

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

Children and Family Services

Annual Report
2023-24

Alberta 

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Preface

The Public Accounts of Alberta are prepared in accordance with the *Financial Administration Act* and the *Sustainable Fiscal Planning and Reporting Act*. The Public Accounts consist of the annual report of the Government of Alberta and the annual reports of each ministry.

On June 9, 2023, the government announced new ministry structures. As such, the family violence prevention responsibilities of the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services were transferred to the Ministry of Children and Family Services. On February 16, 2024, child care system responsibilities of the Ministry of Children and Family Services were transferred to the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Trade. The 2023-24 Annual Report reflects the 2023-26 Ministry Business Plans, the Government of Alberta Strategic Plan, as well as the ministry's activities and accomplishments during the 2023-24 fiscal year, which ended on March 31, 2024.

The Annual Report of the Government of Alberta contains *Budget 2023* Key Results, the audited Consolidated Financial Statements and Performance Results, which compares actual performance results to desired results set out in the government's strategic plan.

This annual report of the Ministry of Children and Family Services contains the Minister's Accountability Statement, the ministry's Financial Information and Results Analysis, a comparison of actual performance results to desired results set out in the Ministry Business Plan. This ministry annual report also includes:

- other financial information as required by the *Financial Administration Act* and *Sustainable Fiscal Planning and Reporting Act*, as separate reports, to the extent that the ministry has anything to report; and
- financial information relating to trust funds.

All Ministry Annual Reports should be considered along with the Government of Alberta Annual Report to provide a complete overview of government's commitment to openness, accountability, and fiscal transparency.

Minister's Accountability Statement

The ministry's annual report for the year ended March 31, 2024, was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Sustainable Fiscal Planning and Reporting Act* and the government's accounting policies. All the government's policy decisions as at June 4, 2024, with material economic or fiscal implications of which I am aware have been considered in the preparation of this report.

<original signed by>

Honourable Searle Turton
Minister of Children and Family Services

Message from the Minister



Since being sworn in as Minister of Children and Family Services in June 2023, I have been focused on supporting strong, thriving families and communities. Preserving the safety, well-being and cultural and family connections of vulnerable young Albertans has been my top priority. With the transfer of family violence and abuse prevention to Children and Family Services, the past year has also presented opportunities to invest in prevention strategies and additional supports for survivors and their families.

I am proud to share this report highlighting the important work we have done to support vulnerable children and youth in care, remove barriers to adoption, enhance supports for foster and kinship caregivers, and further fund women's shelters and sexual assault centres. Through these targeted efforts, we continued to provide high-quality services and supports to Albertans when and where they need them most.

My ministry's mandate from Premier Smith includes a commitment to improve the foster care system. We have made positive changes to increase placement stability for children and youth in care, as well as recruit and retain qualified foster caregivers in Alberta. In 2023-24, we introduced the Refer-a-Foster Caregiver Program to encourage existing caregivers to refer new ones. We launched the Foster Caregivers Caring for Young Adults program to recognize the stability, mentorship and connection caregivers provide to young adults making the transition out of government care. We have also begun providing easily accessible mental health supports for licensed foster caregivers and their families, so that those who care for our most vulnerable citizens can take good care of themselves as well.

To help address the caregiver shortage in Alberta, our government also launched a province-wide campaign to recruit additional foster families to ensure children in government care are placed with caregivers who meet their physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual needs. This contributes to our strategic focus on permanency for children in care and those eligible for adoption.

Because we know that early intervention and prevention services can strengthen families, help them build resilience, and decrease the need for more intensive intervention later on, we invested \$68.2 million into the Family Resource Networks program in 2023-24, an increase of \$1.5 million from 2022-23. Supporting Family Resource Networks across the province ensures we can continue to provide a continuum of prevention and early intervention services for children and youth from 0-18, including specialized services for unique cultural and linguistic communities, as well as supports for Indigenous families and communities.

Children and Family Services has made great progress on making sure the voices and perspectives of the youth we serve are incorporated into our work. We established the Youth Coordinating Committee, which is designed to gather direct feedback from youth who have been in government care or had lived experience with child intervention. In addition, we launched the Youth Employment Connection Program alongside the Youth Apprenticeship Connection Program, which helps youth build the skills and connections needed to succeed in today's job market.

We have continued our efforts to better support those making the transition out of government care and into adulthood. In 2023-24, we directed \$69.8 million to the Youth in Transition program, which focuses on transition supports such as employment readiness, educational attainment, connection to support services and life skills development. We also continued to support the Transition to Adulthood Program, investing \$38.3 million to deliver services to 490 young adults transitioning out of government care or child intervention involvement.

Alberta's commitment to enhance adoption supports continued in 2023-24, including an increase to the adoption expenses tax credit and a one-time subsidy to help cover the costs of private adoption through licensed adoption agencies in Alberta.

We continue to take a multi-faceted approach to meet our commitment to reconciliation and address the overrepresentation of Indigenous children involved with the child intervention system, prioritizing their connection to their culture, families and communities.

I want to thank all the community partners and ministry staff who work tirelessly to support Albertans. This province is a better, safer place for families because of your contributions.

It is an honour to serve as the Minister of Children and Family Services and I look forward to building on the past year's success and making improvements wherever we can. We remain dedicated to providing Albertans with access to high-quality services and supports, while continuing our work to make a meaningful difference for children and youth across the province.

<original signed by>

Honourable Searle Turton
Minister of Children and Family Services

Management's Responsibility for Reporting

The executives of the ministry have the primary responsibility and accountability for the ministry. Collectively, the executives ensure the ministry complies with all relevant legislation, regulations and policies.

Ministry business plans, annual reports, performance results and the supporting management information are integral to the government's fiscal and strategic plan, annual report, quarterly reports, and other financial and performance reporting.

Responsibility for the integrity and objectivity of the accompanying ministry financial information and performance results for the ministry rests with the Minister of Children and Family Services. Under the direction of the Minister, I oversee the preparation of the ministry's annual report, which includes the financial information, performance results on all objectives and initiatives identified in the Ministry Business Plan, and performance results for all ministry-supported commitments that were included in the 2023-26 Government of Alberta Strategic Plan. The financial information and performance results, out of necessity, include amounts that are based on estimates and judgments. The financial information is prepared using the government's stated accounting policies, which are based on Canadian public sector accounting standards. The performance measures are prepared in accordance with the following criteria:

- Reliable – Information used in applying performance measure methodologies agrees with the underlying source data for the current and prior years' results.
- Understandable – the performance measure methodologies and results are presented clearly.
- Comparable – the methodologies for performance measure preparation are applied consistently for the current and prior years' results.
- Complete – outcomes, performance measures and related targets match those included in the ministry's *Budget 2023*.

As Deputy Minister, in addition to program responsibilities, I am responsible for the ministry's financial administration and reporting functions. The ministry maintains systems of financial management and internal control, which give consideration to costs, benefits, and risks that are designed to:

- provide reasonable assurance that transactions are properly authorized, executed in accordance with prescribed legislation and regulations, and properly recorded so as to maintain accountability of public money;
- provide information to manage and report on performance;
- safeguard the assets and properties of the province under ministry administration;
- provide Executive Council, the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Children and Family Services the information needed to fulfill their responsibilities; and
- facilitate preparation of ministry business plans and annual reports required under the *Sustainable Fiscal Planning and Reporting Act*.

In fulfilling my responsibilities for the ministry, I have relied, as necessary, on the executives within the ministry.

<original signed by>

Lisa Sadownik
Deputy Minister of Children and Family Services
June 4, 2024

Results Analysis

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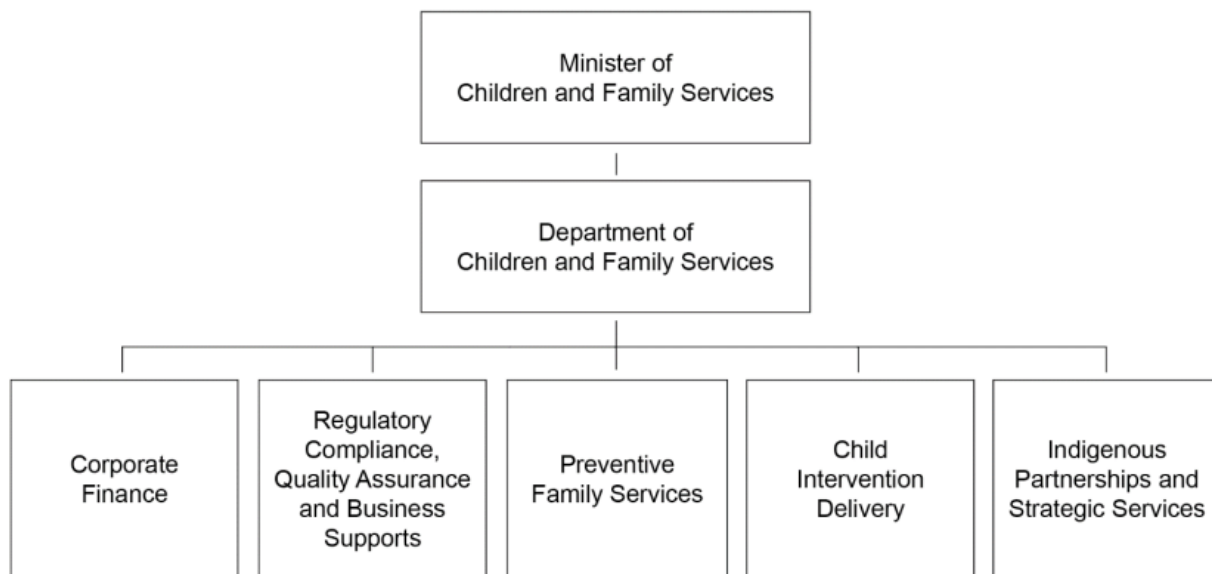
Ministry Overview

Organizational Structure

In 2023-24, the ministry underwent organizational changes to support the delivery of government priorities and commitments.

- On June 9, 2023, the Prevention of Family Violence portfolio was transferred to the Ministry of Children and Family Services from the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services as a result of government restructuring.
- On February 16, 2024, responsibility for the child care system transitioned to the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Trade.
- The Preventive Family Services division, formerly Child Care and Youth Services division, was restructured to support the diverse array of youth services, including prevention and early intervention, and supports to prevent family and domestic violence throughout the province.

The changes enabled the ministry to direct its resources to protecting and promoting the well-being of children, youth and families throughout the province, and to focus specifically on its mandate.



Operational Overview

The Ministry of Children and Family Services is committed to helping to build strong, resilient and thriving families and communities by providing them with the supports they need through community-based prevention and early intervention supports and child intervention services. The ministry mandate focuses on the safety and well-being of children, youth and families. This includes services for children and youth at home and in care, and through adoption and post-intervention supports; support for youth as they transition to adulthood; and preventive and intervention supports to address family violence.

The information provided in this annual report aligns with the strategic direction of the Government of Alberta. This annual report highlights results achieved from the delivery of key strategies and performance metrics described in the Children and Family Services 2023-26 Business Plan and the key factors that influenced those results. The results described herein considered the potential impact of risks facing the department and the ongoing management through risk mitigation activities.

The Ministry of Children and Family Services consists of the areas described below.

Office of the Deputy Minister

The Deputy Minister oversees the ministry under the direction of the Minister and is the liaison between the elected official and ministry employees. The Deputy Minister provides strategic advice and oversees the ministry's day-to-day operations, budget, and program development.

Child Intervention Delivery

The Child Intervention Delivery division delivers services to children and youth who are or may be at risk of abuse, neglect, or otherwise in need of intervention as mandated under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, the *Drug-Endangered Children Act* and the *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act*. Child intervention services are provided when a parent or guardian cannot adequately protect their child from harm or danger as defined by the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*.

When it is necessary to become involved with a family, all efforts are made to deliver services while the child remains in the family home. When children are unable to safely remain in their family home, Child Intervention Delivery works collaboratively with parents and extended family to identify a safe and stable temporary caregiver, maintain familial, cultural and community connections, and pursue reunification of children with their parents. When it is not possible to safely return a child to their guardian, Child Intervention Delivery works to find legally permanent homes for children through private guardianship or adoption. To enable the successful transition into adulthood, the division provides services to youth formerly in care that focus on education, employment and career, mentoring, and stability.

Preventive Family Services

The Preventive Family Services division develops and coordinates programs, administers funding, and works closely with community partners who deliver prevention and early intervention programs and services. The division supports children, youth, and families through policy and program development to enhance resilience, reduce risk factors, and strengthen protective factors. This includes Family Resource Networks, mentoring, youth emergency shelters, and youth suicide prevention.

The division provides support and coordination of services to prevent and address family and sexual violence, including targeted family violence prevention programs and innovation in research and prevention. The division supports women's emergency shelters, second stage women's shelters and sexual assault centres. The division provides secretariat support to the Family Violence Death Review Committee and co-chairs the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence.

Indigenous Partnerships and Strategic Services

The Indigenous Partnerships and Strategic Services division supports the development of partnerships with Indigenous communities and is responsible for promoting Indigenous cultural awareness and understanding throughout the ministry. The division supports the ministry and its partners in taking a holistic approach to serving Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities, and in building and strengthening relationships. The division leads discussions under *An Act respecting First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, youth, and families*, as well as establishing Delegated First Nation Agency service delivery agreements with First Nations.

The ministry's strategic policy development and coordination, policy advice and guidance for decision-making, legislative services, intergovernmental relations, and stakeholder and community engagement are also led by the division.

Regulatory Compliance, Quality Assurance and Business Supports

The Regulatory Compliance, Quality Assurance and Business Supports division is responsible for the legislation and standards within the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, including internal quality assurance services provided by the Statutory Director.

The division provides strategic support services to the ministry including data and performance analytics, technology supports for case management, workforce learning and development, strategic planning and reporting, emergency management, accommodations, capital planning, and project and change management. The division tracks and coordinates the ministry's response to recommendations from review bodies such as the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and tracks ministry responses and actions stemming from the recommendations.

Corporate Finance

The Corporate Finance division leads the ministry annual financial cycle, from developing its budget to financial reporting and preparing financial statements. The division provides financial and forecasting advice and is responsible for procurement and financial operations, financial processes and policies, compliance and accountability, and internal audit.

Communications

Through a service agreement with Communications and Public Engagement, the Communications branch offers strategic communications advice, strategic writing, and communications planning services. Responsibilities also include delivering clear and timely information to the public about the ministry's key initiatives, programs, and services.

