

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

Annual Report

Children's Services

2022-2023

Children's Services, Government of Alberta | Children's Services 2022–2023 Annual Report

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Note to Readers: Copies of the annual report are available on the Alberta Open Government Portal website www.alberta.ca

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Preface

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

The 2022-23 Annual Report reflects the 2022-25 ministry business plans, the Government of Alberta Strategic Plan, as well as the ministry's activities and accomplishments during the 2022-23 fiscal year, which ended on March 31, 2023.

The Annual Report of the Government of Alberta contains *Budget 2022* 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's 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 *Fiscal Planning and Transparency 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, 2023, was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act* and the government's accounting policies. All the government's policy decisions as at June 6, 2023 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



Over the last year, Albertans have faced increasingly challenging times as the cost of everything from food to fuel continued to rise. This has been especially challenging for families with children. I want to thank all the community agencies, child care operators and educators, and ministry staff who have worked tirelessly to support Alberta families and for your continued commitment to providing high-quality services that Albertans rely on. I am proud to share this report highlighting the work we have done to support vulnerable children and youth in care, reduce child care fees, remove barriers to adoption, and support Alberta families struggling with the impacts of inflation.

In response to the rapid rise in the cost of living, the ministry stepped up to provide immediate and long-term support, so children aren't the ones paying the price of inflation. Alberta's government implemented the Alberta Affordability Payment Program to provide \$600 per child between January and June 2023, which includes foster and kinship caregivers and indexing the Alberta Child and Family Benefit to support families most in need. In addition, to support operators through times of high inflation and to ensure child care fees remained stable for Alberta families, we increased funding for child care operators to offset fee increases and the costs associated with inflation and administration.

The ministry has made great progress in ensuring that Alberta families have access to high-quality, affordable, and inclusive child care options. In 2022-23, our government supported the creation of 9,584 new affordable licensed child care spaces across the province. In January 2023, the governments of Alberta and Canada announced the Cost Control Framework and For-Profit Expansion Plan as the next step in ensuring more private operators have an opportunity to participate in funding supports that make child care more affordable for Alberta families.

To support the growth in licensed child care spaces, we also took immediate and long-term steps to attract and retain early childhood educators across the province. This included increased wage top-ups for certified early childhood educators, which were also expanded to cover indirect and employer paid vacation and a one-time payment for certified early childhood educators employed in licensed child care in November and December.

Alberta's government has taken numerous steps to assist vulnerable children and youth across the province. This includes reinforcing our efforts to keep children connected to their family, community, and culture whenever possible, increasing spending to a total of \$832 million to address the growing complexity of cases, improving the supports provided to kinship and foster caregivers, and expanding our efforts to recruit more foster parents.

We have improved services to youth in care and young adults formerly in care to aid in their successful transition to adulthood through the launch of the Transition to Adulthood program. Often, these young adults have experienced trauma, live with mental health issues, and are more likely to face discrimination and barriers to education and training. That is why, in March 2023, new investments were announced that will remove some of the barriers youth and young adults face when transitioning out of care. This includes providing \$25.6 million over the next three years for the Transition to Adulthood Program and an additional \$2.5 million to help about 500 youth and young adults build a career in skilled trades with training and education.

Over the last year, our government remained committed to supporting First Nations that expressed interest in exercising authority over child and family services, as we will continue to do going forward. We know First Nations children and youth benefit from cultural and family connections, which is why we were proud to take part in the trilateral agreement between the Founding First Nations, and the governments of Alberta and Canada.

Our government is also helping Albertans looking to open up their hearts and their homes to a child in need of adoption. Investing \$4 million in 2023-24 will help to subsidize the cost of adoption and cover supplemental health benefits for adopted children, making it more affordable for Alberta families.

Since 2019, the ministry has made significant progress in reducing red tape. To date, we have cut red tape by 33.8 per cent, surpassing our goal of 33 per cent. By making red tape reduction a priority, our government has made life better for Albertans.

As we move forward, we will continue to build on the successes of this last year while recognizing the areas we need to improve. It is an honour to serve as the Minister of Children and Family Services and I look forward to working with our tremendous team and outstanding industry partners who are focused on and committed to getting the best possible results for Alberta families.

<original signed by>

Honourable Searle Turton
Minister of Children and Family Services

Management's Responsibility for Reporting

The executives of the individual entities within the ministry have the primary responsibility and accountability for the respective entities. 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's 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 2022-25 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 2022*.

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 consider 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 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's Services the information needed to fulfill their responsibilities; and
- facilitate preparation of ministry business plans and annual reports required under the *Fiscal Planning and Transparency 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 6, 2023

Results Analysis

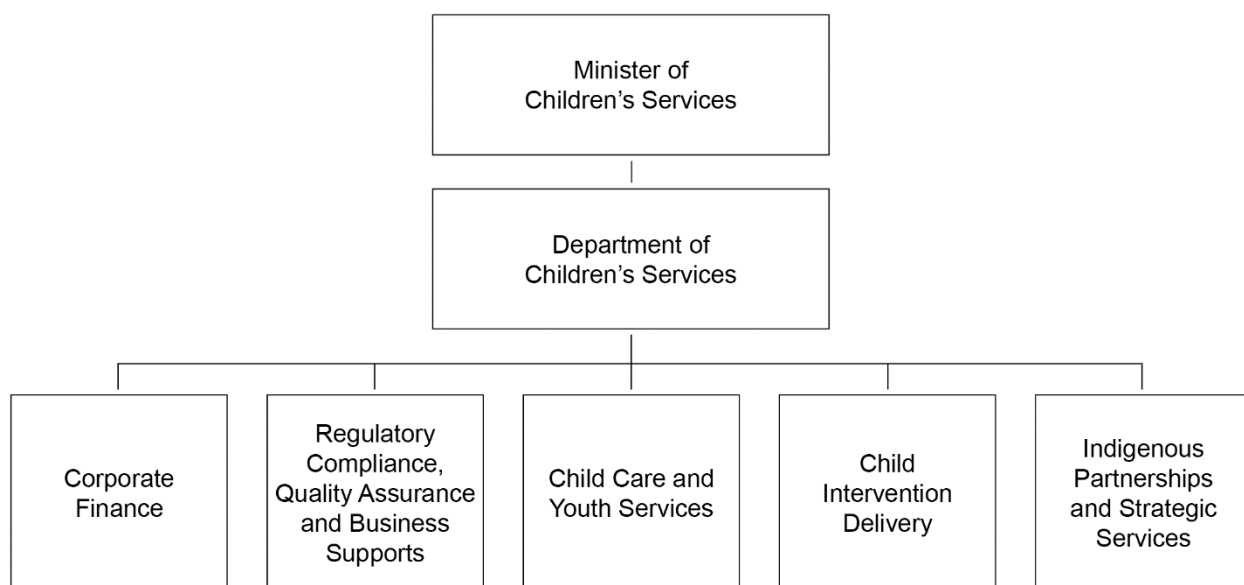
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Ministry Overview

Organizational Structure

In 2022-23, the organizational structure remained the same to support the delivery of government priorities and commitments, and to help ensure effective and efficient organization of divisions and branches.



