigenous partners, and Canada. It supported introductory co-development sessions with First Nations and Indigenous partners in Fall 2023. Further co-development with rights holders and partners has continued through 2024 and into 2025.
- The FFDT has continued to meet regularly since September 2023 to discuss MCFD's ongoing co-development of the funding model and has recently expanded to discussing outcomes for First Nations children and youth.
- The TWG sub-committee on practice has not been re-established.

Intergovernmental Communications

Intergovernmental Communications

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Intergovernmental Communications

A commitment was made by BC to enter into a refreshed accord with FNLC to re-establish the commitment to work together. The Accord was co-developed by the FNLC and MCFD, and outlines a shared commitment to creating a new approach to child and family well-being.

- The Accord builds on the Reconciliation Charter between Canada, BC and the FNLC, which formalized the commitment to reduce the number of First Nations children in care, keep families together and support First Nations youth to successfully transition out of care. The Accord is a formal commitment for the parties to continue their work together to advance reconciliation and includes

the systemic changes that may be required to law, policy, fiscal models and approaches to data.

- Regular meetings between FNLC, MCFD minister and deputy minister have occurred since January 2024

Intergovernmental
Communications

- TWG met on February 1, and March 14, 2024 to re-establish the working group. Meetings scheduled for May, August and September 2024 were all cancelled.
- The TWG last met on January 29, 2025 and is scheduled to next meet on April 9, 2025.
- Representatives from FNLC are regularly briefed at the TWG on the transformation initiatives occurring for MCFD.

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Adoption Services

KEY MESSAGES:

- Licensed adoption agencies in B.C. facilitate international adoptions and direct placement adoptions. Agencies are licensed and regulated by B.C.'s Director of Adoption and operate in accordance with the *Adoption Act* (AA) and Adoption Agency Regulation.
- Licensed adoption agencies are independent, non-profit organizations responsible for their own funding, operating decisions, and the success of their organizations.
- The Provincial Director of Adoption monitors the activities of the agencies through a three-year licensing process that includes consulting with them on complex cases, reviewing closed files, and investigating complaints.
- The decline in intercountry adoptions has led to the closure of five B.C. adoption agencies since 2000.
- Currently, there are two remaining licensed adoption agencies in B.C. – the Adoption Centre of British Columbia in Kelowna and Sunrise Family Services Society in North Vancouver.

BACKGROUND:

- The B.C. licensed adoption agency structure came into existence in 1996 with the introduction of the AA. Licensed adoption agencies provide adoption services under the AA.
- Licensed adoption agencies allow the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and Indigenous Child and Family Services Agencies (ICFSAs) to focus on achieving permanency for children and youth who are in the continuing custody of the Director under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) or in the guardianship of the director under the AA.

- A 2024 jurisdictional scan showed that Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories do not have private adoption agencies. Prospective adoptive parents must work with other provinces' agencies to complete an intercountry adoption.
- B.C., Manitoba, and Ontario all report closures of private adoption agencies due to a decline in intercountry adoptions.

Types of Adoption and Adoption Services	
Private Adoption Agencies Adoptions	
Intercountry adoption	Adoption of children/youth from outside of Canada.
Domestic direct placement	Birth parents residing in B.C. work with an adoption agency to facilitate placement with an adoptive family in B.C. The adoptive parents may be either relatives or non-relatives of the child.
Ministry Adoptions	
Intercountry adoption oversight	Regulatory oversight of intercountry adoption in alignment with the Hague Convention. Intercountry adoptions are primarily facilitated through the private adoption agencies. They rarely involve children in ministry care.
Administration of Post-Adoption Assistance (PAA)	Management of financial assistance for services related to specific needs of a child/youth adopted from care.
Foster-to-Adopt	Adoption of children/youth under Continuing Custody Orders (CCOs) by their foster parent(s).
Child Specific	Adoption of children/youth by an adoptive parent recruited for a specific child due to their relationship or ability to meet the child/youth's unique needs.
BC General	Adoption of children/youth under CCOs by a member of the general community (no previous relationship to the child/youth).
Direct Placement	Birth parents work with the ministry to place the child with an adoptive parent they know. The adoptive parent may be a relative or a non-relative.
Wards under the AA	Adoption of a child who becomes a ward of the ministry

<i>or Infant Act</i>	due to voluntary relinquishment or death of their parent.
Adoptions Under an Independent Legal Process	
Custom Adoption	An Indigenous cultural practice where a child is raised by a person who is not the child's biological parent, according to the community's customary laws.
Relative/Stepparent	Adoption of a child/youth related to the adoptive parent by blood or marriage.
Adult Adoption	Adoption of an individual over the age of 19.

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment program - SAJE Services Overview

KEY MESSAGES

- It is essential that youth and young adults transitioning from government care to adulthood have the supports, tools and relationships that help them thrive. These are often the most vulnerable in our communities.
- The Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment (SAJE) program offers resources and supports that help young people in and from care make strong transitions to adulthood.
- SAJE offers inclusive and flexible benefits to provide youth in care and eligible young adults from care the right supports when they need them.
- Fully implemented in 2024, SAJE offers dental, optical, mental health and life skills benefits, access to Navigators and Guides to support planning, and housing and financial supports to youth with care experience.
- SAJE increases financial stability, reduces the risk of homelessness, promotes skill development, connection to culture and community, supports improved mental health and wellbeing and better prepares young people to transition to adulthood and build toward interdependence.