Human Resources

Human Resource services are delivered by the Public Service Commission and each department is supported by a dedicated portfolio director and business partners/consultants who provide strategic advice, guidance and consultation relating to a variety of subjects. Topics include workforce development and engagement, employee relations, occupational health and safety, and attraction and retention strategies. This dedicated team connects people leaders to common human resource services such as recruitment, classification, policy development and analytics through service centres within the broader human resource system.

Legal Services

Justice provides a full range of non-litigation services and related legal advice to the ministry from its People and Communities (PAC) Legal Team. Under a shared service model, PAC supports Children and Family Services by providing advice on contracts, grants, procurement, privacy and information sharing, legislative development, and general legal advice. For litigation matters, including fatality inquiries, Justice provides support via their Civil Litigation team, two Family and Surrogate Court Litigation teams located in Edmonton and Calgary, as well as external counsel retained by Justice.

Key Highlights

The Ministry of Children and Family Services focused on accomplishing one outcome identified in the 2023-26 Ministry Business Plan:

- Outcome One: Access to early learning and child care options enable parents and families to participate in training, education, or the workforce – reported by the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Trade.
- Outcome Two: The safety, resiliency, and cultural connections of children, youth, and families are supported and children and youth are protected.

Key highlights and results achieved by the Ministry of Children and Family Services in 2023-24 include:

- Enhanced the foster care system through the introduction of the Refer-a-Foster Caregiver Program, Foster Caregivers Caring for Young Adults program, and easily accessible mental health supports for licensed foster caregivers, all designed to promote placement stability and support and retain qualified foster caregivers.
- Launched a province-wide campaign to recruit additional foster families to ensure children in government care are placed with caregivers who will meet their physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual needs.
- Launched the Youth Employment Connection Program and the Youth Apprenticeship Connection Program designed to help youth build the skills and connections needed to succeed in today's job market.
- Established the Youth Coordinating Committee to examine existing and emerging gaps for Children and Family Services involved young people with diverse backgrounds and lived experiences and make recommendations about policies and programs that matter to young people.
- Approved 989 young adults to receive a bursary to pursue post-secondary studies through the Advancing Futures program with 89.5 per cent of the young adults successfully completing their educational studies.
- Hosted a Minister Roundtable with women's emergency shelters to gather input on the long-term vision for the future of women's emergency shelter services in Alberta. With many prominent themes emerging from the conversation, the ministry will collaborate with its partners to provide critical services and determine how investments will be made in the coming year.

The Ministry of Children and Family Services remains committed to regulatory approaches and program delivery that reduces unnecessary government oversight and emphasizes outcomes to improve access to government services, attract investment, support innovation and competitiveness, and grow Alberta businesses.

Discussion and Analysis of Results

Actions that support the priorities of the Government of Alberta Strategic Plan

Key Priority Two:

Standing up for Albertans.

Objective Three: Supporting Albertans most in need.

Children and Family Services Action: Improving supports for the successful transition of youth from government care into adulthood focusing on mentoring, educational attainment, employment readiness, and connection to support services.

Detailed reporting found on pages 28-31.

Outcome One: Access to early learning and child care options enable parents and families to participate in training, education, or the workforce.

The child care system moved to the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Trade on February 16, 2024; therefore, results related to this outcome can be found in the 2023-24 Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Trade Annual Report.

Performance Measure 1.a:

Percentage change in the number of licensed child care spaces.

Reporting responsibility for this performance measure has transferred to the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Trade.

Performance Indicator 1.b:

Enrollment in Facility-based Child Care programs, Family Day Home, Innovative and Group Family Child Care.

Reporting responsibility for this performance indicator has transferred to the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Trade.

Outcome Two: The safety, resiliency, and cultural connections of children, youth, and families are supported and children and youth are protected.

Partnerships, services, and programs provide children, youth, young adults and families with the support needed to ensure their autonomy, maintain their safety and well-being, and prepare youth for the transition to adulthood.

The *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* (CYFEA) provides the authority to deliver services to children and families when safety cannot be maintained without involvement by Children and Family Services. Services can be provided with the child or youth remaining at home or while in care. Children and youth can be brought into care when all efforts to create safety at home are not sufficient to mitigate concerns. Adoption of children, including government, private, and international adoption is covered under the CYFEA. The *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act* protects and provides specialized services to sexually exploited children. The *Drug-Endangered Children Act* authorizes the apprehension of children living in drug houses or exposed to illegal drug activity.

In 2023, the child population in Alberta surpassed one million, reaching an estimated 1,015,780 children aged 0-17. This statistic marks a 2.6 per cent growth compared to the previous year, and a significant increase from the prior five years. During the same year, child intervention services were delivered to 1.2 per cent of children in Alberta, down from 1.3 per cent in the previous year. This is due to the Alberta child population increasing and the number of children receiving services decreasing.

Initial Assessment

Child intervention practitioners respond to each call or referral regarding a child or youth to determine if an initial assessment is needed in two parts: intake and safety assessments. In 2023-24, the ministry completed 23,325 initial assessments.

Intake

During intake, child intervention practitioners determine safety, and whether the concern raised fits the legal definition of abuse or neglect described in CYFEA. If there are reasonable and probable grounds, an intake report is used to gather information to understand the child, the family, and the supports needed. Based on the information gathered, intake reports may open to safety assessment. In 2023-24, on average, there were 1,977 intake reports started each month, a 15 per cent increase compared to last year.

An intake report is closed if the information gathered does not present safety concerns, or if safety concerns can be resolved through community programs that provide support with parenting, lifestyle choices, family violence or other topics. An intake report is opened to a safety assessment if the information gathered presents safety concerns.

In 2023-24, consolidated child intervention intake teams continued to ensure coverage across the province and processes were streamlined to improve intake oversight and monitoring. Children and Family Services also continued the implementation of the Signs of Safety Practice intake model, originally introduced in 2021, to provide a balanced approach to risk assessment that focuses on concerns and strengths of the family to maximize collaboration between the family and the child intervention practitioner. Child intervention practitioners are better able to quickly assess cases to determine if supports are needed, begin working with families to help to resolve safety concerns, and provide child intervention services to the children that need it most.

Safety Phase Assessment (formerly Investigation)

A safety assessment involves a child intervention practitioner spending time with the family over a period of weeks to determine whether child intervention services are needed to support the safety and well-being of the

child. A safety assessment is closed if:

- the allegations are unsubstantiated, and parents can maintain safety and well-being of the child;
- if concerns can be resolved through referrals to community programs and no child intervention involvement is required;
- if concerns can be resolved through the development of a plan (voluntary agreements or supervision orders) that outlines what families can do to keep the child safe at home; or
- through court orders where a child comes into the care of the Director and is placed in kinship, foster, or group care.

In 2023-24, of the total initial assessments completed, 3,381 children and youth had a child intervention file opened because their safety, security, or development was assessed to be at risk.

Child Intervention Caseload

In 2023-24, on average each month, 9,162 children and youth received child intervention services, a four per cent decrease from last year. This decrease is represented by fewer children and youth requiring child intervention involvement, and a greater number of children and youth ending involvement.

Overall caseload decreases are noted as fewer children and youth were receiving not-in-care services (13 per cent decrease) along with fewer children and youth in care (three per cent decrease in temporary care and one per cent decrease in permanent care). As a proportion of the total caseload, not-in-care is decreasing year-over-year while permanent care caseloads have been increasing.

Although there was an increase in intake reports in 2023-24, the results of those increases did not affect caseloads in the same year. The drivers of the overall caseload decline may include the 2018 legislative changes that emphasized least intrusive measures and focused on child safety, fewer referrals received during and since the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2021-22 integration of the Signs of Safety practice model into the intake process.

Services to Children and Youth at Home

When it is necessary to provide services to a child or youth to support their safety, all efforts are made to provide services that will allow the child or youth to remain at home in parental care. Voluntary Family Enhancement Agreements allow children and youth to remain in parental care in situations where the parents or guardians agree to services, and intervention concerns and safety issues can be addressed through safety planning with the parent or guardian to support the safety and well-being of the child or youth. In 2023-24, on average each month, 1,440 children and youth were receiving services while remaining in their family home under a not-in-care legal authority, of whom 79 per cent were in a voluntary family enhancement agreement.

When concerns about a child cannot be mitigated under an Enhancement Agreement with a guardian, but do not warrant bringing a child into care, the court can grant a Supervision Order about the child and others in the home to ensure the child's safety and well-being. A Supervision Order contains terms and conditions that are set out by a judge that direct the case plan and services and supports are provided in the home for a set period.

Services to Children and Youth in Care

When children and youth are unable to remain with their parent or guardian due to safety concerns, as defined under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, they receive services in care. In this case, children and youth are provided safe and nurturing temporary living arrangements in kinship care or foster care. In 2023-24, on average each month, 7,722 children and youth were in care, a two per cent decrease

from 2022-23. Of these, 2,167 received services under a temporary care legal authority and 5,555 received services under a permanent care legal authority.

The ministry continued to prioritize family-based care, monitor placement moves and focus on caregiver enhancement initiatives to optimize placement stability, and minimize placement disruptions. In 2023-24, approximately two-thirds of children in care did not experience a change to their placement during the year.

Of all children and youth in care, 85 per cent were in a family-based placement, including 39 per cent in kinship care, 39 per cent in foster care and seven per cent in other family-based placements. For the remaining children in care, 12 per cent were in a facility-based placement such as community group care, provincial campus-based care, or personalized community care, and three per cent were living independently or in a community resource (hospital, shelter, *Youth Criminal Justice Act* facility). Compared to last year, this is a one per cent decrease in family-based placements.

In recent years, the ministry has seen an increase in the number of children with mental health issues, addictions, and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The need for more intensive supports, which can exceed the level of care provided by foster and kinship caregivers, necessitates work with cross-ministry partners to offer additional services and supports for children and youth, and more intensive placement options within Children and Family Services.

Family-based Placement

Kinship Care

When children cannot live with their parents, kinship is pursued as the first placement option. A kinship care provider is an extended family member of a child, or a person who has a significant relationship with the child or is a member of the child's cultural community. As of March 31, 2024, there were 2,317 kinship caregivers providing care in their homes. On average each month, there were 3,035 children and youth placed with kinship caregivers compared to 3,125 in 2022-23. The decrease is reflective of fewer children and youth in care, with a three per cent decrease in temporary care and one per cent decrease in permanent care. This, combined with an increase in facility-based placements, accounts for the reduction.

In 2023-24, the ministry continued to support and transition kinship caregivers to the Assessment and Support for Kinship Caregiving model. This model provides a more culturally responsive, inclusive, and supportive practice for the unique placement of children with kinship caregivers. It is both an assessment tool and an ongoing supportive process that provides children, youth, and caregivers with opportunities to express their views and opinions. The model is suitable for all cultures and incorporates an Indigenous worldview into the tools and practice. The model includes staff training co-facilitated by an Indigenous Elder.

As of March 31, 2024, there were:

- 2,317 kinship caregiver providers; and
- 1,505 foster caregivers.

Foster Care

The child intervention system plays a crucial role in providing support and care for children who have experienced difficult life situations. Foster care is the temporary living arrangement made for a child when the ministry is unable to locate and support suitable kinship care. Foster caregivers are required to provide a safe and caring environment and facilitate access to supports and resources that help to meet the needs of children and youth in their home.

As of March 31, 2024, there were 1,505 foster caregivers providing care in their homes. On average each month, there were 3,022 children and youth placed with foster caregivers compared to 3,113 in the previous year.

In December 2023, three foster care initiatives were introduced to enhance the foster care system, promote placement stability, and support the retention and recruitment of caregivers.

- The Refer-a-Foster Caregiver Program provides \$500 to current foster caregivers for each new caregiver who is referred, and who successfully becomes a licensed foster home provider. Referrals are currently being processed and are expected to increase in the coming year.
- The Foster Caregivers Caring for Young Adults (FCCYA) initiative expended approximately \$35,500 between December 2023 and March 31, 2024, for those foster caregivers who continue to provide support to young adults remaining in their home. Foster caregivers caring for young adults between the ages of 18 and 22 and who are enrolled in the Transition to Adulthood Program are eligible to apply for this financial compensation.
- The Easily Accessible Mental Health Supports program enables licensed foster caregivers with access to up to five one-hour counselling sessions (\$220 per session) per year. As the program was rolled out in December 2023, only \$5,117 was accessed by foster caregivers.

As of fall 2023, policy changes require a transition debrief with each foster caregiver after the child or youth moves from their foster placement. The debrief is an opportunity to reflect on the transition process and improve supports for foster caregivers during and following a child or youth transitioning from their care.

The Foster Care Awareness Campaign:

- Used a variety of advertising mediums, including print ads, social media, ethno-cultural platforms, and digital search engines; and
- Saw a surge in traffic averaging 3,500 daily page views compared to the previous 50 views per day.

Helping children in the child intervention system requires an array of skills and competencies that make foster caregiving recruitment and retention a challenge. From February to March 2023, Children and Family Services launched a province-wide foster care awareness campaign to recruit new, quality caregivers so children in government care are placed with caregivers who will meet their physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual needs. While initial campaign results appear to be favourable, ongoing promotion is required to increase awareness of the need for foster caregivers across the province. In January 2024, a grant was provided to the Alberta Foster & Kinship Association to update promotional materials for a recruitment and informational campaign for further

enhancement of quality foster and kinship care in the province of Alberta.

In 2024-25, the ministry will conduct a three-phased tendering approach to procure foster care services throughout Alberta.

Therapeutic Foster Caregiving

The ministry recognizes the pressing need for Therapeutic Foster Caregiving (TFC) services, a family-based system of care that supports children and youth at risk of placement disruptions due to their complex care needs. The ministry responded to this need by expanding the out-of-home placement continuum to include TFC services, an evidence-informed approach combining therapeutic interventions, trauma-informed care, and specially trained caregivers.

In 2023-24, Children and Family Services expended \$9.3 million for 164 TFC placements, an increase from \$7.3 million in 2022-23. This significant financial commitment addresses the commitment to provide a family-based model of care, reduce placement disruptions, and embed culturally focused elements to preserve children's cultural identity.

In 2023-24, 30 per cent of the targeted TFC placements were available. Agencies continued to implement their TFC programs despite the recruitment of caregivers proving to be slower and more challenging than

anticipated. Caregivers new to fostering presented other challenges given the specialized nature of Therapeutic Foster Caregiving. Identifying those with the necessary experience, qualifications, and willingness to provide therapeutic support requires targeted recruitment strategies and extensive screening processes. Agencies continue to address recruitment challenges and are committed to the implementation of their TFC programs.