Operational Overview

The Ministry of Children's Services administers programs that support families and communities from early learning, child development and community-based prevention through to early intervention supports and child intervention services. Children's Services' mandate focuses on the safety and well-being of children and youth. This includes services for children at home and in care, and through adoption and post-intervention services.

Information provided in this annual report aligns with the strategic direction of the Government of Alberta. This annual report highlights results achieved from delivery of key strategies and performance metrics described in the Children's Services 2022-25 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.

Children's Services aligned its services under three outcomes in 2022-23:

- Outcome One: Albertans have access to early childhood education and child care options that enable participation in training, education, or the workforce.
- Outcome Two: The well-being, resiliency, and cultural connections of children, youth and families are supported, and children and youth are protected.
- Outcome Three: Reduction in red tape imposed by legislation, regulations and associated policies and forms improves services for children, youth, and families.

The Department of Children's 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 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 adoptions.

Youth formerly in care transitioning to adulthood are eligible to receive services and supports up to the day before they turn 24 years old. Services focus on education, employment and career, mentoring, stability, and enrollment in adult support services to support a successful transition into adulthood.

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* and the *Early Learning and Child Care 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 coordinates the ministry's response to corporate initiatives, such as Red Tape Reduction, as well as responses to recommendations from review bodies and tracking of actions stemming from recommendations.

Child Care and Youth Services

The Child Care and Youth Services division is responsible for early learning and child care, as regulated under the *Early Learning and Child Care Act*, and prevention and early intervention programs and services. The division works to support children, youth, families and communities through policy and program development to support early development and learning, enhance resilience, reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors.

The division supports access to affordable and quality child care options for families, oversees licensing and monitoring of child care programs and child care staff certification, and provides funding to licensed child care programs to support recruitment and retention of a qualified workforce. The division also supports the development of prevention-focused policy and early

intervention programs for children, youth, and families. This includes the Family Resource Networks, mentoring, youth shelters, and mental health and youth suicide prevention supports.

Indigenous Partnerships and Strategic Services

The Indigenous Partnerships and Strategic Services division leads the ministry's strategic policy and initiatives, and stakeholder and community engagement. The division supports the ministry and its partners in taking a holistic approach to serve Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities, and in building and strengthening relationships. The division supports the development of partnerships with Indigenous communities and is responsible for promoting Indigenous cultural awareness and understanding throughout the ministry.

The division leads the department's participation in tripartite coordination agreement discussions under *An Act respecting First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, youth, and families*, as well as establishing Delegated First Nations Agency service delivery agreements with First Nations.

The division provides strategic policy development and coordination, policy advice and guidance for decision-making, legislative services and intergovernmental relations to support teams across the department and leads coordination on broader cross-divisional or cross-government policy initiatives.

Corporate Finance

The Corporate Finance division leads the ministry's 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 topics including workforce development and engagement, employee relations, occupational health and safety, 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

Legal Services provides a full range of non-litigation services and related legal advice to the ministry. Under a shared services model, Legal Services supports Children's 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 and Solicitor General 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 and Solicitor General.

Key Highlights

The following table represents Children's Services' key achievements in 2022-23, including progress toward commitments in the 2022-25 Government of Alberta Strategic Plan.

Created new child care spaces and supported the child care work force.	Supported the creation of 9,584 new child care spaces across the province and a qualified child care workforce by providing wage top-ups and professional development funding for 24,101 certified early childhood educators.
Announced the Cost Control Framework and For-profit Expansion Plan	Allows more private operators and spaces to be eligible for funding available through the Canada-Alberta Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.
Launched the Transition to Adulthood Program	Offers more specialized and coordinated supports tailored to specific needs and goals, enabling young adults formerly in care to transition into the adult system.
Increased access to youth suicide prevention supports	\$1.8 million in grants for 12 youth-focused community programs for children and youth to improve mental health and prevent suicide.
Achieved a 33.8 per cent reduction in red tape across the ministry	Exceeded the Government of Alberta target of 33 per cent by reducing paper forms and reviewing statutes, regulations, and guidelines.

Discussion and Analysis of Results

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

Key Priority One:

Enhancing Government services now and for the future.

Objective: Supporting Albertans most in need.

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 28-29.

Key Priority Two:

Growing Alberta's economy.

Objective: Connecting Albertans with family-supporting jobs.

Action: Improving access to child care through initiatives that support affordable, high-quality care that enables parents to participate fully in the labour market and supports Alberta's economic growth.

Detailed reporting found on page 16-18.

Red Tape Reduction

The Ministry of Children's 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.

On May 1, 2019, Children's Services had 10,079 regulatory requirements. Child care accounted for 43 per cent of all regulatory requirements and adoptions accounted for 23 per cent. The remaining 34 per cent were a blend of forms, guidelines, and statutes from other ministry programs. By the end of March 2023, the ministry had reduced 3,410 regulatory requirements, achieving a cumulative red tape reduction of 33.8 per cent, exceeding the Government of Alberta's target of 33 per cent.

Children's Services used online platforms to reduce dependence on paper forms and increase access to information.

Child care transformed its digital environment to make it easier for parents to receive child care subsidy. Over the past year, upgrades to the child care subsidy application process helped speed up processing times and removed multiple family application requirements, meaning parents who previously received a subsidy need not apply again.

Children's Services also implemented digital solutions for licensed child care providers to reduce paper processes. Building on the launch of the online Family Day Home and Child Care Licensing Portals, Children's Services reduced administrative burden in 2022-23 by updating the portal for child care claims, which improved the process for child care operators submitting monthly claims.

Children's Services worked with the ministries of Seniors, Community and Social Services, and Health to enhance supports available for preschool-aged children with disabilities. In 2022-23, the Inclusive Child Care program forms were streamlined to simplify the application process and reduce overlap and duplication. This resulted in a reduction of 566 regulatory requirements (5.6 per cent) and helped the ministry exceed the 33 per cent target.

Affordability Measures

In response to the rising cost of living, Alberta's government launched the Affordability Action Plan, a cross-government initiative to support Albertans struggling with the impacts of inflation. 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. Caregivers of children and youth in foster care and kinship care were also eligible for the payment. In 2022-23, an expense of \$218.6 million was incurred from January to March 2023 to provide and administer these Affordability Payments. The payments will continue from April 2023 until June 2023.

Outcome One: Albertans have access to early childhood education and child care options that enable participation in training, education or the workforce

Access to safe, high quality and affordable child care is critical to ensure Alberta parents can pursue education, training, and career opportunities that supports economic recovery.