BACKGROUND:

SAJE Program Eligibility

- In Spring 2024, the ministry enacted legislative and regulatory amendments to expand the eligibility and services available to young adults from government care. The amendments allow MCFD to support more young people beginning at age 19 up until their 27th birthday:
 - who were in a Youth Agreement or Continuing Custody Order immediately before their 19th birthday; or
 - who had a permanent transfer of custody or were adopted after being in care from age 12 to 19; or

- had a minimum of 24 cumulative months of government care experience from age 12 to 19.
- were in a comparable arrangement under Indigenous law.

The following supports are available through the SAJE Program:

SAJE Workers

- Since spring of 2024, SAJE workers have been fully implemented across the province to support youth and young adults in and from care.
- Youth and young adults aged 14 to 25 can access transition planning support from a SAJE Navigator, a SAJE Guide, or a similar role available through Indigenous Child and Family Service (ICFS) Agencies.
- SAJE and ICFS Agency workers assist youth and young adults to set and achieve goals, strengthen relationships, develop natural networks of support and connect with culture and community.

SAJE Housing

- **MCFD Rent Supplement:** Young adults (aged 19-27th birthday) from care can access \$600/ month for up to 24 months to support them to live independently in the private market.
 - 50% of the rent supplements are available to Indigenous young adults.
- **SAJE Support Agreement (SSA):** up to 24 months of support to assist with living expenses for young adults (aged 19-21) who are transitioning to living independently.
- **SAJE Housing Agreement (SHA):** up to 24 months of support for young adults (aged 19-21) living with someone other than their parents (foster caregiver, contracted agency or out-of-care provider) to remain in their pre-19 home up to age 21.

SAJE Income Supports

- **Unconditional Income Support (UIS):** young adults aged 19-20 can receive up to \$1,250 monthly to assist with living expenses, improve their financial stability and prevent the experience of homelessness.
- **Conditional Income Support (CIS):** young adults aged 20 and up to their 27th birthday can receive up to \$1,250 monthly to assist with living expenses if participating in an educational or vocational program, or engaging in life-skills,

cultural activities, rehabilitative programming, or a combination of these options.

- **Earnings Exemption:** young adults on a SAJE agreement receive a no-limit earnings exemption to incentivize employment, attachment to the labour market and to increase financial stability.

SAJE Life-Skills, Training and Cultural Connections Funding

- Young adults aged 19 and up to their 27th birthday who receive Income Support (UIS or CIS) can access funding (up to \$11,000) to support them with life-skills development, cultural connections and individualized learning goals.

SAJE Enhanced Medical Benefits

For young adults on SSA, SHA, UIS or CIS are eligible for the following:

- **Mental Health and Counselling:** young adults can access up to \$1,500 per year in coverage for mental health and counselling-related supports.
- **Dental and Optical Coverage:** young adults can access extended health benefits including dental coverage of up to \$1,000 per year and optical benefits including coverage for eye exams and eyewear up to \$600 every 2 years.

CROSS REFERENCE:

- **Note 9.2 – Rent Supplements**

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Youth Transitions – Rent Supplements

KEY MESSAGES:

- We know it is essential that youth aging out of care get the supports they need to transition into adulthood.
- The Ministry of Children and Family Development's (MCFD) Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment (SAJE) program, offers rent supplements, among other benefits, to a number of young adults transitioning from government care to adulthood.
- The rent supplements reduce the risk of homelessness through a \$600-a-month in financial assistance over a maximum of 24 months to eligible young adults age 19 to 27 who are renting in the private market.
- Approximately 1,888 young adults have received a rent supplement since the program launched in 2022.
- Lower-income and Indigenous applicants are prioritized, with 50 percent of supplements available to Indigenous young adults.
- There has been strong uptake amongst Indigenous males, a group that has been historically under-represented in post-majority supports.

Advice/Recommendations

BACKGROUND:

- Since its inception, the Rent Supplement Program has accepted applications over four (4) intake cycles. The last intake was Spring 2024.
- Approximately 1,888 eligible young adults received a rent supplement over these four intakes.
- Intakes two through four experienced a higher application rate of eligible young adults than anticipated. To meet the demand and support more young people,

rent supplement allocation was increased through re-allocations from future intakes.

- This allocation increase resulted in the Rent Supplement Program being oversubscribed.

Advice/Recommendations

- Government's public commitment to provide rent supplements has been well-received by young adults, community and Indigenous partners and advocacy organizations.

CROSS REFERENCE:

- **NOTE 9.1 – SAJE Services**

MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
SERVICE DELIVERY DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26

ISSUE: Overview of Youth Custody Services

KEY MESSAGES:

- Every youth deserves to have the support they need to live safe and healthy lives and reach their goals.
- The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) administers youth justice services for youth aged 12 to 17 at the time of their alleged criminal offence.
- MCFD's youth justice services include community youth justice services, Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services (YFPS), and Youth Custody Services (YCS).
- Youth justice services is supported by approximately 107 youth probation officers.
- BC has the third lowest youth custody rate in Canada (0.46 per 10,000 youth), well below the national average of 2.52.¹
- Declining youth crime rates have led to reductions in community caseloads and youth custody populations.² However, custody use rose slightly in the past year, with daily averages increasing from 15 in the 2023/24 fiscal year to 25 during the period of April 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024.
- Youth receiving custody services spend an average of 42 days in custody.
- From April 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024, 119 unique youth have received custody services. Of these, 46 per cent (55) self-identified as Indigenous, and 21 per cent (25) self-identified as female.
- Approximately one in ten youth admitted to YCS are from population groups

¹ See, Statistics Canada, Average counts of young persons in provincial and territorial correctional services, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510000301>. Fiscal Year 2022/23 is the most recent available national data.