Facility-based Placement

Community Group Care

Community group care is available to children and youth when a family-based setting such as kinship care or foster care is unable to meet their care needs. As of March 31, 2024, there were 249 Community Group Care (CGC) providers. Focusing on positive developmental outcomes, consistency, connection, and skill development in a safe environment, CGC is community-based, with a staffed home-like setting.

In 2023-24, on average each month, 691 children and youth were placed in CGC, compared to 642 in 2022-23. This was the result of more children and youth with needs that could not be met in family-based settings like kinship care or foster care and require more specialized services. This increase is due in part to case complexity in the permanent care caseload and increases in mental health issues and addictions.

Considerable progress was made on several procurement activities and investments, which reflects the ministry's commitment to make essential services more accessible for children and youth in Alberta. For instance, the ministry commenced a two-phased procurement process in 2023-24 aimed at enhancing service delivery and outcomes for vulnerable children, youth and families involved with child intervention. These procurement activities focus on promoting innovative practices that align with commitments to embed essential principles such as culturally focused care and optimal placement matching.

As cases become more complex, the need for supports and services that address the underlying, adverse experiences of youth, as well as their related behaviours, emphasizes the critical role of healing and resiliency. In 2023-24, Children and Family Services invested \$82.8 million into CGC services specifically tailored to support children and youth who experienced adversity. Through this province-wide and multi-phased procurement approach, the ministry is increasing the average daily rate for CGC by 22 per cent, resulting in a per diem rate of \$550 for all CGC placements across Alberta.

Provincial Campus-based Care

The ministry continues to provide high-quality, evidence-based care to vulnerable youth in the province and provide the necessary supports to achieve positive outcomes so they can return to their families and communities. Provincial Campus-based Care (PCBC) provides housing, on-site clinical assessment services and education, recreation therapy, academic support, Indigenous supports, discharge, transition, and connection planning. PCBC supports youth aged 12–17 with complex emotional and behavioural needs, receiving child intervention services, with 24/7 intensive and therapeutic care.

In 2023-24, on average each month, 130 children and youth were placed in provincial campus-based care, compared to 149 in 2022-23.

Personalized Community Care

Personalized Community Care (PCC) are community-based care settings individualized to address the child or youth's mental health, behavioural, emotional, developmental, and complex care needs. These care settings support a low number of children or youth within a highly structured, supervised community care environment. As of March 31, 2024, there were 45 personalized community care providers. In 2023-24, on average each month, 71 children and youth were placed in PCC, compared to 59 in 2022-23.

Children and Family Services also partners with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction, Alberta Health Services (AHS), and two agency partners on an eight bed PCC program, with four placements operating in

Edmonton and four in Calgary. These partnerships facilitate seamless coordination and enhance the overall effectiveness of care delivery for children and youth.

In 2023-24, the ministry collaborated with Mental Health and Addiction through the eight-bed Personalized Community Care program to facilitate a smooth transition of eligible youth in care, or formerly in care, into the Transition to Adulthood Program by ensuring continued support and guidance as they navigate adulthood. Mental Health and Addiction provided one-time funding of \$517,000 towards this initiative.

Child Intervention Outcomes

In 2023-24, Children and Family Services saw 3,557 children and youth end child intervention involvement. Based on preliminary data:

- 42 per cent of these children and youth achieved family preservation;
- 22 per cent achieved family reunification;
- 14 per cent ended involvement on their 18th birthday;
- 11 per cent achieved adoption or private guardianship; and
- 11 per cent of children and youth ended involvement for reasons such as rescinding a Permanent Guardianship Order or transfer to an Indigenous governing body.

When a child is in permanent government care, Children and Family Services focuses on achieving timely legal permanency, whether it entails a return to guardian, adoption, or private guardianship. In 2023-24, policy was introduced that provides a standardized framework for decision-making and improved oversight and accountability. The policy identifies regular intervals for reviewing permanency plans for children and youth in permanent care. Plans are modified, as needed, and tangible plans are developed to move children to timely legal permanency where appropriate. These reviews include multiple levels of leadership and provide the necessary framework for timely decision making. The policy also includes clear direction and processes regarding the involvement of First Nations and other Indigenous communities in legal permanency planning.

The Child Intervention Data Tool provides an overview of children, youth and young adults who received child intervention services, under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*. The tool can be found at <https://www.alberta.ca/child-intervention-statistics>.

Adoption

The ministry continued to work towards its mandate by enhancing adoption supports and removing barriers with the adoption process, allowing the process to be more efficient and affordable for Albertans.

There are three types of adoption in Alberta: adoption of a child in the permanent care of the ministry, private adoption, and international adoption. Private adoption includes stepparent, relative, private direct or licensed agency adoptions through one of Alberta's three licensed agencies. International adoption involves the adoption of children residing outside Canada.

Government continues to help Albertans afford the costs associated with adoption. Introduced in December 2023, Children and Family Services provided \$42,000 in subsidies to help cover the costs of private adoption through licensed adoption agencies in Alberta. A one-time \$6,000 subsidy is available to families with a household income less than \$180,000 a year, reducing adoption costs by as much as 40 to 50 per cent. In addition, an increase of almost \$4,000 was administered through the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance for the adoption expenses tax credit claimable by families adopting locally or internationally. The tax credit was retroactive to January 1, 2023, matching the federal tax credit.

A Supplementary Health Benefit Program is under development that is expected to help with the cost of dental, vision and other health benefits for current and future children who achieved legal permanency

through a government or licensed adoption agency. The benefit program will be available to families without benefits coverage or whose plan does not cover supplementary health benefits for their adopted children; and is expected to help approximately 5,000 children across the province. A Request for Proposals was released in March 2024 to seek potential vendors for the program, expected to be introduced prior to 2024-25 fiscal year end.

Albertans interested in adopting children in government care can attend monthly Adoption and Private Guardianship information sessions virtually or in-person across the province. Anyone interested in adopting a child can access profiles of children through the government website <https://www.alberta.ca/child-profiles-for-adoption.aspx>.

Additionally, the Wednesday's Child program, a long-standing partnership with CTV spanning over 40 years, features children in government care who are ready to be adopted, but for whom general recruitment efforts have not yet been successful. The videos air on CTV Edmonton, CTV Calgary, and CTV Two Alberta.

Supports for Permanency

The Supports for Permanency program is available to families who have adopted or obtained private guardianship of children and youth in permanent government care. The program includes financial support such as basic maintenance, parental respite, counselling, and payments for services to address emotional or behavioural needs. As of March 31, 2024, there were approximately 4,626 families accessing the program through their region or Delegated First Nation Agency.

Collaboration continues between Children and Family Services and Seniors, Community and Social Services and its Family Supports for Children with Disabilities program to facilitate better coordination between both ministries.

Private Guardianship

Children and youth in permanent government care may also achieve legal permanency through private guardianship, which is the preferred option among many Indigenous communities. In the last year, 90 Indigenous children achieved legal permanency through private guardianship compared to 76 non-Indigenous children.

Serious Injuries, Deaths, and Incidents

Children and Family Services is committed to continuously improving its system to support the safety of children receiving child intervention services. When a child receiving those services dies or is seriously injured, the ministry reports it publicly and conducts a rigorous, transparent examination of what happened. Public reporting of deaths, serious injuries and incidents of children and youth in care or receiving services is mandated under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* (CYFEA). All such deaths go through the Internal Child Death and Serious Injury Review (ICDSIR) Process, which looks at what was happening at the time of the incident to understand the factors that contributed to the death, the service provided and decisions made during the involvement with the child and family. Analysis conducted through data and quality assurance activities support continuous improvement in child intervention policy and practice.

Under CYFEA, a serious injury is defined as a life-threatening injury to a child or an injury that may cause significant impairment. In 2023-24, there were 16 reports of serious injuries involving young people receiving child intervention services, nine more reports than in 2022-23. One serious injury occurred during initial assessment, 10 injuries involved children in care, and five were for a young adult over 18 receiving supports through a Transition to Adulthood Program Agreement.

In 2023-24, 34 children and youth receiving child intervention services died in comparison to 50 the previous year. Of these children and youth, seven deaths occurred during initial assessment, one with an open not-in-care legal authority, nine in care, 16 over the age of 18 receiving supports through a post-18 intervention

supports program, and one child receiving courtesy supervision services. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner determined that eight deaths were accidental, one was undetermined with medical causes, and one was medical. The manner of death for 20 children and youth is pending determination by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. The four remaining deaths did not require a review as the deaths occurred in hospital while the young person was under the care of medical professionals and an attending physician determined the manner of death as natural.

All 34 deaths and 16 serious injuries were reported to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, as legislated under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* and the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*. Over the past three years, the ministry has seen an increase in deaths related to substance use.

Since 2019, Children and Family Services has provided reporting requirement training to employees to support requirements under CYFEA. In 2023-24, there were 227 substantiated incidents, a 27 per cent increase from last year. Training opportunities were attended by Regional Directors, regional and Delegated First Nation Agency leadership teams and a Policy to Practice session was held. Staff have been made available for ongoing consultations about Reports of Incidents and the policy and practice requirements. In addition, a Community of Practice for the province was commenced to identify leading practices and trends surrounding incidents.

Regarding the Reports of Incidents, there were 171 incidents involving significant events such as being the victim of, involved in, or witnessing a serious event. There were 56 incidents, such as emotional, physical, sexual abuse, or neglect allegations involving a foster or kinship home or group/provincial campus-based care provider. Substantiated incidents may include, but are not limited to:

- Allegations that a child or youth in care has been:
 - subjected to neglect, emotional injury, physical or sexual abuse by the caregiver; or
 - abused by someone other than the caregiver, including, but not limited to, another young person or adult who is not the child's caregiver.
- Any child or youth receiving intervention services who witnesses, is the victim, or is involved in a serious event such as, but not limited to, a criminal matter.

Work continues with initiatives such as the Electronics Risk Identification and Mitigation Initiative (E-RIMI), an integrative electronic data system that helps identify risk across the child intervention continuum from intake, investigation, and on-going involvement. E-RIMI is an operational quality assurance process that:

- Safeguards and enhances the well-being of children and youth;
- Uses integrated data to identify risk in child intervention services; and
- Supports ministry commitments to quality assurance and continuous improvement.

A review of the overall impact of E-RIMI on casework practice and compliance with policy by front-end teams, following an E-RIMI notification, is currently in progress.

Youth Virtual Opioid Dependency Program

As part of Alberta's recovery-oriented system of care, Children and Family Services established a partnership with Alberta Health Services (AHS) and the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction to expand the Virtual Opioid Dependency Program (VODP) to youth in Alberta who are involved with child intervention services. Youth VODP is a youth-directed health service where youth struggling with opioid dependency can choose to access the Youth VODP with their caseworkers, provincial campus-based care or community agency staff. The program offers same-day treatment with no waitlist for treatment medications such as methadone or suboxone.

Children and Family Services and Mental Health and Addiction provided \$1.5 million each in 2023-24 to cover initial and ongoing costs of the program, and Children and Family Services will provide another \$1.5 million in 2024-25 for ongoing operating costs. In March 2024, the grant agreement was extended to July 2026 under the existing funding arrangement.

The Youth Virtual Opioid Dependency Program (VODP) was established to serve 100-120 youth each year, including those not receiving child intervention services. The initial program pilot started in March 2023 and provided 131 youth ages 14 to 17 in community group care and provincial campus-based care the option to access the program. In December 2023, the program expanded to include the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs facilities, operated through Mental Health and Addiction.

As of March 31, 2024, there were 88 total admissions to the Youth VODP with 49 youth (56 per cent) having some level of Children and Family Services involvement and more than half of those were under permanent guardianship. While the intent of the program is to serve the entire province, a high proportion of Youth VODP participants reside in either the Calgary zone (26 youth) or the Edmonton zone (23 youth). In 2024-25, the program plans to expand in phases to serve other opioid-dependent youth.

The ministry made enhancements to training manuals and policies and embraced technology.

- A Substance-Use Practice Support was added to the Child Intervention Enhancement Policy Manual in the fall 2023 to guide child intervention practitioners working with children and youth when substance use is a factor.
- Updates to the mandatory Opioid and Substance Use eLearning better assist child intervention practitioners who work with children and youth with mental health and addiction challenges.
- Improvements introduced into the Child Intervention Database allows early identification of youth aged 16-17 years and who identify as needing extra attention due to levels of risk.

Child Advocacy Centres and Child and Youth Advocacy Centres

Children and Family Services is committed to working with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction and community partners to provide supports and services to children and youth impacted by sexual abuse.

Child Advocacy Centres (CAC) and Child and Youth Advocacy Centres (CYAC) align to national standards and support multidisciplinary teams of professionals from various government ministries (Health, Justice, Public Safety and Emergency Services and Children and Family Services), law enforcement agencies and community partners in a child-friendly environment to provide a coordinated, collaborative, and timely response to reports of sexual abuse, severe physical abuse and neglect against children and youth up to 18 years of age. Examples of CACs and CYACs include public, private not-for-profit and caring citizens working in partnership to provide responsive trauma informed services to reduce the re-victimization of children and youth.

The ministry in partnership with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction funds eight centres in Alberta that offer programs and services for children and youth through a highly integrated multi-disciplinary team approach. In 2023-24, grant funding totaling \$3.4 million was provided to the eight centres with \$2.3 million of that amount coming from Children and Family Services and \$1.1 million provided by Mental Health and Addiction.

- Little Bear Child Advocacy Centres (CAC) in Lloydminster;
- Sanare CAC in Medicine Hat;
- Central Alberta CAC in Red Deer;
- Luna Child and Youth Advocacy Centres (CYAC) in Calgary;
- Zebra CYAC in Edmonton;

- Waypoints CYAC in Fort McMurray;
- Caribou CYAC in Grande Prairie; and
- Chinook CYAC in Lethbridge.

Over-Representation of Indigenous Children and Youth

The ministry continues to take a multi-faceted approach to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the child intervention system through policies and practices that prioritize children's connection to their culture, families, and communities. Strengthening relationships with Indigenous peoples of Alberta and continued work towards reconciliation remains a priority.

In 2023-24, on average each month, 6,530 Indigenous children received child intervention services, which accounted for 71 per cent of the provincial caseload. Compared to last year, the number of Indigenous children and youth receiving services decreased by one per cent.

Families can receive child intervention services regionally from the ministry or through one of the 20 Delegated First Nation Agencies, representing 37 of 48 Alberta First Nations. Of the 6,530 Indigenous children receiving child intervention services, seven per cent identified as Métis and primarily receive services regionally, and the remaining 93 per cent identified as First Nations. Of the 6,073 First Nations children receiving child intervention services, 34 per cent received services from a Delegated First Nation Agency.