Children's Services enables access to high quality and affordable child care for children 0 to kindergarten-age with investments under two agreements with the federal government: the \$3.8 billion Canada-Alberta Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement and the \$291 million Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (Bi-lateral and Workforce).

Although the federal agreements focus on child care for children 0 to kindergarten-age, Children's Services also continues to support families with school-aged children. This includes funding subsidies for out-of-school care and successfully lowering fees for kindergarten-age children by negotiating the inclusion of kindergarten-age children in federal affordability funding.

Key Objectives

1.1 Improve access to child care through initiatives that support affordability, high-quality, safety, inclusion and parent choice enabling parents to participate in and support Alberta's economic recovery.

Affordability – lowering child care fees

Children's Services maintained the 50 per cent reduction in parent fees for child care for all families of children birth to kindergarten-age through Affordability Grants to licensed child care programs. 2,228 licensed child care providers received a total of \$475 million in grant funding to reduce parent fees for 114,054 children enrolled in child care spaces in daycare facilities, family day homes and preschools.

Children's Services also supported families with children from birth to kindergarten-age by providing a child care subsidy for families making up to \$179,999 annually, further reducing fees for those that need it most. In total in 2022-23, \$252 million was spent on subsidies. As of March 31, 2023, 74,143 children received some level of subsidy.

Additionally, to help keep parent fees stable, in March 2023 eligible operators with Affordability Grants were able to receive one-time funding in lieu of increasing parent fees. 1,950 operators chose to receive the one-time funding totaling \$11 million.

Recognizing that many families require extra care for school-age children during summer months and when schools are closed, families with children from grades one to six enrolled in a licensed program outside of regular school hours were eligible to receive subsidy up to a family income threshold of \$89,999 annually. During July and August 2022, the subsidy rate for out-of-school care increased from \$366 to up to \$644. The rate increase helped parents offset the full-time child care fees for school-age children.

The Child Care Subsidy program was also expanded to include previously ineligible families. As of March 31, 2023, 1,819 temporary residents with a work permit and refugees and 777 Ukrainian newcomers fleeing the war received the child care subsidy.

Children's Services also offers the Infant Care Incentive program to support child care affordability for families with infants. The Infant Care Incentive encourages licensed child care programs to offer child care for infants between the ages of 0 and 18 months. These programs receive \$150 each

month for infants receiving child care for eight or more hours per month. As of March 31, 2023, funding was provided for child care for 7,942 infants. This is an increase of 1,091 infants compared to the previous year.

Accessibility – increasing access to licensed child care

Children's Services is supporting access to more licensed child care options and addressing increased demand, thereby enabling parents to go to work or school confident they will be able to find child care. Children's Services worked with municipalities, community-based organizations, child care operators and other stakeholders across the province, with a specific focus on creating spaces in areas of high need and high demand.

Including private operators in Alberta's child care system is critical to make sure Alberta families have choice and access to licensed child care that meets their family's needs. In January 2023, the governments of Alberta and Canada announced the Cost Control Framework and For-profit Expansion Plan as the next step to creating more affordable child care spaces. The framework enables up to 22,500 additional licensed private child care spaces to become eligible for funding supports over the next three years. This is in addition to 42,500 non-profit spaces being created by 2026. By including private operators in future space creation, the Cost Control Framework and For-profit Expansion Plan reflects Alberta's mixed-market and respects parents' choice.

To support the development of the Cost Control Framework and For-Profit Expansion Plan, between May 30 and June 6, 2022, Children's Services hosted five roundtable sessions. Thirty participants from private and non-profit facility-based programs located throughout Alberta participated and were requested to provide input into the impacts of potential cost control mechanisms on their operations. Additionally, more than 1,000 licensed child care operators provided valuable feedback on the cost of child care through the Children's Services Cost of Child Care Data Gathering questionnaire. Information gathered through the questionnaire provided a better understanding of child care funding needs, valuable input on core child care services and ways to reduce administration, red tape, and costs.

Further to this, in March 2023, Children's Services held four technical briefings with child care operators about the Cost Control Framework and For-profit Expansion Plan. In total, 582 child care operators participated. Additional opportunities to inform the Cost Control Framework implementation will be offered in 2023-24.

Increasing Child Care Spaces

As of March 2023, there were 116,660 licensed child care spaces for children 0 to kindergarten-age across the province, including 48,368 non-profit spaces (33,242 facility-based and 15,126 family day home spaces) and 68,292 private, facility-based spaces. This represents an increase of nine per cent or an increase of 9,584 spaces compared to March 2022, when there were approximately 107,076 licensed spaces.

Space Creation

In July 2022, Children's Services launched the Space Creation Grant for new or existing non-profit groups interested in creating new licensed, facility-based child care spaces or expanding existing spaces for children 0 to kindergarten age. In February 2023, the Space Creation Grant expanded to include new or existing licensed family day home agencies and was targeted to support areas of high need and high demand across the province. As of March 31, 2023, the ministry provided grants totaling \$12.6 million to 44 successful applicants who have committed to creating 3,156 licensed child care spaces.

To support unlicensed day homes to become licensed providers, the Space Creation Grant offered a \$500 incentive per space to new and existing operators to assist with any associated start-up costs. Becoming licensed provides assurance to parents that they are receiving quality, safe and affordable child care while providers have access to professional development and wage top ups and other government funding.

Supporting Inclusion

Parents and families across Alberta rely on licensed child care programs every day to support the growth and development of their children. Ensuring families have access to inclusive child care is necessary for children who require developmental or behavioural supports to participate meaningfully in the program. It also ensures parents can go to school or work knowing their child's needs are met.

Licensed child care programs and family day home agencies across the province have access to a range of inclusion supports. Supports build operators' and educators' capacity and confidence to include children who have extra support needs; increase families' access to inclusive child care and prevent the exclusion or removal of children from a licensed child care program.

The Inclusive Child Care Program is voluntary and uses evidence-based resources, on-site consultation, and training to support educators' inclusive practices. Such practices enable licensed child care programs to have the capacity to care for children with extra support needs, and to receive short-term, intensive resources and supports that include:

- access to on-site coaching and consultation;
- training and professional development;
- short-term funding to address the cost of extra staff so primary educators increase the knowledge and skill development to include children with extra support needs; and
- referrals to relevant community supports and assisting child care programs and families to navigate these services.

In 2022-23, five regional community partner agencies received \$7.2 million to provide inclusive child care coaching and capacity-building supports. In total, 705 licensed child care programs participated in the Inclusive Child Care Program, compared to 535 programs in 2021-22.

Unlicensed Child Care

The *Early Learning and Child Care Act* allows for unlicensed child care for up to six children not including the caregivers own children. Unlicensed child care includes nannies, private day homes, and informal arrangements with friends, neighbours, or family.