² Statistics Canada's Crime Severity Index (CSI) measures changes in the severity of police-reported crime by accounting for both amount of crime reported by police and the seriousness of these crimes. The overall youth CSI for BC in 2023 is nearly one fifth (19 per cent) of what it was in 2013.

designated as visible minorities.

- YCS uses a Trauma-Informed Behaviour Support model, and staff are trained in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention.

BACKGROUND:

- The Burnaby Youth Custody Services (BYCS) facility is the only youth custody centre in BC, providing pretrial detention (remand), sentenced secure custody, and sentenced open custody.
- BYCS has a staffed operating capacity of 56 and is operating at 45 per cent capacity this year.
- Interim Holding Units (IHU) in Victoria and Prince George offer short-term overnight accommodations for youth on Vancouver Island and in the North who are awaiting court appearances or transfer to/from BYCS. From April 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024, there was no utilization of the IHU in Victoria, while the IHU in Prince George reported 29 admissions resulting in a total of 32 overnight stays.
- Youth in custody have access to diverse supports, including mental health care and health services, educational programs, substance misuse counselling, and culturally responsive interventions and programming tailored to diverse needs.

CROSS REFERENCE:

- **NOTE #10.4** – Youth Justice Ombudsperson report

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
SERVICE DELIVERY DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Closure of Prince George Youth Custody Services

KEY MESSAGES:

- We are working on modernizing Youth Justice Services to ensure effective and efficient use of resources that best meet the needs of the youth in our province.
- B.C.'s per capita rate of youth in custody is the second lowest in Canada and the number of youths in custody and crime rates involving youth have declined dramatically.
- These declining rates are one of the main reasons the Prince George Youth Custody Centre was closed effective March 31, 2024, and youth custody services were centralized to the Burnaby Youth Custody Centre.
- BYCS has a 56-room capacity and, since April 1, 2024, has operated, on most days, at less than 50 per cent capacity, with a daily average of 25 youth.
- We are focused on providing enhanced community-based services that address mental health, addictions, and complex needs.
- Our goal is for youth to return home and build meaningful and productive lives, supported by their families and communities.

Temporary Accommodation of Northern BC Youth in Custody:

- When PGYCS closed, an Interim Holding Unit (IHU) within the Prince George facility was established.
- The IHU has two secure rooms for the temporary detention of in- custody youth who are awaiting transport to BYCS or require a place of temporary detention for multi day court appearances.
- The Prince George IHU is currently staffed by one senior youth correctional officer, two auxiliary and five regular youth correctional officers, who also provide community-based intensive supervision and support services.
- From April 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024, the Prince George IHU reported:

- 29 admissions, with 32 total overnight stays.
- 21 youth escorted to BYCS by youth correctional officers.
- In the summer of 2024, the Ministry of Citizen's Services undertook a feasibility study for a permanent location for the Prince George IHU. Options are being considered to find a suitable and permanent location.

BACKGROUND:

- In response to the declining rates of youth in custody, reflective of the provisions in the federal *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA) that limit the imposition of custody to serious and repeat offenders and promote the utilization of community-based services for youth, PGYCS closed on March 31, 2024.

Release of Northern BC Youth back to Northern Communities (April 1, 2024-December 31, 2024):

- Post-release air transportation for Northern BC youth returning to their communities totaled \$12,333.
- Total costs for escorted transfers amounted to \$23,926.

Visitation Support for Northern BC Youth in Custody:

- The Ministry's family visitation program provides financial support to families, and other supportive adults residing outside the Lower Mainland to visit youth in custody.
- Enhancements to the visitation support program were implemented which included:
 - No funding limits per visit and reduced administrative barriers for families.
 - Since April 1, 2024, three in-person family visits for Northern BC youth were supported, with expenditures totaling \$3,916.

Reallocation of Funding Resulting from the Closure:

- As part of MCFD efforts to modernize Youth Justice services, the ministry has been engaging with community service providers, youth, Indigenous and Métis

Chartered communities, and other justice sector partners to determine priorities for enhancing services within the Youth Justice system.

- In support of these engagement efforts, BC First Nations Justice Council and Metis Nation British Columbia were provided funding to engage with Indigenous and Métis chartered communities and youth.
- Inputs from engagement efforts will be summarized in a final report and will inform opportunities for the reallocation of funding into community based services such as rehabilitation and reintegration services, judicial interim release programs, and diversion programs, consistent with the objectives of the federal Youth Justice Services Funding Program.

CROSS REFERENCE:

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION, AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Collaboration with the BC First Nations Justice Council and Métis Nation BC

KEY MESSAGES:

- The over-representation of Indigenous youth in the youth justice system remains high, and we are committed to addressing this issue with our Indigenous partners.
- The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) is conducting a review of community-based youth justice (YJ) services to ensure they align with the mutual priorities of MCFD and its partners to best meet the needs of youth in B.C., in particular: prevention, diversion, community supports, and increased use of restorative justice practices.
- This review offers an opportunity to refocus resources to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous, Métis, and other racialized youth and to work in alignment with the *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The review will be completed by March 1st, 2025, and the findings will be considered within the proposed reallocation plan between Spring and Fall 2025.
- Indigenous partners, including the BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) and Métis Nation BC (MNBC) have partnered with the province to find opportunities to improve B.C.'s YJ services.
- MCFD has partnered with BCFNC and MNBC through the grant process to lead engagement with First Nations and Métis Chartered communities, respectively, as part of its broader engagement strategy.