Child intervention practitioners are guided by the Child Intervention Practice Framework (CIPF) which sets out six principles: Indigenous Experience, Preserve Family, Strengths-based, Connection, Collaboration and Continuous Improvement. The Connection principle focuses on supporting children and youth to maintain important relationships, be connected to their culture, practice their religious or spiritual beliefs and, for those with involvement, have a plan for their care where they are included in the decision-making process.

Framework principles are woven throughout the Child Intervention Enhancement Policy Manual contain robust policy and practice procedures related to case planning and ensuring cultural connections, and several principles dedicated to ensuring Indigenous children in care have connections to their family, community, and culture. Policy gives direction that all children and youth in care must have a culturally appropriate service plan.

Identification of First Nations Children and Youth

Through intentional focus and in partnership with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), Children and Family Services has increased the number of identified Indigenous children and youth in care. Identification supports Indigenous children, youth, and their families in pursuing status under the *Indian Act*, which leads to better outcomes for connection to family, culture, and community. Since June 2020, Indigenous Services Canada resolved 1,756 requests, and 987 children and youth are now registered under the *Indian Act*.

In 2023-24, 5,404 children and youth in care identified as First Nations, 3,612 (67 per cent) identified as Registered under the *Indian Act*, 1,425 (26 per cent) children and youth have the potential to be registered status and 367 (seven per cent) children and youth are non-registered.

Strengthening Relationships and Developing Collaborative Partnerships with Indigenous Communities

The ministry is committed to reconciliation and strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities, leaders, and organizations. Maintaining positive and productive relationships with Indigenous communities and organizations supports ministry work resulting in an increased understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, and worldviews. In 2023-24, the ministry:

- Met regularly with the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) to work on mutual priorities. With support from Children and Family Services, the MNA provided culture kits and camps to Métis children and families,

held Community Gatherings for Métis youth to improve mental health and suicide prevention, and implemented the Métis Family Resource Program.

- Worked with the Stoney Nakoda-Tsuut'ina Tribal Council through a Child and Family Services sub-table under the Protocol Agreement between the Government of Alberta and the Stoney Nakoda-Tsuut'ina Tribal Council. A 2023-24 Action Plan was co-developed and Children and Family Services provided a \$50,000 grant to support the Stoney Nakoda-Tsuut'ina Elders Advisory Committee to explore and document traditional ways and teachings for living, supporting families, raising, and protecting children.

Public Recommendations and Reporting

Children and Family Services aims to continuously learn and improve services. Electronic Service Delivery Accountability Standards (ESDAS) are a suite of electronic measures used to provide operational quality assurance information to leadership, front-line workers, and corporate staff. These standards measure the minimum level of required performance, focusing on safety and achieving positive outcomes for children. It is important that at the early stages and throughout involvement for an Indigenous child, the uniqueness of Indigenous culture, language, heritage, spirituality, and traditions are respected, and attention is given to preserving the child's cultural identity. Children need to be in direct contact with individuals that tie them to their heritage and facilitate their ongoing learning of cultural practices. Additionally, these contacts will be focused on meeting the cultural goals outlined in the child's service plan.

The ministry is committed to a child centered approach to intervention services and monitors that the care plan for each Indigenous child requiring intervention services is meeting the standards of care the ministry sets for all children in Alberta. Key Electronic Service Delivery Accountability Standards (ESDAS) results for 2023-24 are identified in the table below. Recorded Legal Authority, Service Plan and Face to Face Contact are critical measures that demonstrate that there is a legal authority that permits involvement, a service plan that outlines the plan for each child and that children are seen on a regular basis. All Indigenous children should have a culturally appropriate Service Plan that encompasses the four Areas of Connection: Relational, Physical, Legal and Cultural. In 2023-24, 95 per cent of Service Plans for Indigenous children were deemed to be culturally appropriate.

The ministry is committed to ensuring all children are seen regularly. This data is shared regularly with service delivery leadership to assist with follow-up and adherence to standards.

Electronic Service Delivery Accountability Standards – Average Results for 2023-24

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Province
Recorded Legal Authority	97%	94%	96%
Recorded Service Plan	98%	95%	97%
Culturally Appropriate Service Plan	95%	N/A ¹	95%
Recorded Face to Face Contact	88%	93%	90%

¹Culturally Appropriate Service Plans only apply to Indigenous children currently.

Public Reporting on Recommendation Status

Children and Family Services is accountable for providing quality services. The ministry is required by legislation to provide public reporting on the ministry's progress on recommendations from the Office of the

Child and Youth Advocate, fatality inquiries and other government sources, including the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention (MPCI).

In March 2018, the MPCI delivered 26 recommendations to strengthen the child intervention system. As of October 26, 2023, the ministry assessed its remaining two of 26 recommendations as complete. Strengthening the relationships with Indigenous peoples of Alberta and the continued work towards reconciliation remains a top priority. The government continues to work with First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners, as well as the federal government to implement and advocate for the needs of Indigenous children and families.

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

Under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, the ministry is required to respond to recommendations made by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA) within 75 days of a report being released. The ministry has established an effective process that allows for meaningful responses to the Advocate's recommendations. While not legislated, formal annual progress updates are provided on Office of the Child and Youth Advocate recommendations. The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate assesses these updates and publicly posts its review of progress on all recommendations issued to Government of Alberta ministries.

In March 2023, the ministry received two new recommendations issued by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate through a Mandatory Review Report related to cultural connections for Indigenous children in the care of the province. The ministry accepted the intent of both recommendations and considers them in progress. In 2023-24, one Office of the Child and Youth Advocate recommendation was completed regarding the need to address service gaps for young people with complex needs.

Fatality Inquiries

Under the *Fatality Inquiries Act*, the Minister of Justice may order a fatality inquiry. A report is released and may contain recommendations for Children and Family Services. Under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, the ministry is legislated to respond to recommendations issued through a fatality inquiry. Children and Family Services responses are publicly posted within four months of the report being released.

On January 4, 2023, one Fatality Inquiry Report was provided to Children and Family Services with 18 recommendations on improving transitions for children in foster care facing placement changes. The ministry accepted two recommendations in full and the intent of 16 recommendations. Of the 18 recommendations accepted in full or in part by Children and Family Services, 14 have been assessed as complete with existing policy and practice. Work continues for the remaining four recommendations.

Designated Reviews

The *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* (CYFEA) provides the Children and Family Services Statutory Director with the authority to conduct internal reviews examining the circumstances surrounding children and youth who died or were seriously injured while in receipt of services under CYFEA. Internal reviews are conducted through the Children and Family Services Internal Child Death and Serious Incident Review (ICDSIR) Process. As part of this work, designated reviews could lead to findings and recommendations for quality improvements to child intervention services and practice. In 2023-24, two recommendations related to substance abuse and safety planning were assessed as complete with the incorporation of the new Safety Planning and Substance Abuse Practice Supports into the Children and Family Services Enhancement Policy Manual.

The Child Intervention Recommendations Data Tool is an interactive tool that provides a five-year summary of the progress made on formal recommendations to improve service delivery to Albertans. Through this tool, the ministry publicly reports on its progress on recommendations from the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, Fatality Inquiries, and other government sources and internal reports.

Capacity Building

The ministry continues to develop and offer training opportunities for caregivers, child intervention and caregiver practitioners who care for or work with vulnerable children and youth. Supporting all those involved in a child or youth's life, through training and knowledge, is important in creating positive environments where children and youth can thrive. This also ensures child intervention and caregiver practitioners have the right skills and knowledge when working with caregivers to improve relationships and facilitate positive change.

Caregivers

Caregiver training for foster and kinship caregivers ensures they are supported to meet the needs of children and youth placed in their home and is essential for maintaining placement stability. Training and continuous learning builds competency to meet the needs of children and youth in their care and helps reduce the risk of a mismatch between a child or youth's care needs and a caregiver's skills.

Caregiver training for foster caregivers is mandatory and consists of approximately 160 hours. The training addresses the competencies that support caregivers to effectively care for children and youth. Kinship caregivers may access foster caregiver training to support their capacity to meet the needs of the children or youth placed in their home. Approximately 300 sessions were facilitated in the past year, with over 2,600 foster and kinship caregivers attending.

Training for caregivers is reviewed and revised as needed to ensure alignment with current research, legislation, policy, and practice. Recent training improvements launched in September 2023 include the redeveloped Foundations of Caregiver Support for Caregivers training. This training is delivered in two parts; self-directed e-learning and virtually facilitated sessions and is available to caregivers and child intervention practitioners. The intent of the training is to learn how best to support the development, safety and well-being of the children and youth in their care. Since the launch, 90 caregivers and 10 child intervention practitioners have taken this training.

In August 2023, the Kinship Orientation Training (KOT) was launched. In that time, 167 caregivers and four practitioners completed this training. This mandatory e-learning for kinship caregivers focuses on kinship-specific training designed to meet the unique need of kinship caregiving and is available through the online Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education (PRIDE). This update improves training delivery options for kinship caregivers to complete the Kinship Orientation Training as an e-learning, caregiver practitioners complete training directly one to one with a caregiver or in small groups.

To help reduce cost pressures for caregivers attending training, effective December 2023 allowance rates for vehicle mileage and meals for caregivers increased. This helps ensure caregivers can attend and benefit from training without having to worry about extra costs.

In 2023-24, the ministry continued to provide grant funding to the Alberta Foster and Kinship Association (AFKA), a nonprofit, charitable organization that provides support such as training and mentorship opportunities to foster and kinship families and educates the Alberta community about foster and kinship care.

Child Intervention Practitioners

Recruitment of skilled practitioners who are the right fit for supporting vulnerable children and youth remains a significant challenge for the ministry. From prioritizing job postings to running advertising campaigns in post-secondary institutions throughout Alberta, the ministry targets recruitment to meet staffing demands and employs creative strategies to recruit and hire as quickly as possible. In 2023-24, 296 new staff were hired, a net gain of 68 over the reporting period.

The ministry addressed its retention challenges by further supporting employee learning and development. Launched in 2022-23, the Children and Family Services workforce model specifies ongoing opportunities for learning, growth and overall career development to increase employee satisfaction and fulfillment. This hiring model addresses recruitment and retention challenges, while focusing on growing a skilled and competent workforce.

In January 2024, the ministry introduced an Education Grant Program for eligible child intervention employees. The cost of tuition, books and other education costs at the Bachelor or Master level are eligible under the grant program, supporting 20 participants each year for the next five years. Employees participating must sign a Return to Service Agreement for five years.

The ministry also announced a new Psychological Safety Program designed to support employees who experience or are exposed to work-related stress and trauma. In 2023-24, the ministry secured the Mental Health Commission of Canada to deliver the Working Mind Program beginning in 2024-25. This evidence-based program will augment supports currently offered through the Employee Family Assistance Program and the Peer Support Program. The program equips supervisors with the necessary tools to facilitate healthy conversations with their teams, utilize incident review processes effectively, and support employees during their return to work. Strong leadership support is crucial in promoting a mentally healthy work environment. The program will be delivered through both virtual and in-person formats and will launch Spring 2024.

In 2023-24, Children and Family Services Peer Supporters remained active by furthering a supportive workplace community. Over the past year, 20-25 formal and informal, supportive conversations occurred between a Peer Supporter and an employee seeking support. Additionally, the first Peer Support eLearning component was completed and will be made available in 2024-25 to all ministry staff interested in developing their interpersonal skills or learning more about the Peer Support Program.

Ensuring child intervention practitioners are equipped with the confidence, competence and skills to work with vulnerable children and youth who have experienced adversity, including mental health and addiction is a priority for the ministry. The ministry employs various training requirements to help employees achieve confidence and competence in their role.

- Blended Delegation Training – Redesigned and launched in 2022, this training is a mandatory six-month program comprised of learning and development activities new practitioners must complete in the first six months of employment. In 2023-24, 352 Children and Family Services and Delegated First Nation Agency employees enrolled in the Blended Delegation training compared to 219 employee enrollments in 2022-23.
- Working Together for Safety Training – In 2023-24, 79 child intervention practitioners completed this training, which consists of a series of models found to be foundational in equipping practitioners to assess risk and work with families and their network to build safety.
- Safety Phase Workflow Training – This training focuses on how to prepare and conduct balanced risk assessments while ensuring safety is in place. There were 667 child intervention employees who completed this training.
- Suicide Intervention Training – Redesigned in 2021, this core training focuses on developing essential suicide intervention skills. Practitioners learn how to identify suicide risk and suicide behaviours in children, youth and family members. In 2023-24, 352 ministry and Delegated First Nation Agency employees enrolled in this core training.
- Child Intervention Workflow Intake Phase Training – Originally implemented in 2022, this training was updated in 2023-24. The training provided an overview of practices, how to communicate with stakeholders, and a review of quality assurance measures for 154 employees.
- Opioids and Substance Use Training – The continued increase in opioid and substance abuse across the province necessitated Children and Family Services to employ mandatory training in 2021. This training

provides practitioners with the knowledge, skills, and awareness required to support the families and caregivers of young people in government care who use substances. In 2023-24, 725 ministry and Delegated First Nation Agency employees finished this training.

- NARCAN Training – All child intervention practitioners are required to complete NARCAN (overdose reversal drug) training prior to accessing the supply; however, the choice to carry NARCAN is voluntarily when working with youth and young adults, including those receiving child intervention services, living in provincial residential facilities, and accessing the Transition to Adulthood Program.
- Collaborative Investigation Training – This one-day session is co-facilitated between Children and Family Services and Police Departments and is focused on a collaborative and coordinated approach to the investigation of child abuse. Over the past year, this training was offered several times a month in-person and virtually across the province with 75 employees taking part.
- Practice Supervision Training Course – The ministry supports employees who are new to the role of supervisor by offering the Practice Supervision course. This course prepares new managers to build a supervisory practice model to help support and develop frontline practitioners. There were 35 employees who completed the course last year.
- Proactive Defensive Driver Improvement Course – The ministry introduced a defensive driver course in March 2024 for employees who are required to drive regularly for their role. In 2023-24, 216 employees completed the course and 245 remained in progress.

Key Objectives

2.1 Improve supports for youth to successfully transition from government care into adulthood; and build on available support services, mentorship, educational attainment and employment readiness.

Youth in Transition

The ministry provides services to youth and young adults in government care or formerly in care to support their transition to adulthood. In 2023-24, \$69.8 million was directed to the Youth in Transition program that focuses on transition supports, such as employment readiness, educational attainment, connection to support services, and development of life skills.