Children's Services investigates complaints about unlicensed child care providers when there is reason to believe a person is providing care for more than six children, not including their own, or an imminent threat exists to the health, safety, or welfare of any child to whom the person is offering or providing care. In 2022-23 nine stop orders were issued to unlicensed child care providers. To support quality and safety with unlicensed child care, Children's Services provided

Supporting parents to make informed choices about child care

- Choosing child care in Alberta <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/choosing-child-care-in-alberta>
- Child care lookup <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/oldfusion/ChildCareLookup.cfm>
- Child Care Connect
toll-free 1-844-644-5165

\$115,000 in grant funding to develop online resources to maintain an online community forum for unlicensed providers.

1.2 Enhance quality licensed child care through workforce investments that strengthen the recruitment and retention of skilled childhood educators and support their capacity to deliver quality child care.

The ministry supports the recruitment, training, and retention of qualified early childhood educators (ECE). As part of the Canada-Alberta Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, the ministry is committed to recruiting and retaining an additional 9,000 to 13,000 ECEs by 2026.

As of March 31, 2023, there were 24,101 certified ECEs working in licensed child care programs. Overall, this is a 22 per cent increase compared to March 31, 2022, when there were 19,756 ECEs and a 33 per cent increase since the signing of the Canada-Alberta Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement in November 2021. Broken down by certification level, this represents an increase of 32 per cent of Level 1 ECEs, 21 per cent of Level 2 ECEs and 12 per cent of Level 3 ECEs in 2022-23.

In April and May of 2022, the child care sector was asked to provide feedback on workforce issues and needs. Early childhood educators also had an opportunity to provide input through a workforce survey; 2,599 educators participated. In addition to providing incentives through wage top-ups to try to attract and retain educators, a public social media campaign profiled the workforce.

Wages and Benefits

In January 2023, wage top-ups increased by certification level for all ECEs: an increase of \$0.50 per hour for Level 1, \$1 per hour for Level 2 and \$2 per hour for Level 3. This was in addition to the expansion of the wage top-up program in October 2022, which included indirect time and paid vacation for all hours worked.

In recognition of ECEs who support the development and well-being of children in their care, Children's Services also invested \$17.4 million in a one-time payment for ECEs employed in licensed child care in November and December 2022.

Average Wages by Level

- Level 1: \$19.51 per hour in facility-based programs and \$23.48 per hour in home-based.
- Level 2: \$23.31 per hour in facility-based programs and \$26.91 per hour in home-based.
- Level 3: \$28.64 per hour in facility-based programs and \$31.60 per hour in home-based.

Certification

Children's Services reviews education, training, and competencies to determine eligibility for certification. Individuals who work in licensed facility-based child care programs must hold provincial certification issued by Children's Services.

In 2022-23, Children's Services worked to make it easier to enter the child care field. Enrollment capacity for the free Level 1 child care orientation course was increased from 4,000 to 10,000 spaces, and eligibility criteria was expanded to enable Albertans interested in receiving their Level 1 certification to enroll in the course. In January 2023, Children's Services also invested \$153,916 to modernize the orientation course. All updates to course content were made available in both English and French.

Early childhood educators (ECE) receive certification for Levels 2 and 3 through post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree programs or approved programs in private career colleges. In

January 2023, Children's Services began the development of a competency-based approach to certification. In addition to educational background, a competency-based model will better assess and evaluate an ECE's combined experience, knowledge, and skills helping ECEs increase certification and have progressive career pathways.

Professional Development

Having qualified ECEs is a key predictor of quality in early learning and child care programs. Children's Services provides access to up to \$4,387.50 in professional development funding to each ECE annually. This funding assists eligible ECEs with the costs of approved post-secondary tuition, textbooks and other approved training. It also includes release time funding to pay certified ECEs while they receive education and training. As of March 31, 2023, 7,082 ECEs accessed this funding totaling \$8.7 million.

In 2022-23, \$200,000 was invested to help immigrant women start and grow careers as certified ECEs. The project removed barriers and improved access for the completion of post-secondary early childhood education and other essential pre-employment training, providing Level 1 and 2 ECE training to about 230 women.

A key aspect of high-quality early learning and child care is a strong curriculum. Children's Services' Flight Curriculum Framework is evidence-based, supporting quality early learning and child care by maximizing learning and development opportunities using children's play and care experiences. In 2022-23, 1,902 educators were trained on Flight. Between September 2022 and March 2023, 182 programs participated in Pedagogical Partner Supports, which offers mentoring and coaching to implement the Flight curriculum. Between November 2022 and March 2023, a new intermediate level training series on Flight was launched and 307 ECEs were trained on it.

Supporting Operators

An affordable, inclusive quality child care system that gives Alberta parents the choice they want cannot be accomplished without dedicated operators. Children's Services supported operators in the past year by:

- Providing \$27 million through a one-time grant of \$280 per licensed space to assist with inflationary and administrative costs for operators with an Affordability Grant.
- Investing \$3.7 million in one-time payments to operators to offset increased costs for mandatory employer contributions due to increases in wage top-ups for ECEs.
- Providing access to business support, including access to information, professional development, and business mentoring for 1,419 programs.
- Developing video tutorials and other resources, such as the Affordability Grant Financial Reporting Guide, to assist operators in completing agreements and submitting claims.

Performance Measure 1.a:
Percentage change in the number of licensed child care spaces.

Prior Years' Results				2022-23 Target	2022-23 Actual
2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22		
5%	5%	4%	6%	8%	7%

The ministry supports Alberta's economy by improving access to affordable, high-quality, safe, and inclusive child care options that create employment opportunities and support parents' participation in the workforce. This measure reports the percentage increase in the number of licensed child care spaces. Spaces refer to the maximum number of children a child care program can accommodate. Child care programs include facility-based programs (daycare, out-of-school care, and preschool programs) and home-based programs (family day homes under a licensed agency, innovative, and group family child care programs).

In 2022-23, the number of licensed child care spaces increased by seven per cent, relative to the previous year, falling short by one per cent from the estimated target of eight per cent. The result is influenced by the supply and demand for child care throughout the province. This can be further influenced by population trends including growth and interprovincial migration, labour market participation and personal choice.

Performance Indicator 1.b:**Enrollment in Facility-Based Child Care programs, Family Day Home, Innovative and Group Family Child Care.**

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Total number of spaces (preschool)	114,436 (17,188)	121,671 (16,696)	127,860 (15,609)	136,867 (15,359)	146,484 (15,757)
Number of children enrolled (preschool)	92,254 (13,456)	97,553 (11,789)	71,579 (12,678)	101,409 (18,017)	128,914 (19,947)
Per cent of total enrollment (preschool)	80.6% (78.3%)	80.2% (70.6%)	56.0% (81.2%)	74.1% (117.3%)	88.0% (126.6%)
Number of children receiving subsidy	25,272	28,320	22,967	55,274	74,143

This indicator reports on the total number of child care spaces, the number of children enrolled, the percentage enrolled with respect to the available spaces and the number of children receiving subsidy. Child care spaces include daycare, family day home, out of school care, innovative and group family child care programs. Preschool spaces and enrollment are reported separately (in parenthesis) from other types of child care spaces and enrollment.