BACKGROUND:

BC First Nations Justice Strategy

- The B.C. First Nations Justice Strategy (BCFNJS), signed in 2020, included commitments to address poor justice outcomes for First Nations people in B.C., and promote alternatives to custody. The strategy was developed by

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Date: January 21, 2025

BCFNJC, B.C. First Nations communities, and the Province of British Columbia.

- Four significant components of the strategy relate to YJ:
 - Strategy 1 – Review restorative justice approaches in B.C.’s justice system, explore program expansion, and increase culturally appropriate diversion opportunities.
 - Strategy 10 – Develop a First Nations Youth Justice Prevention and Action Plan to help address root-causes, youth-specific issues, and the prevention of youth involvement in the justice system.
 - Strategy 14 – Expand culturally based programs throughout corrections and support the use of alternatives within First Nations.
 - Strategy 15 – Support First Nations community-based justice programming.

The Métis Justice Strategy

- The Métis Justice Strategy (MJS), signed in 2024, included commitments to address poor justice outcomes for Métis people in B.C, and to promote alternatives to custody. The MJS was developed through engagement and in consultation with Métis people throughout B.C., MNBC, and the MNBC Justice Council.
- Three significant components of the strategy relate to YJ:
 - Recommendation 6 – Collect accurate data on Métis youth involved in the justice system to inform program development.
 - Recommendation 10 – Seek to build relationships with Métis and partners to support justice involved youth and their families.
 - Recommendation 12 – Transform the Métis experience of the justice system with a focus on prevention and early intervention.

YJ Engagements

- MCFD aims to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of YJ services through the development of a Youth Justice Service Framework. As part of this work, the ministry is undertaking a comprehensive current state assessment that involves engagements.
- BCFNJC and MNBC have partnered with MCFD to lead engagements; the

feedback from these engagements will be used to inform improvements to the youth justice system, develop the service framework, and the re-investment of funding from the closure of the PG Youth Custody Centre. Additionally, BCFNJC's engagements will inform development of their First Nations Youth Justice Prevention and Action Plan.

- Phase 1 engagements, which included 340 sector partners and staff, were completed in 2022, and show alignment with the MJS and BCFNJS.
- Phase 2 engagements were completed in 2024 and included youth who have lived experience, community sector partners, and Indigenous communities, including First Nations.
- MCFD received criticism for a lack of engagement with First Nations communities surrounding the decision to close the PG Youth Custody Services centre.
- In response, the Ministry issued a written apology and reaffirmed commitments to enhance communication and collaboration, including engagement on the development of the Ministry's forthcoming YJ Service Framework and redirection of funding for YJ.

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION, AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Status update on the Ministry's response to the recommendations in the Ombudsperson's report *'Alone: The Prolonged and Repeated Isolation of Youth in Custody' (Alone)*

KEY MESSAGES:

- My top priority is and continues to be the safety and protection of all children and youth in our province, regardless of where they are or their circumstance.
- Children and youth in our province - especially those who are the most vulnerable - deserve every opportunity for full, thriving lives with connection to community, peers, and culture.
- The Province's youth detention rates continue to be amongst the lowest rates per capita of any province.
- The Ministry always focuses on providing supports and whenever possible, alternatives to detention are explored. We are working hard on the recommendations outlined in the Office of the Ombudsperson's report.
- I cannot comment further or on the proposed class action matter as the matter is before the courts.

BACKGROUND:

Advice/Recommendations; Legal Information

- In *Alone*, the OMB made 26 recommendations, some of which include amendments to legislation, regulations, and policy on separate confinement.
- In response to *Alone*, former Minister Mitzi Dean, on behalf of MCFD, committed to implementing all recommendations, including meeting the "spirit" of a recommendation if it could not be met as framed in *Alone*.

THIS NOTE CONTAINS LEGAL ADVICE TO CABINET AND IS SOLICITOR-CLIENT AND CABINET PRIVILEGED

- MCFD implemented several policy and practice changes to respond to the recommendations including:
 - Youth in separate confinement are now provided a minimum of 2 hours in a 24-hour period outside of their room;
 - Implementation of a Vulnerable Youth Policy;
 - Implementation of an Inspection Framework to provide periodic inspections of youth custody centres;
 - Implementation of a Living Alone policy to support youth housed alone; and
 - Establishment of a Director of Quality Improvement role within Specialized Intervention and Youth Justice with oversight from the Inspections and Standards Office, Ministry of Attorney General.
- Progress updates were provided to the OMB in 2021 and 2022. No formal update has been provided to the OMB since 2022.
- The Ombudsperson's systemic update report, publicly released in April 2024, identifies no progress in relation to 15 of the 26 recommendations, including recommendations where regulatory or legislative amendments were needed.

Advice/Recommendations

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- The Ministry values the opportunity to continue working with the OMB to ensure the programming and supports provided to youth supervised in the community and custody remain relevant, and that any changes implemented will improve the lives of vulnerable youth who are involved with the justice system.

THIS NOTE CONTAINS LEGAL ADVICE TO CABINET AND IS SOLICITOR-CLIENT AND CABINET PRIVILEGED

- MCFD is continuing to advance work on the implementation of the recommendations through a phased approach through current policy exploration.