In 2023-24, the ministry continued to support the:

- Transition to Adulthood Program (TAP);
- Advancing Futures Program;
- Mentoring for Youth and Young Adults from Care (MYAC) Program;
- Youth Coordinating Committee (YCC);
- Youth Employment Connection Program (YEC);
- Youth Apprenticeship Connection Program (YACP);
- Foster Caregivers Caring for Young Adults (FCCYA) Initiative; and
- Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) Program for children and youth from care.

Transition to Adulthood Program

The 2023-24 fiscal year was the first year the Transition to Adulthood Program was fully implemented with a dedicated provincial workforce, operating out of 23 Child Intervention Delivery sites. The program assists young adults who received child intervention services by developing transition to adulthood goals, which may include creating stable connections and interdependence, and achieving education and employment aims.

The Transition to Adulthood Program continued to collaborate with several other ministries, including Seniors, Community and Social Services, Mental Health and Addiction, Health and Justice to address issues related to accessing supports and services.

The ministry spent \$38.3 million to deliver the Transition to Adulthood Program to 490 young adults who ended involvement in the child intervention system on their 18th birthday; 448 (91 per cent) went on to access post-18 intervention supports through the Transition to Adulthood Program.

Through Transition to Adulthood Program, young adults aged 18 up until the day before they turn 22 have access to financial, social and emotional supports, and soft supports such as mentoring opportunities, life skills, employment supports, and mental health and addiction supports. After age 22 to the day before turning 24, young adults continue to have access to social, emotional, educational and other soft supports. As of March 31, 2024, 2,009 young adults had an active agreement for post-18 intervention supports through the Transition to Adulthood Program with 260 of these clients accessing the program through their Delegated First Nation Agency.

Transition to Adulthood Program clients can choose services from any one of four pathways: Adult Support Services, Stability, Employment and Career, and Education. Choosing a primary pathway helps guide the young adult and provides a focus, although they can also access supports from more than one pathway. All participants have access to a dedicated practitioner, soft supports, life skills, cultural connections, mentorship, and financial supports up to age 22. Transition to Adulthood Program clients can also access other customized supports such as Advancing Futures and the Youth Employment, and Apprenticeship Connections programs.

Adult Support Services

Supports in this pathway are geared to the capabilities of the young adult and are intended to help ensure a lifelong support network, of the most appropriate adult services. Young adults enrolled in adult disability services in other Federal or Provincial programs can receive soft supports through the Transition to Adulthood Program. At the end of March, 12 per cent or 239 young adults were enrolled in the adult support services pathway.

Stability

Young adults in this pathway require supports to achieve stability, including building support networks with the youth, engaging in services and activities to overcome barriers to independence, and working on life skills the youth requires. At the end of March 2024, 40 per cent or 794 participants were enrolled in this pathway.

Employment and Career

In this pathway, young adults have identified employment and career as a primary goal. Core services include career and education planning, developing work skills, finding and maintaining employment, and education tailored to handling the transition into the workforce. While the focus of this pathway is on employment, young adults are encouraged to engage with or establish their support network, access resources and services, and build life and self-care skills. In the last year, 23 per cent or 459 participants were enrolled in this pathway.

Education and Advancing Futures

Young adults in this pathway are focused on education, which includes high school completion, upgrading or the Advancing Futures program for those who attend post-secondary. The pathway provides funding, emotional, social supports. As of March 31, 2024, there were 19 per cent or 378 young adults enrolled in this pathway.

Pathway Undecided

At the end of the fiscal year, seven per cent or 139 Transition to Adulthood Program clients were still selecting a pathway.

To ensure the Transition to Adulthood Program is having a positive impact on the young adults, an evaluation framework was created in 2023-24 that will guide evaluations across different programs, and includes client surveys, sharing circles and youth interviews, which provides opportunities for Transition to Adulthood Program clients to share their experience with the program.

Advancing Futures

Advancing Futures, the only program of its kind in Canada, is available to Transition to Adulthood Program clients and other young adults formerly in care. The program provides transitional and funding support to help young adults achieve their educational goals with the intent of obtaining a long-term career. To qualify, young adults aged 18-30 who were in government care before their 25th birthday can apply to the Advancing Futures program to pursue their educational goals for up to five years, or before their 31st birthday. At the fiscal year end, 989 young adults accessed the Advancing Futures program and of these, 378 accessed both the Transition to Adulthood Program and Advancing Futures.

In 2023-24, approximately \$14 million was spent to help Advancing Futures students with tuition, books and supplies, and student expenses, including monthly living allowance, transportation, childcare and medical. Of the total number of young adults in the program, 31 per cent were enrolled in a degree program, 35 per cent in a diploma program, 21 per cent in a certificate or trade program and 14 per cent completed upgrading in 2023-24. Moving forward, the ministry will monitor and evaluate the success of those accessing Advancing Futures through the Transition to Adulthood Program, versus those accessing the program directly, for program completion rates to identify any trends and impacts.

Every year, 25 students in the Advancing Futures program are recognized for their exceptional educational achievements through the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge Scholarship. In 2023-24, there was a tie, and 26 students were selected. Each recipient received \$2,000 for achieving a grade point average of 3.8, with two students achieving a 4.0, the highest possible grade point average.

Youth Coordinating Committee

A Youth Coordinating Committee (YCC) was established in August 2023, providing a forum for collaboration and alignment of ministry-wide initiatives and services that relate to youth and young adults as they transition toward independence. The committee focuses on examining existing and emerging gaps for youth and young adults involved with Children and Family Services and makes recommendations. In 2023-24, the ministry was in recruitment to the Youth Advisory Task Force (YATF). Recruitment has been completed and the first meeting occurred in May 2024. The YATF and the formation of various working groups were established, under the YCC, to respond to and identify issues surrounding youth transitioning from care.

Youth Employment Connections and Youth Apprenticeship Connections Programs

In 2023-24, the ministry launched the Youth Employment Connections Program (YECF) and the Youth Apprenticeship Connections Program (YACP) for youth aged 16-24 with active child intervention, Transition to Adulthood Program or Advancing Futures case files. These two programs were launched to address the gaps and barriers youth in care experience when trying to access the labour market. The programs were designed to serve 500-600 youth and young adults at a time.

The ministry partnered with the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services to initiate the YECF and in 2023-24 Seniors, Community and Social Services provided \$2 million in funding through the Alberta at Work initiative. Working with community partners across Alberta, the YECF helps youth build skills and

establish connections needed to achieve success in the job market. Success is often achieved by offering individualized and intensive one-on-one support or group opportunities for career exploration and planning, life and employment skills and experiential learning. The program offers pre-employment preparation, including addressing barriers to employment, work search support or work experience opportunities. As of March 31, 2024, the program had served 260 clients, of which nine were in care and 251 young adults were exercising an active Transition to Adulthood Program or Advancing Futures file. The program has received positive anecdotal feedback from the young adults who accessed it.

The Youth Apprenticeship Connections Program enables youth and young adults to access apprenticeship and career exploration in the trades. With collaboration and funding provided by the Ministry of Advanced Education, this program launched March 1, 2024, and offers participants a personalized program and support from an apprentice coach to explore their interests and develop skills in the trades. The partnership Children and Family Services and the Ministry of Advanced Education share resulted in a \$1 million commitment by Advanced Education covering from January 2024-March 2025 with \$200,000 of this funding transferring to Children and Family Services in 2023-24. As of March 31, 2024, there were almost 30 participants in the program, and all were from either Transition to Adulthood Program or Advancing Futures.

Foster Caregivers Caring for Young Adults

Eligible Transition to Adulthood Program (TAP) clients who continue to reside with the foster caregiver on their 18th birthday have the option of signing a Foster Caregivers Caring for Youth Adults (FCCYA) Agreement up to their 22nd birthday, enabling the young adult to remain with the caregiver who would receive financial compensation for the skill and ability they continue to provide. The caregiver skill fee would be received until the day before that young adult turns 22 provided the young adult remains in the caregiver home. The initiative was launched in November 2023, and as of March 31, 2024, 52 Transition to Adulthood Program clients (73 per cent) of those eligible signed an agreement resulting in \$187,700 being spent through this initiative.

Registered Education Savings Program

The Registered Education Savings Program (RESP) for children and youth in care began in partnership with the Royal Bank of Canada in 2004. Centrally administered and managed through the Youth in Transition branch, the Registered Education Savings Program ensures children and youth in the permanent care of the Statutory Director have access to available government educational incentives to save for future post-secondary educational costs. Currently, just over 7,000 Registered Education Savings Program accounts have been opened through this program.

2.2 Work with First Nations and Government of Canada to implement *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth and families*.

Supporting Indigenous Governing Bodies

On January 1, 2020, the Government of Canada's *An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families* (federal act) came into effect. It sets out national principles for the delivery of child intervention to Indigenous children, youth and families. Child intervention practices demonstrate alignment with the national principles of the federal act and the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*.

The federal act introduced Indigenous governing bodies (IGB), which are defined as a council, government or other entity authorized to act on behalf of an Indigenous group, community or people that holds section 35 rights.

The ministry supported First Nations, or their designated Indigenous governing bodies, to exercise their authority over child and family services by sharing information regarding the federal act, development of agreements to support the transfer of authority, and sharing information to support service delivery.

The ministry also supported Indigenous governing bodies by providing in-kind supports, including continuation of access to provincial after-hours crisis lines and continuation of child intervention off-reserve costs while under provincial legislation until transfer of authority is complete. The ministry was actively advocating and pressing the federal government to create a sustainable long-term funding approach for the implementation of the federal act.

Trilateral coordination agreements are intended to articulate roles and responsibilities to ensure no service gaps are created as First Nations assume authority. The ministry participated in trilateral coordination agreement discussions throughout 2023-24.

A coordination agreement was signed with Loon River First Nation #476, Lubicon Lake Band #453, and Peerless Trout Lake First Nation #478 (known as the Founding First Nations) and Indigenous Services Canada on March 31, 2023. In July 2023, Children and Family Services completed the transfer of authority to the Founding First Nations. In February 2024, Children and Family Services signed a bilateral Information Sharing Agreement with KTC Child & Family Services, the agency authorized to deliver the child and family services program of the Founding First Nations.

Indigenous Cultural Understanding Framework

The Indigenous Cultural Understanding Framework (ICUF) establishes a vision and plan that sets the direction for coordinated, consistent learning pathways for Indigenous cultural trainings and teachings, which equip Children and Family Services employees with improved knowledge, skills and abilities to deliver culturally appropriate support, services and programs to Indigenous children, youth and families. The framework sets out training and learning opportunities through four Pathways: Foundations, Relationship & Culture, Reconciliation and Wisdom. In 2023-24:

- The Foundations Pathway was offered through 20 sessions with 386 employees participating. To date 3,205 ministry employees have completed the Foundations Pathway Learnings since first being offered in 2019. All new Children and Family Services employees are required to complete this pathway in their first year of employment.
- There were 19 Relationship & Culture Pathway sessions offered with 264 employees participating. This pathway focuses on understanding, building relationships, and participating in cultural practices. To date, 1,389 employees have completed this training since first offered in 2018.
- Four Reconciliation sessions were attended by 67 employees. The Reconciliation Pathway sets out the specific knowledge and understanding with respect to Indigenous people, families, and communities for employees in leadership positions 145 employees have completed this pathway since first being offered in September 2022.
- Learning under a Wisdom Pathway is aspirational and self-directed. The ministry provides employees with access to additional Indigenous cultural learning, knowledge, and awareness opportunities such as teaching sweats and medicine picking (sage and sweetgrass).
- To support employees through the Wisdom Pathway and as a commitment to Diversity and Inclusion, the Indigenous Speaker Series, the Kihew Resource Room, and the Indigenous Knowledge Hub are available as ongoing learning for all Government of Alberta employees.
- Four Indigenous Speaker Series events, open to all Government of Alberta employees took place. A total of 1,624 Alberta Public Service employees attended the virtual sessions.
- An Elders Wisdom Circle established in 2012, continues to provide Indigenous cultural wisdom and advice on various Children and Family Services initiatives, programs, and services.

2.3 Improve access to a range of prevention and early intervention programs and services for children, youth, and their families that support child safety, well-being, development, and caregiver capacity and support.

Family Resource Networks

Family Resource Networks consist of agencies working together to provide a continuum of prevention and early intervention services for children and youth from 0-18 years and their families. The Family Resource Networks consist of 70 networks made up of 131 partner agencies offering programs ranging from universal prevention supports to more targeted and intensive. Additionally, families have access to home visitation services that provide in-home parenting education and family support services to expectant parents and those with children from newborn to six years of age. These programs help ensure that children have a good foundation in their early years, youth have the resources they need, and parents and caregivers are supported in raising their families.

All Family Resource Networks respect diverse cultural identities and provide resources and programming to all Albertans. Of the Family Resource Networks, 18 specialize services to unique cultural and linguistic communities, including seven networks to support urban Indigenous families, eight in Metis Settlements, one to support Francophone families, and two to support newcomer, immigrant, and cultural minority families. In 2023-24, 50 of Family Resource Networks (or 138 Family Resource Network employees) accessed training that enabled them to provide culturally responsive supports to immigrant, newcomer, and ethno-cultural families.

In 2023-24, \$68.2 million was spent on the Family Resource Networks program, an increase of \$1.5 million from 2022-23. About 51,300 caregivers and 77,000 children and youth accessed services. Of the total number of caregivers, children and youth who accessed services, 16 per cent self-identify as Indigenous, four per cent Francophone, eight per cent did not identify English/French as their first language and 11 per cent were born outside of Canada.

The table below provides a breakdown of caregivers, children and youth who accessed Family Resource Network services by age.

Children 0-6 years	42,500
Children 7-13 years	21,200
Youth 14 – 18 years	13,300
Caregivers under 21 years	2,100
Caregivers over 21 years	42,200
Caregivers unknown age	7,000

In 2023-24, the Family Resource Networks program spent \$1 million on immediate mental health supports and \$260,000 on enhancements to build capacity to support young parents. This resulted in 3,500 individuals accessing immediate mental health supports and 114 Family Resource Network agencies engaged to further build their capacity to meet the needs of pregnant and parenting teens.

Since December 2021, the Family Resource Networks program has been undergoing a phased evaluation in partnership with Family Resource Network agencies. This evaluation is helping to clarify the ministry's understanding of service gaps, and program impacts on families and communities. The evaluation illustrated

that Family Resource Networks are positively impacting children, youth and families. Participants experienced improved well-being, enhanced their parenting knowledge and skills, strengthened relationships, and were better connected to their culture, language and community. The service delivery model has enhanced collaboration with community agencies to meet the needs of families and understand the needs of the communities they serve. These partnerships have enabled Family Resource Networks to connect to hard-to-reach populations, share knowledge and resources, reduce duplication of services and provide families with diverse options for support.