In 2022-23, there were 162,241 total licensed child care spaces in the province. The result shows an increase of spaces over the 2021-22 results where there were 152,226 total spaces. The total number of children enrolled in a licensed child care program also increased from the previous year after recovering from a period of low enrollment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In total 74,143 children were supported through a full or partial child care subsidy in 2022-23, an increase of 18,869 from 2021-22. Factors for the increase in the overall number of subsidies includes continued support for children requiring out-of-school care and who are in grades one to six, and the inclusion of temporary residents with a work permit, refugees and Ukrainian newcomers fleeing the war.

Outcome Two: The well-being, resiliency and cultural connections of children, youth and families are supported, and children and youth are protected

Child intervention services were delivered to 1.3 per cent of the children in Alberta in 2022, down from 1.4 per cent in the previous year. This is due to the Alberta population increasing, and the number of children receiving services decreasing. The *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* (CYFEA) allows children to be brought into care if they are not safe in their own homes. Adoption of children, including government, private, and international adoption is also covered under the CYFEA. The *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act* and Regulation protects and provides specialized services to sexually exploited children. The *Drug-Endangered Children Act* and Regulation authorizes the apprehension of children living in drug houses or exposed to illegal drug activity.

Services for Children and Youth at Home or In Care*Intake and Assessment*

Child intervention practitioners are required to assess all referrals from the community to determine whether a child or youth needs intervention. In 2022-23, Children's Services completed 20,936 assessments resulting in 3,528 (17 per cent) children and youth having a child intervention file opened because their safety or well-being was at risk.

Since 2019, the number of referrals with reasonable and probable grounds for intervention have decreased. While the overall volume is down, the proportion of intakes received from each type of referral source (e.g., education, healthcare providers, anonymous) has remained consistent since 2021-22. The proportion of intakes moving to investigation increased (in 2022-23, 77 per cent of intakes moved to investigation, compared to 54 per cent in 2019-20). Over the same time, re-occurrence, where a child or youth returns to the child intervention system following recent family preservation or reunification, also showed a decrease from 2019-20 (14 per cent) to 2022-23 (12 per cent).

Children's Services' response to reports of child abuse and neglect was refined to better understand why a child needs intervention through additional questions and tools to determine safety concerns. These steps are expected to result in severe abuse and neglect cases being addressed more quickly and are intended to ensure Children's Services is only involved with families who meet its legislative authority. This approach is in the best interest of the child and potentially less traumatic for the family.

In addition to the new approach to gathering and analyzing information, daytime reporting and intake functions were consolidated from 72 worksites to five, with the goal of providing a more consistent experience for vulnerable Albertans, reducing duplication of work, and ensuring more time can be spent supporting children and families. Together, these changes allow a dedicated and more specialized workforce to complete the initial assessment, facilitate stronger decision-making consistent with Children's Services legislative mandate and improve consistency across the province.

Child Intervention Caseload

In 2022-23, on average each month 9,507 children and youth received child intervention services. Compared with last year, the overall caseload of children receiving services has decreased six per cent. Since 2019-20, overall child intervention caseload has seen year-over-year decreases, with a 14 per cent decrease over the last four years. These decreases are due in part to the pandemic but were more recently influenced by the reduction of intakes and fewer cases opening, having cascading impacts on the not-in-care caseload, followed by temporary care and permanent care.

This reduction, combined with a greater number of children and youth ending involvement compared to opening involvement, resulted in overall caseload decreases.

Services to children at home- Voluntary Agreements

In 2022-23, on average each month 1,647 children and youth were receiving services while remaining in their family home under a not-in-care legal authority, of whom 80 per cent were in a voluntary family enhancement agreement. Under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* (CYFEA), Children's Services can enter into an agreement with the guardian or the person who has custody of the child or youth in need of intervention when the child or youth's intervention needs can be met without requiring intrusive measures. The goal is to support the child or youth's safety and well-being through the agreement while they remain in the care of the guardian or custodian.

Services to Children and Youth In Care

When children and youth are receiving services in-care, this means they are unable to return to their parent or guardian due to safety concerns as defined under the act. In 2022-23, on average each month 7,860 children and youth were in care, 29 per cent of whom received services under a temporary care legal authority and 71 per cent received services under a permanent care legal authority.

Of all children and youth in care, 86 per cent were in a family-based placement, including kinship (40 per cent) and foster care (40 per cent), with six per cent in other family-based placements. For the remaining children in-care, 11 per cent were in a facility-based placement such as community group care, a campus-based treatment center or personalized community care, and three per cent were living independently or in a community resource (hospital, shelter, *Youth Criminal Justice Act* facility). Children's Services is seeing an increasing number of children with mental health, addiction, emotional and behavioural difficulties. These children require intensive supports and exceed the level of care and supports provided by foster and kinship caregivers.

As of March 31, 2023, there were:

- 2,321 kinship caregiver providers; and
- 1,540 foster caregivers.

Kinship Assessment and Support

In response to previous recommendations related to strengthening kinship care supports and assessment, Children's Services implemented a new provincial approach to assessing and supporting kinship caregivers in 2022. This included a new kinship care workforce model as well as an Assessment and Support for Kinship Caregiving (ASKC) tool, which simultaneously assesses and supports caregivers, while considering the distinct characteristics of kinship caregiving. Although an Indigenous worldview is intentionally introduced throughout the tool and practice, it is designed to be suitable for all cultures.

Foster Caregiver Recruitment Campaign

In early 2023, Children's Services launched a province-wide campaign to recruit new, quality caregivers to ensure children in government care are placed with caregivers who meet their physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual needs. Data collected during the campaign shows an increase in the number of Albertans expressing interest in becoming foster parents.

Therapeutic Foster Caregiving within a family-based care setting

In the 2022-23-year, therapeutic foster caregiving (TFC) services were introduced. This is a new evidence-based approach for children and youth who require therapeutic and specialized services within a family-based care setting. Therapeutic intervention provides support to a child or youth so they can transition successfully back to their home or to a less intensive out-of-home placement.

This placement combines the strengths and positive aspects of therapeutic interventions, family-based care, a trauma-informed approach, and specially trained caregivers to provide placements for children and youth who require therapeutic and specialized placement. The care needs of children and youth supported within this model extend beyond the common emotional, behavioural, and trauma-impacted care needs typically addressed within general foster care. Children and youth matched to a TFC placement would likely otherwise be supported in group care. In the TFC model a child-specific Therapeutic Care Plan is created for each child and youth. This plan guides day-to-day therapeutic caregiving and incorporates cultural elements as healing and therapeutic interventions.