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

THIS NOTE CONTAINS LEGAL ADVICE TO CABINET AND IS SOLICITOR-CLIENT AND CABINET PRIVILEGED

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) Services

KEY MESSAGES:

- The Ministry offers a range of programs and services for children and youth with support needs and their families. These range from early intervention services for children who have, or are at risk of, developmental delay to supports for children with unique and complex health care needs.
- Since November 2022, work to improve the system of services for children and youth with support needs have been ongoing. The province has:
 - Established four pilot family connections centres. They were launched in 2023 and are providing an integrated approach to services.
 - Engaged in deeper consultation with parents and caregivers, First Nations, Indigenous Peoples, communities, experts and practitioners, and other stakeholders with lived experience. This engagement is helping to understand how the current system can be transformed. The intention is to build a better system of supports together.
 - Made new investments to support children with disabilities and support needs who are currently underserved.
- Looking ahead, we are taking action to make an important change – aligning programs for children and youth with special needs and children and youth mental health services with the health system. I look forward to working closely with the Minister of Health and all our partners as we strive to build a system that meets the needs of the children and youth we serve.

BACKGROUND:

- **CYSN FOUNDATIONAL SERVICES** are provided by contracted community agencies. They offer direct support and intervention to young children and their families:

- **Early Intervention Therapy (EIT)** provides community-based physiotherapy (PT), occupational therapy (OT), and speech-language pathology (SLP) to children who have, or are at risk of, developmental delays. The age range for this program is birth to school entry.
- **Infant Development Program (IDP)** and **Aboriginal IDP (AIDP)** help families develop tools and access resources to promote optimal child development.
- **School-Aged Therapy (SAT)** provides OT and PT services to school-aged children with support needs. This program is jointly funded and administered by MCFD and the Ministry of Education and Child Care in partnership with boards of education, independent school authorities, and ministry Service Delivery Areas.
- **Supported Child Development (SCD)** and **Aboriginal SCD (ASCD)** enable children with support needs to participate in childcare.
- **FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS** offer an additional range of direct support for families of children/youth with support needs up to age 19. Through a Social Worker, families can access:
 - **CYSN Social Worker Supports:** case management and transition services.
 - **Respite Services:** support family functioning and alleviate stress. Provides intervals of relief and rest to families of children/youth with support needs.
 - **Support Services:** provides behavior supports, homemaker services, child/youth care workers, parent and caregiver support, and contracted professional supports.
 - **Specialized Supports** including:
 - **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Key Worker and Parent Support:** available through contracted community agencies for families of children/youth with confirmed or suspected FASD and similar conditions.
 - **Person Centred Societies:** provide funding to small non-profit societies that address the support needs of individual children/youth.

- **CYSN PROVINCIAL SERVICES** are administered centrally through specialized financial units, or by contract with central oversight. A child/youth must acquire a diagnosis and/or complete a functional assessment for families to access these services:
 - **At Home Program:** provides medical benefits to children/youth up to 18 years of age with disabilities who have dependencies in at least 3 of 4 areas of daily living. Includes basic medically necessary supplies, equipment, transportation, therapies, orthotics, dental, optical and PharmaCare.
 - **Autism Funding:** for children under age 6 and children/youth ages 6-18 to help families with the cost of purchasing autism intervention services.
 - **Autism Information Services BC (AIS BC):** helps families, service providers, community professionals and ministry staff to understand the best range of practice treatments and options to navigate through the BC service system.
 - **Community Brain Injury:** provides short-term, acute rehabilitation and life transition services for children/youth with acquired brain injuries.
 - **Provincial Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services:** provides a range of direct and contracted services to children/youth who are deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind, and their families.
 - **Provincial Outreach and Professional Supports:** serves children with complex disability-related needs and their community-based therapists.
- **CYSN PILOT SERVICES** includes this delivery of developmental and goal focused services through four pilot family connections centres (FCCs) and strengthened Ministry delivered services. The pilot areas are located in the northwestern areas of B.C. – Smithers, Terrace/Kitimat, Prince Rupert/Haida Gwaii, as well as in the central Okanagan in Kelowna.
- The pilot FCCs opened in 2023, and are providing an integrated approach to services, based on the changing needs of the child, and are integrated with Disability Services and Provincial Services delivered through the Ministry.
- Throughout 2024, MNP, an external contractor, working in partnership with each of the four pilot FCCs, to complete an evaluation that is thorough and accurately represents the strengths and needs of the FCCs and the families they are serving.
- In the pilot areas, existing programs such as the individualized Autism

Funding program, At Home Program Medical Benefits and School Age
Extended therapy benefit, and Autism Information Services continue.¹

CROSS REFERENCE:

- **Note 11.2** – FCC Pilots and Engagement

¹ This note to be revisited before estimates based on FCC evaluation release and engagement report back.

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Children and Youth with Support Needs: Pilot Family Connections Centres (FCC)

KEY MESSAGES:

- We want all children and youth to have access to the supports they need to live a full, happy and healthy life and to reach their goals.
- From 2023 through 2024, the Province engaged in comprehensive consultation with families and caregivers, First Nations, Indigenous Peoples, service providers, advocates and those with lived experience to understand how we can work together to design an effective system of services for children and youth with support needs (CYSN).
- Engagement ended December 1, 2024, and yielded consistent recommendations such as address silos between mental health and CYSN, move CYSN out of child protection ministry, improve diagnostics, expand individualized funding, increase funding to services, and strengthen community-based delivery system – funding, policies, etc.

Advice/Recommendations

- As of December 2023, four pilot family connections centres (FCCs) operated by contracted community agencies are providing a wide range of supports to children, youth and families regardless of diagnosis. They are:
 - ARC Programs Ltd. in Kelowna
 - North Coast Community Services Society in Prince Rupert
 - Terrace Child Development Centre Society in Terrace
 - Northwest Child Development Centre Society in Smithers
- Evaluation of this pilot approach to delivery of CYSN services began in 2023 and has been completed.