A Phase 3 evaluation on the Family Resource Networks program was completed last year. Findings highlighted the need to enhance capacity-building activities to address the needs of sexual and gender diverse youth, continue to strengthen the overall capacity of Family Resource Networks to provide culturally appropriate programming for Indigenous children, youth and families, and build network capacity to deliver evidence-based intensive programming for complex children, youth, and their caregivers.

In 2023-24, Phase 3 findings informed additional investments. In total \$3.2 million was spent on:

- Two organizations with expertise working with youth received \$500,000 to address the needs of sexual and gender diverse youth;
- Three Indigenous agencies received \$1.7 million to support capacity-building with all Family Resource Networks in addressing the needs of Indigenous children, youth and families; and
- \$1 million was provided to support capacity building in all Family Resource Network agencies in providing intensive services to meet the complex needs of families.

In 2023-24, a two-year extension was approved for existing Family Resource Network grants, with 83 per cent of the networks providing services grounded in Indigenous cultures and teachings, including ceremonies, language, and culture. A foundation of the Family Resource Networks program is to honour Indigenous knowledge, experience, and families. Family Resource Network agencies have highlighted they are doing this through traditional parenting programs, hosting or connecting families to ceremonies, and regular cultural programming based in ceremony. Culturally relevant programs provided families with opportunities to practice their culture and integrate teachings and cultural activities into their home and family life. Family Resource Networks also provided opportunities for families to learn about other cultures and share and celebrate their own culture.

Community-based Support

In addition to services offered through the Family Resource Networks program, the ministry supports other prevention and early intervention initiatives to promote the well-being and resiliency of young people in the province. The goal of prevention and early intervention services is to prevent the need for more intrusive intervention services by providing focused resources that strengthen families and communities at an early stage. In 2023-24, Children and Family Services provided funding to approximately 50 community-based organizations for mentoring, mental health supports, youth suicide prevention, prevention and early intervention supports and services for children and youth across Alberta including 12 First Nation communities, and seven youth emergency shelters.

- \$1.3 million supporting mentoring for children and youth with a focus on youth in care.
- \$1.8 million to support youth suicide prevention initiatives including front-line service delivery, training, education and awareness, research, and reduce access to means of suicide.
- \$1.2 million to support mental health supports for children and youth.
- \$1.3 million to support prevention and early intervention services on First Nations.
- \$4.9 million to seven youth emergency shelters across the province.

Mentoring

Ensuring youth have access to the supports they need to thrive and reach their fullest potential is a priority for the ministry. Young people who have healthy, supportive relationships with mentors often do better in school, are better able to deal with stressful situations, and gain the skills they need to set and reach goals.

In 2023-24, Children and Family Services provided \$1.3 million to community organizations for a range of mentoring supports for children and youth, including for Indigenous youth, youth transitioning out of government care, and 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. Included was \$125,000 for the Alberta Mentoring Partnership, which helps to develop and deliver high quality mentoring resources province wide. Approximately 2,000 young people between the ages of six to 24 are supported annually through this funding. Over the last year, the Alberta Mentoring Partnership trained more than 1,500 mentors and recruited more than 3,000 new volunteers to support young Albertans in need.

In April 2022, a multi-year grant was provided to Alberta Mentoring Partnership to expand mentoring supports to young adults transitioning out of care. These supports enhance services provided by the Transition to Adulthood Program. To date, 25 young adults have been referred to the Mentoring for Youth and Young Adults from Care program. As the program was newly developed with the Transition to Adulthood Program, the ministry is supporting an evaluation framework and active engagement with stakeholders to determine the program's effectiveness and look for ways to strengthen it.

Youth Suicide Prevention

Since the launch of the Youth Suicide Prevention Grant Program in 2022, Children and Family Services has delivered almost \$3.6 million, with \$1.8 million in 2023-24 to 12 community organizations located across the province. Three specifically target Indigenous youth with one additional organization providing cultural supports for Indigenous youth as part of their programming. About 927 youth have been directly supported through the grant program since the launch, and more than 1,100 individuals have been provided with information and connected to mental health resources to support youth in their community. The program plays an integral role in providing crucial community supports, services, training, awareness, and education to protect the safety and well-being of Alberta's children.

Mental Health Supports

In 2023-24, Children and Family Services provided \$1.2 million to evidence-informed mental health supports and specialists for children, youth and families, including Indigenous, newcomer, immigrant, and refugees involved with or at risk of becoming involved with Children and Family Services. The funding enhanced access to:

- mental health screening and assessments;
- brief intervention services; and
- connection to community resources and outreach supports.

Funding is also provided to peer supports for caregivers caring for children and youth experiencing mental health issues across Alberta. Over 500 youth and caregivers have accessed supports through one-on-one services and group sessions.

Early Intervention on First Nations

In 2023-24, Children and Family Services delivered approximately \$1.3 million to the Early Intervention on First Nations Grant Program, which provides funding to 13 First Nation communities for prevention and early intervention supports to improve child development and well-being among Indigenous infants, children, youth and families. Programming examples include prenatal and traditional parenting courses, mental health groups for youth, strengths-based family relationship and caregiver workshops. About 2,300 community members were supported through this funding.

Youth Emergency Shelters

The ministry funds youth emergency shelters in the seven major urban cities, which experience higher rates of youth homelessness than rural communities. Youth shelters provide emergency, short-term accommodation, and basic needs to Alberta youth in need. Children and Family Services delivered approximately \$4.9 million in 2023-24 to seven youth emergency shelters across the province, located in Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, Fort McMurray, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Grande Prairie.

In addition to providing emergency accommodation and supporting youth to meet basic needs, youth emergency shelters provide a range of other services, including outreach to prevent the need for more future intensive intervention. Programming focuses on minimizing the amount of time youth stay at a shelter and connecting them back to their families or to more permanent housing. Youth shelters are also a resource for youth in care when unexpected placement breakdowns occur.

Boreal Shelter Pilot Project

The ministry in partnership with the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services supported the piloting of the Calgary Trellis Boreal Shelter Pilot Program that began in 2022, with each ministry contributing \$1.4 million in grants over two years. The Boreal, a lodging style house, is a supportive housing program for eight youth with complex needs and provides wrap-around supports and intensive case management for youth, many of whom have cycled through multiple systems such as Children and Family Services, Justice and Health. The program takes a compassionate approach and offers a low barrier entry helping youth achieve stability and resources they may not have access to otherwise.

Prevention of Family Violence and Sexual Violence

Women’s Emergency Shelter Program

The ministry works closely with shelter partners to provide women and families fleeing violence with the necessary supports so they can rebuild their lives. As part of government’s commitment set in 2023-24, women’s emergency shelter funding will increase by \$10 million over four years. The first \$5 million was distributed in 2023-24, with the remaining funding to be dispersed by 2026-27.

Women’s emergency shelters are crucial for women experiencing domestic violence, as they often act as a hub of services in the communities they serve. Support is always available as no one is turned away from a women’s emergency shelter without being offered help. Women’s emergency shelters provide emergency accommodation and basic needs in many urban and rural communities. In addition to being a safe place to stay, shelters provide information, support, and referrals for other services. This can include counselling, safety planning, system navigation, parenting supports and child care, along with culturally responsive supports. Second stage shelters provide safe, longer-term accommodation (six months to two years) for women and families with access to wraparound services.

The following women’s emergency shelters received funding to support women and families fleeing violence in 2023-24:

Supports and Services	Number of Shelters	Funding Amount
Women’s Emergency Shelters	31	\$ 45,112,170
Second Stage Shelters	17	\$ 10,428,628
Women’s Fee-For-Service Shelters	5	\$ 569,660
Outreach Agencies & Counselling Grants	3	\$ 928,681
Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters Support Initiatives	-	\$ 1,990,840
Total	-	\$ 59,029,979

In February 2024, Children and Family Services hosted a Minister Roundtable with women's emergency shelters to gather input on a long-term vision for the future of women's emergency shelter services in Alberta. Many prominent themes emerged from the conversation, including funding levels and flexibility, workforce development, providing specialized services specifically for ethnocultural clients, and further opportunities for collaboration. Using this information, the ministry will consider how best to invest the funding in the upcoming year and will work in collaboration with its partners to provide critical services and prevent family and gender-based violence in all forms to better support and serve Albertans fleeing abuse.

The initial investment of over \$5 million in 2023-24, as part of government's commitment funded an additional 101 beds across the province, addressed capacity and cost pressures in urban and rural shelters and provided funding for innovative programs in rural areas, including at Rowan House Society in High River and Big Hill Haven in Cochrane. These programs each take unique approaches to support women and families experiencing domestic violence.

The ministry provided \$550,000 as one-time capital funding to assist two women's emergency shelter programs to mitigate building issues in 2023-24. The Peace River Regional women's shelter received \$400,000 for mold remediation services and assisted with relocation to other shelters and the WINGS of Providence Second Stage shelter in Edmonton received \$150,000 to replace a sprinkler system, with repairs planned for the 20-unit facility in the spring of 2024.

In 2023-24, women's emergency shelters were provided \$987,000 to support 270 innovative child care spaces operating in shelters across the province. Innovative child care programs provide specialized child care services for children staying at shelters and provide a trauma-informed approach by child care workers to meet the specific needs of children exposed to family violence.

Women's emergency shelters continued to offer a comprehensive range of shelter and outreach services for women fleeing family violence across the province. The average length of stay for women admitted to shelters increased.

- 27 per cent of women spent more than 21 nights.
- Women who spent two months or more at a women's emergency shelter rose to four per cent in 2023-24, up from 1.6 per cent in 2022-23.
- 50 per cent of women spent nine months or more at a second stage shelter in 2023-24, an increase from 41 per cent in 2022-23.
- Potential factors that have led to an increase in stays include rising housing costs and difficulty finding affordable housing options for women to transition to, along with increasing client complexity and overall safety considerations.

Not all women fleeing violence are admitted to shelters. Anyone not admitted to a shelter is referred to outreach services and connected with other community-based supports. These community-based supports ensure women and children unable to access a shelter can be served in their communities and helped to regain stability. Examples of supports and services provided include system navigation, safety planning, and individual and/or group counseling.

Results Analysis

The following table provides a breakdown of women and children who accessed shelters and outreach programs in 2023-24:

Shelters and Supports	Women Served	Children Served
Women's Emergency Shelters	4,574	3,629
Second Stage Shelters	214	332
Women's Fee-For-Service Shelters	158	179
Outreach Supports and Intensive Case Management	586	440

Source: The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters Database.

The ministry continues work that began in 2023-24 to review and update women's emergency shelter standards to better reflect the needs of clients and support program delivery innovation across the province. In 2023-24, Children and Family Services worked with its shelter partners to introduce significant changes to shelter grant agreements that reduced the administrative burden felt by shelters and increased their funding flexibility supporting red tape reduction. Based on the changes, beginning in 2024-25, shelters will now be able to allocate the funding in ways that work for each individual shelter, rather than in a prescribed manner.

Sexual Violence Prevention Program and Sexual Assault Centres

The province is committed to working with community partners to provide supports and services for those impacted by sexual violence. Throughout the province, sexual assault centres provide services to adults, youth and children of all ages and genders affected by sexual abuse and sexual assault and provide services in crisis intervention, counselling, police and court support, education, outreach, system navigation, volunteer engagement and coordination/collaboration among community service providers.

In 2023-24, the ministry spent \$13.8 million to support those impacted by sexual violence. Included in this was \$12.9 million to support 15 sexual assault centres across the province to provide direct services to Albertans, and nearly \$1 million (\$971,000) to the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS), an umbrella organization that provides leadership, coordination and collaboration for sexual assault service providers in Alberta. From the \$971,000, \$211,000 funded Alberta's One Line for Sexual Violence, a toll-free talk, text or chat service providing emotional support, information and referrals to specialized sexual assault services. Support is available in 200 languages on the phone line (texting and chat available in English); and callers can receive confidential and accessible sexual assault services and supports regardless of where they live.

In 2023-24, Alberta's One Line received:

- 1,369 calls
- 1,010 chats
- 267 texts

One Line for Sexual Violence

- toll-free (call or text)
1-866-403-8000

Over the last two fiscal years, an additional \$4.2 million in one-time funding was provided to 13 sexual assault centres to address counselling waitlists across Alberta and enable the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services to pilot a service delivery model for those waiting for services. As a result of this funding, sexual assault centres hired more staff to provide counselling and deliver educational workshops to support and stabilize clients on the waitlist. AASAS and the ministry worked together to develop the pilot service delivery model which will support those in crisis by providing wraparound services that prepare clients for counselling. This pilot will be implemented for one year in four sexual assault centres across the province in 2024.

In 2023-24, government increased funding for sexual assault centres by \$10 million. In early 2024, the ministry, the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services and sector stakeholders began working to determine how these investments will be made. Beginning in 2024-25, Children and Family Services is providing an additional \$3 million to support this commitment.

Preventing Family Violence through Prevention and Intervention

Family violence is an abuse of power in a family or other trusting relationship where people rely on each other. It includes domestic violence, intimate partner violence and child abuse. The ministry provides approximately \$11.6 million annually through 42 community-based grants and two contracts to fund family violence prevention and intervention programs. Programs provide crisis response, risk assessment, safety planning and system navigation, counselling and healthy relationship skill development to address family violence and abuse across the lifespan. To help reduce administrative burdens for family violence prevention organizations, the ministry continued to revise and streamline its family violence prevention grant funding applications and reporting in 2023-24.

In 2023-24, the Family Violence Info Line received:

- 1,939 calls
- 204 texts
- 323 online chat requests

24 Hour Family Violence Info Line

- toll-free (call or text) 310-1818
- chat link:

<https://www.alberta.ca/family-violence-find-supports>

In 2023-24, the Bullying Helpline received:

- 188 calls
- 25 texts
- 77 online chat requests

Bullying Helpline

- toll-free (call or text) 310-1818
- chat link:

<https://www.alberta.ca/bullyin-prevention-resources>

Children and Family Services provided \$419,000 to the Family Violence Info Line and the Bullying Helpline. Through this phone and text line at 310-1818, and on-line chats, Albertans can find supports, stay safe and help others who are experiencing abuse in a relationship or experiencing bullying. From February to March 2024, the ministry ran a campaign focused on educating bystanders on how they can help and where help is available for those experiencing family violence.