Children's Services has invested almost \$7.3 million annually for the development of 164 therapeutic foster care beds across Alberta. Successful vendors are implementing their programs and are in the early stages of recruiting and training therapeutic foster caregivers.

Personalized Community Care

Personalized community care programs are community-based care settings individualized to a child's and youth's complex mental health, behavioural, emotional, developmental, and trauma-impacted care needs. These care settings support a low number of children and youth within a highly structured, supervised, and staffed community care environment. There were 35 personalized community care providers as of March 31, 2023, a 17 per cent increase from last year.

Two specific personalized community care programs are a joint initiative among Children's Services, Mental Health and Addiction (MHA), and Alberta Health Services (AHS). The programs provide specialized out-of-home placement to vulnerable and complex children and youth with child intervention status. With the 2021 investment of more than \$5 million, the ongoing collaboration and the focus on continuous program improvement, Children's Services continues to increase its capacity to respond to developmental, mental health, treatment, and trauma-impacted care needs of children and youth with complex needs.

Community Group Care

Community group care provides placements for children and youth in a smaller, community-based, staffed home-like setting, when a family-based setting such as kinship care or foster care does not meet their needs. Services focus on positive developmental outcomes, consistency, connection, and skill development within a nurturing, supportive, and safe environment. Group care facilities licensed under the CYFEA are required to meet and maintain specific standards to renew their licenses for a term of up to three years. As of March 31, 2023, there were 232 community group care facilities, a nine per cent increase from last year.

Campus-based Treatment Centres

In 2022, Children's Services announced four government-operated youth treatment facilities would become campus-based treatment centres providing 24/7 intensive and therapeutic treatment for youth with complex emotional and behavioural needs. In addition to on-site clinical and assessment services, these centres provide housing, intensive recreation therapy, on-site education, academic support, discharge, and transition planning.

In 2022-23, Children's Services partnered with Hull Services and Dr. Bruce Perry to implement the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) in the four-government-operated Campus-based Treatment Centres.

Additional continuous improvement activities identified in 2023-24 include the addition of facility dogs, occupational therapy services, and embedding therapeutic crisis intervention.

Child Intervention Outcomes

In 2022-23, Children's Services saw 3,886 children and youth end child intervention involvement. Based on preliminary data:

- 46 per cent of these children and youth achieved family preservation,
- 23 per cent achieved family reunification,
- Ten per cent achieved adoption or private guardianship, as outlined in the following sections on Legal Permanency and Adoptions,
- Eight percent of children and youth ended involvement because of rescinding a Permanent Guardianship Order, transferring to an Indigenous governing body or still have a pending closure reason. There were also a number (0.6 per cent) of children and youth who passed away during their child intervention involvement, and
- Youth who ended involvement in the child intervention system on their 18th birthday represented the remaining 13 per cent.

When a child is in permanent government care, Children's Services focuses on timely legal permanency through a return to a guardian, adoption or private guardianship. In 2022-23, on average each month, 5,615 children were in permanent care. Last year, 373 children ended child intervention involvement by adoption or private guardianship. Most children achieving legal permanency do so with their current caregivers. In 2021-22, 120 more children ended child intervention involvement compared to 2022-23, which is attributed to court closures during the pandemic that resulted in a backlog of court applications. In the past year, there has been a stabilization in applications, post-pandemic.

Efforts to increase legal permanency for children in permanent care continue through recent policy and practice revisions. These provide clear direction and processes for the involvement of First Nations and other Indigenous communities in legal permanency planning and establishes greater oversight and accountability for timely and effective legal permanency planning.

Adoption

Children's Services continues to identify ways to make the adoption process less arduous and more efficient. A brief adoption recruitment campaign ran on social media in February and March 2023 encouraging Albertans to consider adopting a child or youth in permanent government care. 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 whereas international adoption involves the adoption of children residing outside Canada.

Private guardianship is another option to achieve legal permanency. Private guardianship is the preferred option among many Indigenous communities. In 2022-23, there were 143 Indigenous children who achieved legal permanency through private guardianship compared to 74 non-Indigenous children. Whereas 114 non-Indigenous children were adopted through private or international adoptions compared to 42 Indigenous children.

Albertans may access profiles of some children in need of permanent homes through the following government website <https://www.alberta.ca/child-profiles-for-adoption.aspx>.

The Wednesday's Child program, a long-standing partnership with CTV spanning over 40 years, features children in care who are ready to be adopted, but for whom general recruitment efforts has 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 that help address a child or youth's emotional or behavioural needs. In 2022-23, an average of 4,654 children and families received permanency supports from Children's Services each month.

Serious Injuries, Deaths, and Incidents

The CYFEA mandates the public reporting of deaths, serious injuries and incidents of children and youth in care or receiving services.

The act defines a serious injury as a life-threatening injury to a child or an injury that may cause significant impairment of the child's health. There were seven reports of serious injuries involving young people receiving child intervention services in 2022-23, which is the same number of reports as in 2021-22. Three of the reports involved children in care, three were for children not in care and one report was for a young adult over 18 receiving supports through a Support and Financial Assistance Agreement.

In 2022-23, 50 children and youth receiving child intervention services died in comparison to 49 the previous year. Of these children and youth, nine deaths occurred during initial assessment, six with an open not-in-care legal authority, 19 were in care, and 16 were over age 18 and receiving supports through a post-18 intervention supports program. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner determined that ten deaths were accidental, two deaths were undetermined, one death was medical and two deaths were suicides. The manner of death for 24 children and youth is pending a determination by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Eleven 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.

The number of deaths of young children ages 0 to five years receiving child intervention services was consistent with the range of deaths reported over the last ten years. Deaths of infants, up to age two, make up a large portion of the deaths in this age group because this is the most medically fragile and vulnerable age group. From April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023, 40 per cent of the deaths of children ages 0 to five years were due to medical or natural causes.

As per *the Child and Youth Advocate Act* and the CYFEA, all 50 deaths and seven serious injuries were reported to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

Children's Services continues to improve its system to support the safety and well-being of children receiving child intervention services. The ministry developed the Electronic Risk Identification and Mitigation Initiative (E-RIMI), an integrated electronic data system that supports the identification of risk across the child intervention continuum from intake, investigation, and ongoing involvement.

In 2022-23, there were 179 substantiated incidents, which is a 35 per cent decrease from 2021-22. There were 93 incidents involving significant events such as being the victim, perpetrator, or witness to a serious event. There were 86 incidents, such as emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, or neglect allegations involving a caregiver.

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 the perpetrator of a serious event such as, but not limited to, a criminal matter.

Over-Representation of Indigenous Children and Youth

Children's Services continues 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 2022-23, on average each month, 6,601 Indigenous children received child intervention services, and accounted for 69 per cent of the provincial caseload.