- This evaluation, led by a third-party contractor, along with the results of engagement, will inform the for the alignment of CYSN and CYMH services with the health care continuum.

BACKGROUND:

- The public has shown ongoing interest in the engagement and the promise of a new system, with the expectation of transparent information sharing.
- Prominent advocates are calling for government to act as soon as possible now that the engagement period is over, namely increasing funding to support all children and youth with support needs.
- FCCs were designed to provide an increase in type and level of services available and have been successfully serving a large number of children, youth and families.
- Engagement has also told us this model will not work for everyone and families are seeking a balance of direct funding and community-based service delivery.

s.13; s.16

¹ Evaluation of Piloted Changes to CYSN Services Draft (February 2025) Report, pg 16.

² Evaluation of Piloted Changes to CYSN Services Draft (February 2025) Report, pg 17.

³ Evaluation of Piloted Changes to CYSN Services Draft (February 2025) Report, pg 16.

Pilot Services Data

- As of December 31, 2024, 2,343 children/youth accessing Family Connections Centre (FCC) and 373 children/youth accessing Disability Services.
- Number of families requesting to pause or resume Autism Funding Program in pilot areas:
 - 2,171 children/youth-maintained Autism funding in the pilot service areas.
 - Requests to Pause Autism Funding: 64
 - Requests to Resume Autism Funding: 14

CROSS REFERENCE:

- **Note 11.1 – CYSN Services**

⁴ Evaluation of Piloted Changes to CYSN Services Draft (February 2025) Report, pg 18.

⁵ Evaluation of Piloted Changes to CYSN Services Draft (February 2025) Report, pg 18.

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION, AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Overview of Child and Youth Mental Health

KEY MESSAGES:

- MCFD is committed to building and supporting a responsive continuum of mental health services with children, youth, and families.
- Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) services range from prevention and community-based supports through to initial services provided during intake and specialized intervention and bed-based clinical treatment.
- CYMH provides free and voluntary evidence-informed mental health services to over 25,000¹ children and youth (aged 0-19) who are experiencing moderate to severe mental health challenges and disorders.
- CYMH services are offered in-person and virtually to meet the needs and preferences of families. Virtual services expand access, especially for those families with accessibility challenges, including those in rural and remote areas.
- Children and youth present to CYMH with increasingly complex needs, including an average of four mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, and neuro-developmental concerns.
- The increase in prevalence and co-occurrence of needs, including substance use, results in families having to move between service providers and the health system, where often there are gaps or challenges in transitioning between services.
- To address these challenges, the Ministry is committed to leading the work with the Ministry of Health, and with Indigenous peoples, key stakeholders and people with lived experience, to realign and improve services for children and youth with mental health and support needs.

¹ Data does not include the number of children, youth, and families who accessed CYMH services in Vancouver and Richmond, where services are contracted with Vancouver Coastal Health Authority.

- The work to realign with the health system provides a crucial opportunity for us to work towards breaking down service siloes and improving access to timely wraparound and more integrated care for children, youth, and families.

BACKGROUND:

- CYMH services are guided by a provincial service framework, overarching policies and practice standards, and an improved internal governance system that ensures clear accountabilities that advance the ministry's mandate and commitment to quality and consistency across all service delivery areas of the province.
- At 93 intake clinics across the province, children and youth participate in an initial screening tool, the BC Child and Family Phone Interview (BCFPI) and intake interview, which informs the CYMH clinicians' response in ensuring children, youth, and families have the right supports including CYMH core services.
- CYMH teams are comprised of a variety of professionals including Masters-level Clinicians, Nurse Clinicians, Psychologists, Support Workers, and contracted Psychiatrists, offering trauma-informed and evidence-informed care to children, youth, and their families. This includes culturally safe and relevant services to Indigenous children, youth, and their families.
- CYMH clinicians work in collaboration with several partners including Health Authorities; health and substance-use services; community-based social service providers; Indigenous Child & Family Service Agencies (ICFSA); Schools; Foundry centers; and contracted agencies or services.
- MCFD does not directly provide CYMH services in Vancouver/Richmond and Prince George where services are delivered through an MCFD-funded contract with Vancouver Coastal Health and Intersect Youth and Family Services.

The Ministry's CYMH services include:

- Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Initiatives which provide mental health prevention programming and resources (e.g., Everyday Anxiety Strategies for Educators (EASE) or Confident Parents Thriving Kids) for parents, educators, professionals, and other adults who are supporting and caring for the mental well-being of children and youth.

- Core Services provided through community-based CYMH and Indigenous CYMH teams and Integrated Child and Youth (ICY) teams in select locations are offered through Ministry offices, ICFSA's, Foundry Centers, contracted agencies, community outreach, and schools.
 - Children and youth who present with urgent mental health issues, such as suicidal thoughts, are immediately responded to by a mental health clinician for assessment and safety planning.
- A new Provincial Virtual CYMH Team (e-CYMH), is designed to be flexible and accessible, ensuring individuals receive the intervention they need in areas with higher wait times.
- Specialized Services provided by specialized CYMH teams (in some communities, contracted agencies, and/or health authorities include:
 - Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health;
 - Early Psychosis Intervention (EPI);
 - Developmental Disabilities Mental Health;
 - Concurrent Disorders; and
 - Eating Disorders.
- Contracted telehealth services ensure Psychiatrists can meet with young people and their families in Northern, rural, and remote areas of the province.
- Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services provide court-mandated forensic assessments and interventions to youth involved in the justice system and support youth who are on community or custody supervision via:
 - In-Patient Assessment Unit in Burnaby; and
 - Outpatient clinics in Vancouver, Burnaby, Langley, Victoria, Nanaimo, Prince George, Kamloops, and Kelowna.
- The Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre (Maples), is a provincially designated mental health facility. Services are delivered to youth ages 12-17 with severe and enduring mental health needs.
 - Referrals are made by CYMH, Indigenous CYMH, and Health Authority Clinicians.
 - The Maples provides a range of community and live-in services for young people admitted under the *Mental Health Act*.