Family Violence Death Review Committee

The Family Violence Death Review Committee is an advisory public agency comprised of community members with expertise in family violence prevention. The Committee is accountable to the Minister of Children and Family Services and is legislatively mandated under the *Protection Against Family Violence Act* to review police-reported incidents of family violence resulting in deaths and provide advice and recommendations to the Minister respecting the prevention and reduction of family violence.

In 2023-24, the Committee finalized seven recommendations resulting from two case reviews and drafted a report. Throughout the year, ministry staff worked closely with the Committee to develop a forward-looking process and a plan for the systemic review of police-reported family violence deaths. Staff supported the Committee to establish relationships with other public agencies, release the 2021-22 Family Violence Death Review Committee Annual Report, prepare the 2022-23 Annual Report and update the Mandates and Roles document. Indigenous membership on the Committee was also increased in 2023-24. Committee work in 2024-25 is focused on systemic case reviews of 11 family violence related deaths involving Indigenous families.

Supporting the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence

The ministry supported work on the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence led by the Ministry of Arts, Culture and the Status of Women. The National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence is a national ten-year strategic framework to address gender-based violence that aligns with Alberta's commitments to end gender-based violence by increasing prevention efforts, reaching underserved and/or most-at-risk populations, and stabilizing support for the sector. As part of Alberta's development of a ten-year strategy to end gender-based violence and support survivors, engagement with Albertans and sector stakeholders is underway. This engagement will help inform strategy development and where to target funding and supports to end gender-based violence and help survivors.

In 2023-24, Children and Family Services invested \$2.6 million to support the implementation of the federally funded National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence. Funding priorities included expanding existing programs deemed culturally relevant and responsive, and counselling programs targeted to supporting men and boys in communities across Alberta. Other funding initiatives focused on education, such as public awareness campaigns to promote existing supports, training for health providers to support patients of all genders experiencing any form of domestic violence, and promoting resources available to Albertans impacted by family and sexual violence, such as the Family Violence Info Line, how Albertans can build healthy relationships and how bystanders can help others impacted by gender-based violence. Investments were also made in the social infrastructure of the gender-based violence sector, to help provide supports to survivors of family violence and their families.

2.4 Continue to combat rising costs due to inflation by providing financial payments to Alberta families with children.

Affordability Action Plan

In 2022-23, the Government of Alberta launched the Affordability Action Plan, a cross-government initiative to support Albertans with the impacts of inflation and rising cost of living. Families with children under the age of 18 and an adjusted household income under \$180,000 could receive \$100 per month per child for up to six months, starting in January 2023. Foster and kinship caregivers were eligible to receive the benefit for each child in their care. In 2023-24, the payments continued from April 1, 2023, until June 30, 2023. The program provided families of approximately 677,000 children, including 7,200 children in care, with inflation relief and every eligible family that applied or was auto-enrolled received the \$100/child monthly payment. The total cost associated with the Affordability Payment Program was approximately \$397 million.

Alberta Child and Family Benefit

The Alberta Child and Family Benefit (ACFB) provides support to Albertans who need it most while maintaining incentives for low-income families to join and remain in the workforce. The Alberta Child and Family Benefit is a direct tax-free financial assistance program that supports approximately 180,000 to 190,000 low-income families with children under 18. In 2023-24, the Alberta Child and Family Benefit provided approximately \$319 million in benefits to families, an increase of \$35 million when compared to 2022-23 expenses. The additional spending is primarily due to the indexation of Alberta Child and Family Benefit in January 2024 and population increase.

Performance Measure 2.a:

Percentage of youth receiving supports from the Advancing Futures program who successfully complete their planned studies.

Prior Years' Results				2023-24 Target	2023-24 Actual
2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23		
88%	89%	86%	91.5%	89%	89.5%

This performance measure tracks the success of young adults who have completed their planned studies. The Advancing Futures program provides support to young adults formerly from care as they transition into adulthood, navigate through complex adult systems, and pursue careers in their chosen field of study. The Advancing Futures program provides emotional and social supports and funding for youth who have been or continue to be in care or are receiving services from Children and Family Services or young adults formerly from care, as they transition to adulthood and pursue post-secondary studies with the goal to obtain a career.

In 2023-24, the ministry received 1,184 applications, and approved 989 young adults to receive a bursary to pursue post-secondary studies. Of the total Advancing Futures recipients, 89.5 per cent of the young adults successfully completed their educational studies in 2023-24. This was a two per cent completion rate decrease compared to 2022-23, but still higher than the target. Over the past five years the average completion rate for the program is 89 per cent.

Advancing Futures recipients are successful because they receive high skill development training and social and emotional support from the Advancing Futures Practitioners. This measure exceeded its target by 0.5 per cent, which demonstrates how well the ministry is addressing the needs of youth and young adults transitioning out of government care into post-secondary studies.

Reasons an Advancing Futures recipient may withdraw or be terminated from their educational studies could be attributed to a variety of factors such as medical leaves, mental health challenges, exposure to family violence, incorrect program, readiness, or absenteeism. The ministry continues to work to increase the success rate in young adults.

Performance Measure 2.b:
Percentage of children in care placed in family-based care.

	Prior Years' Results				2023-24 Target	2023-24 Actual
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23		
Indigenous	85%	86%	87%	86%	87%	86%
Non-Indigenous	86%	86%	86%	84%	87%	84%

Child intervention services are required when a parent cannot adequately protect a child from harm, or the danger of being harmed, as defined by the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*. This measure reflects the ministry's range of programs and services to help children live in a safe and nurturing family setting when out-of-home placements are necessary for short or longer periods. When children cannot live with their parents, kinship care is pursued as the first placement option.

In 2023-24, the ministry did not meet its target for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children placed in family-based care. Compared with 2022-23, results remained the same for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in care. The ministry continues to see an increasing number of children with mental health, addiction, and emotional and behavioural difficulties that require intensive supports and exceeds the level of care and supports provided by foster and kinship caregivers; this has negatively impacted the ability to achieve or exceed our target. In 2023-24, there was a two per cent decrease in the overall average number of family-based placements, while the average number of facility-based placements increased by five per cent compared to 2022-23.

Children and Family Services recognizes it did not meet its targets for this performance measure for a second consecutive year. In preparation for the 2025-28 Business Plan, the ministry is examining the performance measure methodology and targets to verify that factors impacting family-based placements for children in care, including case load numbers and case complexity, are identified and reflected. Additionally, work continues internally and with cross-ministry partners to increase access to additional supports and placement options for children and youth requiring intensive supports.

In addition, the ministry is committed to prioritizing family-based care, reducing the number of moves and minimizing disruption during a child's time in care and supporting kinship and foster families, where appropriate to provide permanent homes and continuity of care for children. In 2023-24, approximately two-thirds of children in care did not experience a change to their placement during the year.

Performance Indicator 2.c:
Number of First Nation children and youth served by Delegated First Nation Agencies (DFNAs).

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
First Nation children and youth receiving child intervention services (not in care and in care) from a DFNA¹	1,904	1,920	2,033	2,014	2,039
First Nation children and youth receiving child intervention services¹	6,382	6,350	6,302	6,142	6,057
Proportion of First Nation children and youth served by a DFNA	30%	30%	32%	33%	34%

¹Data reflects monthly average caseloads.

Over the last three years, an increasing proportion of First Nations children and youth received child intervention services from DFNAs through 20 Agreements with 37 of the 48 First Nations in Alberta. This includes children and youth residing on-reserve within their reserve's boundaries and off-reserve in circumstances where DFNA provisions are in place. Since 2020-21, 226 First Nation children, youth, and young adults have transferred from Children and Family Services to an Indigenous governing body.

This performance indicator provides one mechanism to demonstrate connection for First Nations children. Monitoring the number and proportion of children served by a DFNA helps the ministry assess adherence to its Guiding Principles under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*. This includes that Indigenous people should be involved in the planning and provision of services to, and decisions respecting Indigenous families and their children and supports ministry adherence to its Child Intervention Practice Framework.

It is important to review both figures together to gain a comprehensive view of services delivered to First Nations children because as the care of children and youth transfer to Indigenous governing bodies, the number of children receiving services from a DFNA or from the province may decline. Together, the increasing proportion of First Nations children receiving services from a DFNA, along with the number of First Nations children transferred to an Indigenous governing body, demonstrates the ministry's ongoing commitment to its Guiding Principles under both the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* and the Child Intervention Practice Framework and support for First Nations caring for their children.

Performance Measure and Indicator Methodology

Performance Measure 2.a:

Percentage of youth receiving supports from the Advancing Futures program who successfully complete their planned studies.

This performance measure describes the percentage of youth who received funding from the Advancing Futures program and successfully completed a program this fiscal year or continue to attend as of March in a given fiscal year.

Data is collected between April 1 and March 31. The total recipients include students approved for supports and a bursary, those who applied but never attended a program, those who withdrew during the year, and those whose award was terminated by the institution. Students who finished their planned studies within the fiscal year or were in studies within the fiscal year and will continue the following year are deemed to have successfully completed their planned studies.

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{total recipients in a fiscal year} - \text{never attended/withdrawn/terminated recipients in a fiscal year}}{\text{total recipients in a fiscal year}} \times 100$$

[Source: Bursary Information Module](#)

Performance Measure 2.b:

Percentage of children in care placed in family-based care.

This performance measure describes the percentage of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and youth who are placed away from home in a family-based placement including kinship care, foster care and permanency placements in a given fiscal year.

Results are calculated separately for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children using this formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{average monthly number of children in a family-based placement during a fiscal year}}{\text{average monthly number of children receiving services in care during a fiscal year}} \times 100$$

[Source: Child Intervention Case Information Online](#)

Performance Indicator 2.c:

Number of First Nation children and youth served by a Delegated First Nation Agency (DFNA).

This performance indicator describes the number of First Nation children and youth receiving child intervention services in Alberta as well as the number and proportion of First Nation children and youth being served by a DFNA; both on-reserve within the boundaries of their reserve and off-reserve. The proportion is calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{average monthly number of First Nation children and youth receiving services from a DFNA during a fiscal year}}{\text{average monthly number of First Nation children and youth receiving services during a fiscal year}} \times 100$$

[Source: Child Intervention Case Information Online](#)

Financial Information

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Ministry Financial Highlights

Statement of Revenues and Expenses (unaudited)

Year ended March 31, 2024

	2024		2023	Change from	
	Budget (Restated)	Actual	Actual (Restated)	Budget	2023 Actual
<i>(in thousands)</i>					
Revenues					
Services to First Nations Reserves	\$ 51,178	\$ 55,358	\$ 53,084	\$ 4,178	\$ 2,272
Other Federal Transfers	35,330	32,578	33,332	(2,752)	(754)
Other Revenue	7,699	38,393	15,112	28,694	21,281
Ministry total	94,207	124,327	101,528	30,120	22,799
Inter-ministry consolidation adjustments	-	-	-	-	-
Adjusted ministry total	94,207	124,327	101,528	30,120	22,799
Programs					
Ministry Support Services	6,083	5,875	5,325	(208)	550
Child Intervention	871,379	841,972	831,777	(29,407)	10,195
Early Intervention Services for Children and Youth	148,803	150,147	131,295	1,344	18,852
Indigenous Partnerships and Strategic Services	10,237	8,417	8,059	(1,820)	358
Alberta Child and Family Benefit	345,000	319,009	284,105	(25,991)	34,904
Affordability Supports and Inflation Relief - Families with Children	271,200	198,814	218,622	(72,386)	(19,808)
Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence	80,005	87,332	77,211	7,327	10,121
Ministry total	1,732,707	1,611,568	1,556,394	(121,141)	55,172
Inter-ministry consolidation adjustments	(6,670)	(5,145)	(2,988)	1,525	(2,157)
Adjusted ministry total	1,726,037	1,606,421	1,553,406	(119,616)	53,015
Adjusted annual deficit	\$(1,631,830)	\$(1,482,094)	\$(1,451,878)	\$ 149,736	\$ (30,216)

Revenue and Expense Highlights

Revenues

The total ministry revenue was \$124.3 million, approximately \$30.1 million greater than restated *Budget 2023* and \$22.8 million higher than the 2022-23 actuals.

Compared to restated *Budget 2023*

- Revenues increased mainly in the Other Revenues category due to adjustments in prior year accruals held for the Affordability Support and Inflation Relief program, refunds of surpluses by contracted agencies, and increases in purchased services and First Nations Recoveries for child intervention services provided to Delegated First Nation Agencies and other Provinces. There was also increased recoveries from Indigenous Services Canada for Services to First Nation Reserves attributable to rising cost-per-case for child intervention services, and due to new federal funding for the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence to support women's emergency shelters.

Compared to restated 2022-23 Actual

- Higher revenues were primarily due to adjustments in prior year accruals held for the Affordability Support and Inflation Relief program. In addition, there were increases in refunds of surpluses by contracted agencies, and in services provided to First Nations due to rising cost-per-case in the child intervention program and due to new federal funding for the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

Expenses

The total ministry's operating expense was \$1.6 billion in 2023-24, which was \$121.1 million or 7.5 per cent lower than restated budget and \$55.2 million or 3.5 per cent higher than the 2022-23 actuals.