Families can receive child intervention services regionally from Children's Services or through one of 19 Delegated First Nations Agencies, representing 36 of 48 Alberta First Nations. Of the 6,601 Indigenous children receiving child intervention services, seven per cent of children identified as Métis and primarily receive services regionally, and the remaining 93 per cent of children identified as First Nations. Of the 6,142 First Nations children receiving child intervention services, 33 per cent received services from a Delegated First Nations Agency.

Identification of First Nations children

Through intentional focus and in partnership with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), Children's Services 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, 1,483 ISC requests have been resolved and 843 children and youth are registered under the *Indian Act*.

In 2022-23, 6,142 First Nations children received child intervention services. There were 5,375 children and youth in care identified as First Nations, 3,611 (67 per cent) of whom identified as Registered under the *Indian Act*; 1,417 (26 per cent) children and youth have potential to be registered status and 347 (seven per cent) children and youth are non-registered.

Strengthening Relationships and Developing Collaborative Partnerships with Indigenous Communities

Children's Services is committed to reconciliation and strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities, leaders, and organizations. Maintaining positive and productive relationships with Indigenous communities and organizations supports Children's Services' work through creating pathways resulting in increased understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, and worldviews.

In 2022-23, Children's Services:

- Met regularly with the Métis Nation of Alberta to work on mutual priorities. With support from Children's Services, the Métis Nation of Alberta 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 Blackfoot Confederacy through a Child and Family Services Sub-table under the Protocol Agreement between the Government of Alberta and the Blackfoot Confederacy for discussion on matters of mutual concern. A 2022-23 Action Plan was co-developed, and

Children's Services provided a grant to support the establishment of an Elders Advisory Committee.

- Worked with the Stoney Nakoda-Tsuut'ina Tribal Council (G4) 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 for discussions on matters of mutual concern. A 2022-23 Action Plan was co-developed and through a grant from Children's Services, the Stoney Nakoda-Tsuut'ina Elders Advisory Committee met throughout the year to explore and document traditional ways and teachings for living, supporting families, raising, and protecting children.
- Continued to enhance the relationship with the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Alberta (SSISA) through quarterly meetings and in 2022-23, in partnership with Children's Services, SSISA offered five cultural trainings to increase ministry staff awareness of the Sixties Scoop.

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

Children's Services has improved services to youth in government care and young adults formerly in-care to better support their transition to adulthood. In 2022-23, the ministry introduced new programming and enhancements, including the Transition to Adulthood Program (TAP), mentoring supports and the Youth Employment Connections Program. The TAP replaced and improved upon the previous financial agreement, known as the Support and Financial Assistance Agreement (SFAA).

For 2022-23, nearly \$53 million was directed to the Youth in Transition program. In 2022-23, of the 487 young adults who ended involvement in the child intervention system on their 18th birthday, 452 (93 per cent) went on to access post-18 intervention supports. TAP assists young adults who received child intervention services in achieving independence, establishing stable, life-long relationships, and pursuing education and employment. As of March 31, 2023, 1,719 young adults had an open agreement for post-18 intervention supports through TAP. Young adults aged 18 to 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.

TAP clients can choose services from any one of four pathways: Adult Support Services, Stability, Employment and Career, and Education. Clients may identify a primary pathway, and access supports and services from another pathway depending on their goals. Choosing a pathway helps guide the young adult and provide a primary focus. Regardless of their chosen pathway all have access to a dedicated practitioner, financial supports up to age 22, soft supports, life skills, cultural connections, and mentorship. At the end of the fiscal year, eight per cent of TAP clients were still in the process of selecting a pathway.

Transition to Adulthood Program Pathways

Four pathways exist to fit the youth's specific needs and goals:

- Adult Support Services
- Stability
- Employment and Career
- Education

Adult Support Services

Young adults in this pathway require supports to transition to adulthood. Supports are geared to the capabilities of the young adult and ensure a lifelong network of supports using the most appropriate adult services. Young adults enrolled in adult disability services in other Federal or Provincial programs can receive soft supports through the TAP. As of March 31, 2023, 13 per cent of youth were enrolled in the adult support services pathway.

Stability

Young adults in this pathway require supports to achieve stability, including building the young adults' support networks, engaging in services and activities to overcome barriers to independence, and ensuring young adults have the life skills they require. At the end of March, 36 per cent of participants were enrolled in the stability pathway.

Employment and Career

Young adults in this pathway 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 on how to handle transitions. While the focus of this pathway is on employment, young adults are also supported to engage with or establish their support network, access resources/services, and build life and self-care skills. As of March 31, 2023, 24 per cent of participants were enrolled in the employment and career pathway.

Education

Young adults in this pathway are focused on education. This includes high school completion, upgrading or the Advancing Futures program for those young adults formerly in care who attend post-secondary education. The program provides funding, emotional and social supports. Advancing Futures continues to be the only program of its kind in Canada.

Young adults who have been in government care prior to their 25th birthday can apply to Advancing Futures and can receive supports to pursue their educational goals for up to five years, or prior to their 31st birthday. In 2022-23, \$14 million helped 1,057 young adults in the Advancing Futures program with tuition, books and supplies and student expenses, which also included monthly living allowance, transportation, childcare and medical. Of the total number of young adults; 30 per cent were enrolled in a degree program, 36 per cent in a diploma program, 19 per cent in a certificate program or trade and 15 per cent completed upgrading in 2022-23.

Advancing Futures is accessible to TAP clients as well as other young adults formerly in-care who qualify. As of March 31, 2023, 19 per cent of TAP participants received supports from the education pathway, with close to 300 accessing both TAP and Advancing Futures.

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 2022-23, 25 recipients each received a \$2,000 scholarship for achieving a grade point average of 3.8, with five students achieving a 4.0, the highest possible grade point average.

2.2 Partner with Indigenous Governing Bodies to develop agreements ensuring greater authority for Indigenous child and family services.

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 for all provinces and territories.

Coordination agreements are intended to articulate roles and responsibilities to ensure no service gaps are created as First Nations assume authority. Children's Services is committed to participating in trilateral coordination agreement discussions under the act at a First Nations' request.

In 2022-23, Alberta participated in coordination agreement table discussions with Indigenous Services Canada and Loon River First Nation, Lubicon Lake Band, and Peerless Trout First Nation, collectively known as the Founding First Nations, resulting in the signing of a trilateral coordination agreement on March 31, 2023. Children's Services is committed to supporting the Founding First Nations as they take the next step in assuming authority over child and family services. Children's Services also collaborated with Louis Bull Tribe to support the transition to their law.

Child intervention practices continue to demonstrate alignment with the national principles of the federal Act and the CYFEA. Children's Services collaborated with Indigenous communities for the provision of child and family services to Indigenous children, youth, and families. To build and maintain connections to culture, language, and community, child intervention practices continue to include early identification of the Indigenous background of any child or youth receiving 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 and development and caregiver capacity and support.