- Including care, assessment and treatment for youth with behavioural and complex care needs and for youth found Unfit to Stand Trial and Not Criminally Responsible due to a Mental Disorder (NCRMD) under the Criminal Code of Canada.
- As a full Ministry partner in *A Pathway to Hope*, CYMH clinicians work collaboratively with cross-ministry and community partners to offer seamless and integrated services through:
 - Integrated Child and Youth (ICY) teams: CYMH Clinicians are core members of these teams in twelve communities.
 - Foundry Centres: Where CYMH capacity permits and local memorandums of understanding exist, CYMH Clinicians at operational Foundry sites are providing CYMH core services.
 - High Intensity Outreach Services: CYMH Clinicians in the first five ICY communities work to help prevent and reduce mental health related hospital admissions and support the transition from hospital to community.
 - Early Intervention Enhancement services: Infant Mental Health Clinicians work alongside contracted early childhood community service providers to provide early intervention services for children (ages 0-6) and their families.
- When demand for CYMH services exceed capacity, families waiting for a primary clinician can access the following CYMH initial services:
 - Regular monitoring of mental health status, brief treatment sessions, consultations, psychoeducational and therapeutic groups, resources, and referrals to local and provincial services.
- CYMH and social sector partners have been experiencing labour market challenges since the pandemic, resulting in historically higher challenges with recruitment and retention.

WORK UNDERWAY:

- Further integration of mental health services, including Integration of Child and Youth Mental Health Teams currently operational in or in development in 20 communities.

- MCFD CYMH Provincial Leadership is working directly with Foundry to strengthen the integration of youth mental health services across CYMH and Foundry.
- Net new positions have increased in CYMH across the province due to SDA prioritization of CYMH services and additional funding in ICY communities through the *Pathway to Hope*. While some vacancies exist, CYMH has more staff providing services currently than at any time since 2021.
- To maintain current gains made in recruitment levels within CYMH post COVID, strategies have been implemented or are underway, including:
 - Province wide CYMH focused recruitment strategies including the recent development and release of a recruitment video and the BC Public Service hosted Career Conversations: Opportunities in CYMH (June 2024).
 - Implementation of a Provincial CYMH virtual team (e-CYMH) with positions in various areas of the province, providing increased flexible work options to attract new, and retain existing, CYMH Clinicians.
- To address the responsiveness and quality of services, the ministry has implemented or is undertaking the following:
 - Streamlined intake process pilot to better align with cross-Ministry partners in Integrated Child and Youth Teams ensuring more seamless service delivery for children, youth and families.
 - Policy guidance on waitlist monitoring that includes flexible options to connect with youth and families.
 - Implementation of virtual services to children, youth, and families currently on a CYMH waitlist in three service delivery areas, identified as having the longest wait times in the province.
 - As part of Pathway to Hope, Maples satellite services have been developed in Prince George and Vernon. Each location is offering live-in services for up to 5 youth for 30-90 days.
 - MCFD recently updated the publicly available *Mental Health and Wellness Resources and Supports* guide, that clinicians can share with young people and families awaiting services.
- Implementation of a new provincial CYMH governance structure and SDD

realignment of CYMH Service Delivery Directors to enable increased strategic and specialized oversight of the ministry's continuum of CYMH services.

CROSS REFERENCE: N/A

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
POLICY, LEGISLATION AND LITIGATION DIVISION
ESTIMATES CORPORATE BRIEFING NOTE 2025/26**

ISSUE: Responding to the Opioid Crisis

KEY MESSAGES:

- The toxic drug crisis continues to have a devastating impact on children, youth, families and communities in B.C. and we know families need support to help their loved ones.
- Young people are struggling, and the toxic supply is highly unpredictable. The risks associated with drug use, whether through experimentation, occasional or regular use, are extraordinarily high.
- The death of any child or youth is tragic, and our hearts go out to the families, friends and communities who knew and loved these young people.
- In response, MCFD continues to work as a full partner with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and Child Care in building an integrated system of care for mental health and substance use services that meet the unique needs of children and youth, with a focus on prevention, early intervention, and treatment and recovery services.
- This includes but is not limited to Integrated Child and Youth (ICY) teams, Foundry centres, integrated services with local community organizations, and more throughout B.C.
 - ICY teams are multidisciplinary, community-based teams that deliver integrated mental-health and substance-use care for children and youth.
 - Foundry is a provincewide network of integrated youth centres and virtual supports, offering free and confidential counselling, primary-care, sexual-health and addictions services to young people aged 12-24 and their families.
- MCFD's response to the toxic drug crisis is focused on keeping children, youth, and families safe and healthy through prevention, early intervention, and coordination of equitable and trauma informed services, including connection to local substance use services to plan for safety and reduce harms associated with substance use.