Compared to restated *Budget 2023*

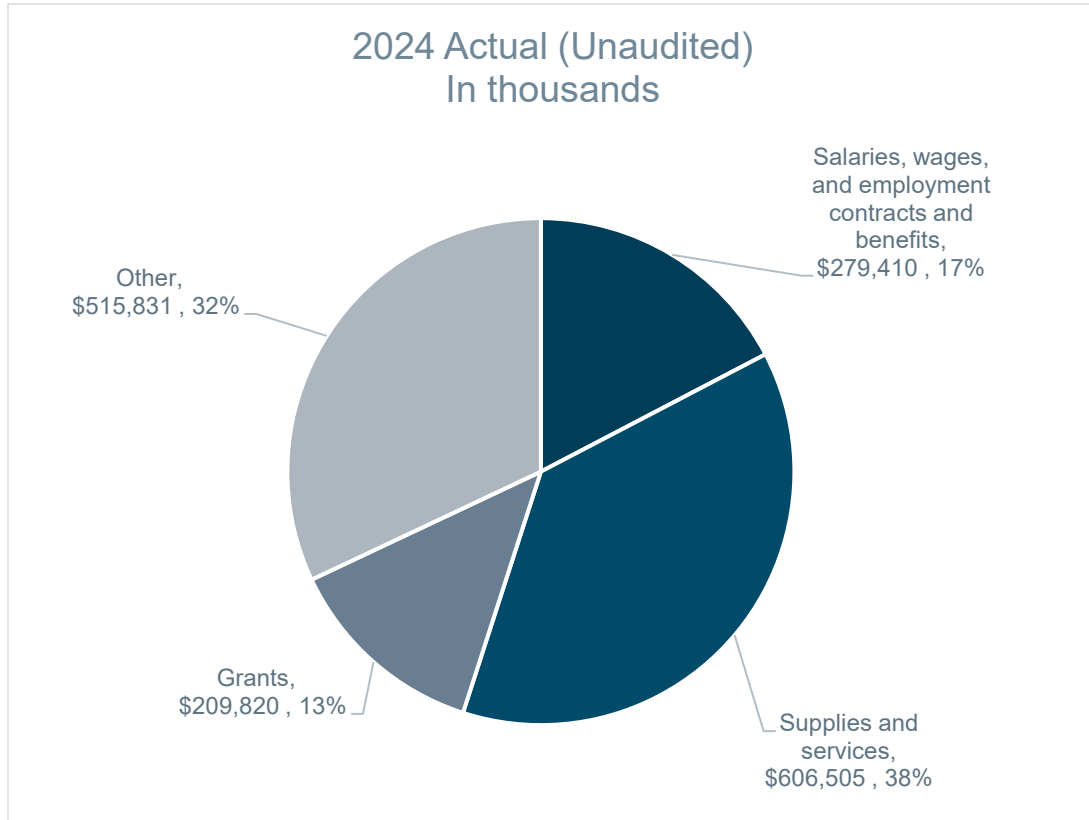
- Ministry Support Services expense of \$5.9 million was \$0.2 million or 3 per cent lower than budget due to delays in hiring.
- Child Intervention expense of \$842.0 million was \$29.4 million or 3.5 per cent lower than budget primarily due to vacancies, and timing of when the Adoption supplementary health benefit was implemented. This was partially offset by additional grants provided for the Youth Virtual Opioid Dependency Program.
- Early Intervention Services for Children and Youth expense of \$150.1 million was \$1.3 million or 0.9 per cent higher than budget due to additional spending to address caseload growth in the Transition to Adulthood Program.
- Indigenous Partnerships and Strategic Services expense of \$8.4 million was \$1.8 million or 17.8 per cent lower than budget due to lower cost of the Appeals Panel, staff vacancies, and less spending on supplies and services.
- Alberta Child and Family Benefit expense of \$319.0 million was \$26.0 million or 7.5 per cent lower than budget due to higher-than-expected incomes resulting in lower than budgeted costs in the program.
- Affordability Support and Inflation Relief – Families with Children expense of \$198.8 million was \$72.4 million or 26.6 per cent lower than budget due to lower than anticipated program uptake and administration costs.
- Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence expense of \$87.3 million was \$7.3 million or 9.1 per cent greater than budget due primarily to the commencement of work to address and accelerate the mandate commitment to Women's Emergency Shelters, and to support the federally funded National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

Compared to restated 2022-23 Actual

- Ministry Support Services expense was \$5.9 million, an increase of \$0.6 million or 10.3 per cent.
- Child Intervention expense was \$842.0 million, an increase of \$10.2 million or 1.2 per cent from 2022-23 primarily due to increased facility placements and case complexities, and to provide additional funding for the Youth Virtual Opioid Dependency Program.
- Early Intervention Services for Children and Youth expense was \$150.1 million, an increase of \$18.9 million or 14.3 per cent from 2022-23 primarily due to increased Transition to Adulthood Program and Advancing Futures caseloads and grants to youth emergency shelters.
- Indigenous Partnerships and Strategic Services expense was \$8.4 million, an increase of \$0.4 million or 4.4 per cent from 2022-23.
- Alberta Child and Family Benefit expense was \$319.0 million, an increase of \$34.9 million or 12.2 per cent from 2022-23 due to population growth and program indexing which began in January 2023.
- Affordability Support and Inflation Relief – Families with Children expense of \$198.8 million, a decrease of \$19.8 million or 9.0 per cent due to the program ending in June 2023 and final spending known compared to 2023-24 estimates and accruals.
- Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence expense of \$87.3 million, an increase of \$10.1 million or 13.1 per cent from 2022-23 to accelerate the mandate commitment to women’s emergency shelters and the commencement of work of the federally funded National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

Expenses – Directly Incurred Detailed by Object (unaudited)

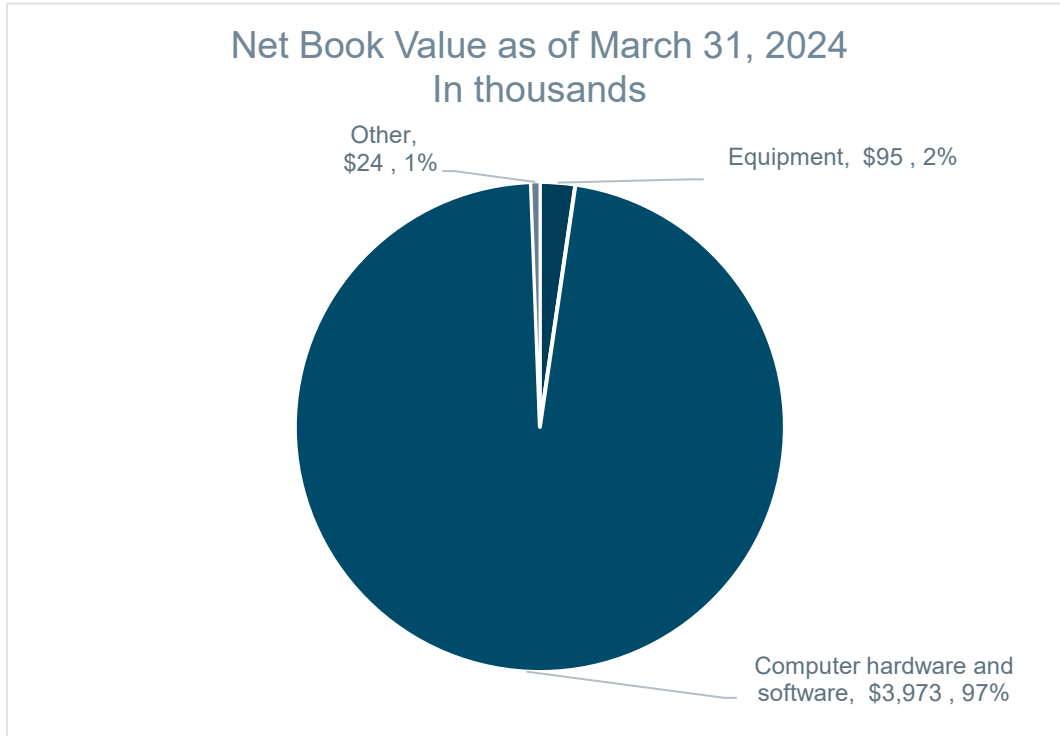
The following information presents expenses of the ministry that were directly incurred by object. The objective of disclosure of expenses by object is to provide information that is useful in evaluating the economic impact of government acquiring or consuming various types of resources.



- The ministry's largest operating expense was supplies and services, which totaled \$606.5 million (38 per cent) primarily to deliver the Child Intervention program.
- The next largest operating expense was "Other", which totaled \$515.8 million (32 per cent) and was primarily for the Alberta Child and Family Benefit program which provided \$319.0 million in support to low-income families maintaining incentives for families to join and remain in the workforce \$195.9 million Affordability Support and Inflation Relief program payments which provided \$100 per month to eligible families with children between April and June 2023.
- Expenditures for salaries, wages and employee benefits totaled \$279.4 million (17 per cent) and were mainly in the Child Intervention programs.
- Grant expenditures totaled \$209.8 million (13 per cent) in supports primarily for Early Intervention Services for Children and Youth (\$111.0 million); and Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence (\$83.8 million); and Child Intervention (\$14.3 million) programs.

Supplemental Financial Information

Tangible Capital Assets (unaudited)



- Total net book value of tangible capital assets was \$4.1 million.
- Computer Hardware and Software make up the largest component of tangible capital assets and represents \$3.97 million or 97 per cent of the total tangible capital assets net book value. This represents investments in Information Technology and systems enhancements, primarily for the Early Childhood Development System for Child Intervention.
- The remainder is comprised of \$94,900 in equipment such as commercial appliances, security systems and workstations and \$23,600 in “Other” for small tenant improvement projects.

Other Financial Information

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Trust Funds Under Administration (unaudited)

(in thousands)

The ministry administers trust funds that are regulated and other funds consisting of public money over which the Legislature has no power of appropriation. As the ministry has no equity in the funds and administers them for the purpose of various trusts, they are not included in the ministry's financial statements.

As of March 31, 2024, the trust funds under administration were as follows:

	2024	2023
Child Resources Rebate Trust Fund	<u>\$722</u>	<u>\$684</u>

Statement of Remissions, Compromises, Write-Offs (unaudited)

The following Statement has been prepared pursuant to section 23 of the *Financial Administration Act*. The Statement includes all Remissions, Compromises and Write-offs of the Ministry of Children and Family Services made or approved during the Fiscal Year.

(in thousands)

Remissions under section 21 of the <i>Financial Administration Act</i> :	\$ -
Compromises under section 22 of the <i>Financial Administration Act</i> :	-
Bankruptcies:	-
Write-Offs:	
Other Miscellaneous Receivables	570
Prior Year Over Accrual	7
Sub total	<u>577</u>
TOTAL	<u><u>\$ 577</u></u>

Lapse/Encumbrance (unaudited)

Year Ended March 31, 2024

(in thousands)

	Voted Estimate ⁽¹⁾	Supplementary Estimate	Adjustments ⁽²⁾	Voted Estimate	Voted Actuals ⁽³⁾	Over Expended (Unexpended)
	(in thousands)					
Program - Operating Expense						
1 Ministry Support Services						
1.1 Ministers Office	\$ 742	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 742	\$ 739	\$ (3)
1.2 Deputy Ministers Office	756	-	-	756	756	-
1.3 Corporate Services	4,585	-	-	4,585	4,382	(203)
	6,083	-	-	6,083	5,877	(206)
2 Child Intervention						
2.1 Program Planning and Delivery	11,178	-	-	11,178	10,730	(448)
2.2 Child Intervention Delivery	545,859	-	(3,400)	542,459	519,104	(23,355)
2.3 Supports for Permanency	67,619	-	-	67,619	69,649	2,030
2.4 Kinship and Foster Care Support	244,151	-	-	244,151	238,776	(5,375)
	868,807	-	(3,400)	865,407	838,259	(27,148)
4 Early Intervention Services for Children and Youth						
4.1 Early Intervention and Early Childhood Development	80,839	-	-	80,839	80,101	(738)
4.2 Youth in Transition	67,964	-	-	67,964	69,779	1,815
	148,803	-	-	148,803	149,880	1,077
5 Policy Innovation & Indigenous Connections						
5.1 Policy and Partnerships	7,637	-	-	7,637	5,965	(1,672)
5.2 Indigenous Connections	2,600	-	-	2,600	2,349	(251)
	10,237	-	-	10,237	8,314	(1,923)
6 Affordability Supports and Inflation Relief - Families with Children	7,700	(1,000)	-	6,700	2,867	(3,833)
7 Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence						
7.1 Program Planning and Delivery	2,480	-	-	2,480	2,402	(78)
7.2 Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence	23,212	2,550	-	25,762	25,425	(337)
7.3 Women's Shelters	54,313	-	-	54,313	59,055	4,742
	80,005	2,550	-	82,555	86,882	4,327
Capital Grants						
2.2 Child Intervention Delivery	1,000	-	2,000	3,000	3,000	-
7.3 Women's Shelters	-	-	-	-	550	550
	1,000	-	2,000	3,000	3,550	550
Total	\$1,122,635	\$ 1,550	\$ (1,400)	\$1,122,785	\$ 1,095,629	\$ (27,156)
(Lapse)/Encumbrance						\$ (27,156)
Program - Capital Investment						
2.2 Child Intervention Delivery	-	-	4,127	4,127	2,935	(1,192)
Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 4,127	\$ 4,127	\$ 2,935	\$ (1,192)
(Lapse)/Encumbrance						\$ (1,192)

⁽¹⁾ As per "Expense Vote by Program" and "Capital Investment Vote by Program" page 47 of the 2023-24 Government Estimates.

⁽²⁾ Adjustments include encumbrances, capital carry over amounts, transfers between votes and credit or recovery increases approved by Treasury Board and credit or recovery shortfalls. An encumbrance is incurred when, on a vote-by-vote basis, the total of actual disbursements in the prior year exceed the total adjusted estimate. All calculated encumbrances from the prior year are reflected as an adjustment to reduce the corresponding voted estimate in the current year.

⁽³⁾ Actuals exclude non-voted amounts such as amortization and valuation adjustments.

Annual Report Extracts and Other Statutory Reports

Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act

Section 32 of the *Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act* reads:

- 32 (1) Every chief officer must prepare a report annually on all disclosures that have been made to the designated officer of the department, public entity or office of the Legislature for which the chief officer is responsible.
- (2) The report under subsection (1) must include the following information:
- (a) the number of disclosures received by the designated officer, the number of disclosures acted on and the number of disclosures not acted on by the designated officer;
 - (b) the number of investigations commenced by the designated officer as a result of disclosures;
 - (c) in the case of an investigation that results in a finding of wrongdoing, a description of the wrongdoing and any recommendations made or corrective measures taken in relation to the wrongdoing or the reasons why no corrective measure was taken.
- (3) The report under subsection (1) must be included in the annual report of the department, public entity or office of the Legislature if the annual report is made publicly available.

There were two disclosures of wrongdoing filed with the public interest disclosure office for Children and Family Services between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024. The first disclosure warranted an investigation, which has been completed. No wrongdoing was found, and the file was closed. After reviewing the second disclosure, it was determined an investigation was not warranted and the file was closed.

Governmental Organizational Changes

In 2023-24, the ministry underwent organizational changes to support the delivery of government priorities and commitments. The Ministry of Children and Family Services was part of government's restructuring on June 9, 2023, which saw, among other innovative changes, responsibility for the prevention of family violence portfolio transition from the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services. On February 16, 2024, the child care system transitioned to the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Trade. The Preventive Family Services division, formerly Child Care and Youth Services division, was restructured to support the diverse array of youth services, including prevention and early intervention, and supports to prevent family and domestic violence throughout the province.

This change has allowed the Ministry of Children and Family Services to direct its resources to protecting and promoting the well-being of children, youth and families throughout the province, and to focus specifically on its mandate.