BACKGROUND:

- Prevalence estimates for concurrent disorders in youth have considerable variability in part due to who is being sampled (e.g. general population versus clinical samples).
- Clinical data from youth in two addiction treatment programs in BC indicates that 53% of youth had at least one mental health problem or diagnosis.¹
- A self-report survey of street youth in BC, indicated that 23% had a mental or emotional condition concurrent with their substance use.²
- Between January 1, 2019, and December 31, 2023, there were 126 suspected youth (younger than 19 years of age) unregulated drug toxicity deaths in BC – approximately 25 deaths per year.³
- The treatment of substance use harms falls outside of MCFD's Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) mandate.
- CYMH clinicians are the treatment lead for youth when their mental health concern is the primary presenting issue, and their substance use is secondary.
- When a youth's substance use is primary and significantly impacting their daily functioning, CYMH clinicians may provide specific intervention e.g., safety planning, crisis stabilization, suicide risk assessment, as needed; and refer to a specialized substance youth counsellor to be the treatment lead.
- MCFD and Indigenous Child and Family Services Agencies (ICFSA), including ICFSAs that are contracted to provide Indigenous CYMH services, work within a broader system of care to support health and development through an array of child and youth mental health and substance use services.
- A series of practice guidelines and learning resources have been developed to support MCFD and ICFSA staff to work with youth and families impacted by substance use, including training on how to access and administer, Take Home Naloxone kits.
- Through A Pathway to Hope, government's 10-year vision for mental health and substance use care:

¹ Retrieved from McCreary Centre Society literature review: Increasing the engagement of youth with concurrent disorders and their families (2012).

² Ibid.

³ Retrieved from BC Coroner's Service Report: Youth Unregulated Drug Toxicity Deaths in British Columbia.

- The Ministry of Health (HLTH) is leading the establishment of ICY Teams, recognizing that alcohol and other substance use, and mental health needs are deeply intertwined, and that mental health and substance use programs for children and youth need to be integrated. These teams include, MCFD CYMH clinicians in each of the 20 school district communities.
- HLTH is also leading the expansion of Foundry centres and their virtual services, increasing access to integrated mental health care, substance use services, primary care, peer support, and social services for youth ages 12-24 and their families — Currently there are 17 Foundry centres opened and 18 centres in development.
- MCFD continues to lead High Intensity Outreach Teams (HIOT) and Live in Satellite services to provide intensive service to our most vulnerable children and youth.
 - HIOT services have been implemented in the first five ICY communities. This program model provides intensive services, for children and youth with severe mental health and/or substance use conditions, that help to prevent hospitalization/inpatient admissions or shorten hospital stays while supporting safe and effective transitions to and from hospital and community settings. Specialized clinicians are available to respond to youth within 24 – 48 hours of receiving a referral.
- MCFD has two designated mental health facilities: The Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre (the Maples) and the Burnaby Inpatient Assessment Unit (IAU).
 - The Maples offers provincially accessible treatment for young people with severe and enduring mental health needs. Services are provided on the traditional territory of the kʷikʷəłəm (Kwkwetlem) First Nation, Lhidli T’enneh (Prince George), and in the Syilx People’s territory (Vernon). The Maples also offers outreach services across the province. Specialized services are available for children under the age of 12 and for those found Unfit to Stand Trial, or Not Criminally Responsible on Account of a Mental Disorder pursuant to the Criminal Code of Canada.

- The Inpatient Assessment Unit is a 4 bed facility located on the ancestral, and shared Coast Salish territories, including the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh), and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations. It provides court-ordered assessment and treatment services to young persons in conflict with the law pursuant to the Youth Criminal Justice Act, and young persons found Unfit to Stand Trial or Not Criminally Responsible on Account of Mental Disorder (NCRMD). The IAU has a dual designation of a mental health facility and a place of temporary detention.
- Forensic Rapid Access Transition Team (FRATT), through Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services (YFPS), is for youth involved in the justice system. FRATT consists of a multidisciplinary team (Nurses, Psychiatric Social Workers, and Psychiatrists) that provides a needs assessment of youth who use opioids non-medically, followed by Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) when appropriate and with consent. FRATT coordinates the transition to their community, enabling access to a prescriber or resource for OAT to enable long term substance use support for the youth.
- Launched in 2021, Phones 4 Youth (P4Y) provides data plans from TELUS to every youth in care aged 13 or older receiving services from MCFD, as part of multi-faceted safety planning.
 - Social workers ensure the phones have the Lifeguard App – an app to help save lives and ensure that people who use drugs alone have access to the supports they need.
- The Ministry works in tandem with the RCMP in various communities and local police agencies to conduct youth outreach including:
 - Yankee 20 (high risk youth/street youth Intervention team – Vancouver)
 - Yankee 30 (Surrey, and Richmond RCMP as of January 2023)
 - Car 86 (Vancouver Police Department) that responds to child welfare matters where violence is an issue, such as family violence.
- MCFD staff work in partnership with staff in the Substance Use Policy division of HLTH to accelerate the response to the toxic drug crisis and receive multiple sources of data to monitor and adjust the response and report in real time to better understand the underlying issues including the weekly Overdose Emergency Response Centre (OERC) Overdose Dashboard.

- MCFD is supporting the development of the Provincial Child and Youth Substance Use and Wellness Framework, led by HLTH, to inform further actions towards enhancing the continuum of services for young people at risk for, or struggling with, problematic substance use, which may provide direction for information sharing pathways and services needs of the children and youth serving system.

CROSS REFERENCE:

- **Note 11.3** – CYMH Services