Family Resource Networks

Family Resource Networks (FRNs) 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. Through 70 Networks made up of 136 partner agencies, children, youth, and families can access a variety of programming. These programs range from universal prevention supports to more targeted and intensive supports aimed at strengthening caregiving capacity, support for healthy child development and well-being, and increased social connections and supports. 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.

Of the 70 FRNs, 18 specialize their services to unique cultural and linguistic communities, including seven networks to support urban Indigenous families, eight FRNs in Metis Settlements, one to support Francophone families, and two to support newcomer, immigrant, and cultural minority families. Evaluation findings show FRNs are positively impacting children, youth and families. 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.

In 2022-23, \$63 million was spent on the FRN program. Approximately 32,200 caregivers and 48,600 children and youth accessed services. Of the total number of caregivers, children and youth who accessed services, 29 per cent self-identify as Indigenous; two per cent Francophone; seven per cent did not identify English/French as their first language and eight per cent were born outside of Canada. The table below provides a breakdown of caregivers, children and youth who accessed FRN services by age.

Children 0-6 years	26,120
Children 7-13 years	14,458
Youth 14 - 18 years	8,020

Caregivers over 18 years	29,086
Caregivers under 18 years	1,054
Caregiver age unknown	2,089

Based on findings from the ongoing evaluation of the FRN program, investments were made to address service gaps. These include increased funding to all eight Metis Settlements and strengthening youth programming for pregnant and parenting teens. In 2022-23, 900 individuals across the province accessed immediate mental health supports and 65 FRN agencies were engaged to improve their capacity to provide services and supports to address the unique needs and experiences of young parents. In March 2023, the ministry invested \$1 million to build FRN program capacity and expand ethnocultural services to rural communities.

While FRN services are available to all families, the program strives to ensure Indigenous children, youth, and families have access to culturally rooted promotion, prevention and early intervention programs and services that reflect the unique experiences of Indigenous people. Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing are integrated in all FRNs through ongoing training and capacity building. In 2022-23, 94 per cent of FRNs provided services grounded in Indigenous cultures and teachings, including ceremonies, language, and culture. Additionally, as a part of the ongoing evaluation of FRNs, an Indigenous Advisory Collective, made up of representatives from Indigenous run FRNs, provides feedback on culturally appropriate data collection methods and the development of outcomes that reflect Indigenous ways of knowing.

Community-based Supports

Prevention and early intervention support delivered in the community, by the community, is key to reducing youth suicide and creating opportunities for mentoring. In 2022-23, Children's Services administered funding to approximately 50 community-based organizations for the provision of mentoring, youth suicide prevention, prevention and early intervention supports and services for children and youth across Alberta including 13 First Nations communities, youth emergency shelters and mental health.

- \$1.5 million helped support mentoring opportunities for children and youth, with a focus on youth in care.
- \$1.8 million supported the Youth Suicide Prevention grant program.
- \$1.4 million was invested in prevention and early intervention services on First Nations.
- \$4.7 million to seven youth emergency shelters across the province.
- \$1.5 million was spent on mental health services and supports for children and youth.

Mentoring

The ministry provides a range of mentoring supports for children and youth, including Indigenous youth, youth transitioning out of government care, and 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. In 2022-23, \$1.5 million supported community organizations in offering mentoring opportunities, including the Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP) with \$125,000 annually, which helps to develop and deliver high quality mentoring resources province wide.

Youth Suicide Prevention

Launched in March 2019, Building Strength, Inspiring Hope: A Provincial Action Plan for Youth Suicide Prevention 2019-24, focuses on targeted prevention, intervention, and post-intervention

activities for priority youth populations, including Indigenous youth. The Youth Suicide Prevention Grant Program was launched in July 2022 to advance Action Plan outcomes.

In 2022-23, the ministry provided \$1.8 million to 12 youth-focused community programs from regions across the province to serve and support the mental health of young people. Since the grant program launched, grant recipients are reporting successful partnerships, trained facilitators, content development, provision of training, increased awareness and engaged youth in programming.

Early Intervention on First Nations

Children's Services has provided grant funding to Indigenous communities through the Early Intervention in First Nation Communities Grant Program (EIP) since 1996. EIP was implemented as a community driven program to support improved child development and well-being among infants, children, youth, and families in First Nations communities.

In 2022-23 Children's Services provided approximately \$1.4 million to 17 programs delivering early intervention, prevention, and youth support services in 13 different First Nations communities. First Nations communities implemented a wide variety of supports using funding through the EIP Program, including meal programs to share cultural teachings; community kitchen classes to support youth in developing life skills; and culture camps to share traditional teachings.

EIP honours community knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing and supports communities to determine the types of programs in response to the needs and desired outcomes they identify.

Youth Emergency Shelters

Youth shelters provide emergency, short-term accommodation, and basic needs to Alberta youth in need. In 2022-23 Children's Services provided approximately \$4.7 million to seven youth emergency shelters across the province, located in Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, Fort McMurray, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Grande Prairie. This included an increase of \$1.4 million provided in March 2023 to enhance service delivery at youth emergency shelters by addressing gaps, increasing safety, and integrating prevention and early intervention supports.

In partnership with the funded shelters, the ministry identified best practices in prevention and early intervention supports to integrate into shelter programming. The Youth Shelter Program Guidelines support consistent programming across all seven Children's Services' funded youth shelters and work towards shared outcomes for youth. Children's Services' ongoing investment in youth shelters ensures youth have emergency accommodation when unexpected placement and family breakdowns occur and connects youth to the help they need while reducing the need for more intensive services.

Youth Virtual Opioid Dependency Program

As part of Alberta's recovery-oriented system of care, the ministry worked in partnership with Alberta Health Services and the ministry of Mental Health and Addiction to expand access to the new Youth Virtual Opioid Dependency Program (VODP) for Children's Services involved youth.

This program is a youth-directed health service accessible by youth and young adults in Alberta with a focus on those living in campus-based treatment centres or in Trellis Society group care placements in Calgary. A team of health professionals provides addiction counsellors, rapid assessments, virtual treatment and ongoing care, recovery-oriented youth programming, peer support, and parent, family and support worker education and training. Youth struggling with opioid dependency in participating settings can choose to explore the program with the support of their child intervention practitioner and facility staff.

The province is investing \$4.5 million over three years, from 2022-23 to 2024-25, to expand VODP services to all group care facilities. The Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction provided funding in 2022-23, while Children's Services will provide \$1.5 million in 2023-24 and \$1.5 million in 2025-26. Implemented in March 2023, the program can help approximately 100 youth and young adults access opioid addiction treatment each year.

Capacity Building

The ministry has developed and implemented various training opportunities for caregivers and practitioners who care for or work with 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 ensures practitioners have the right skills and knowledge when working with caregivers to improve relationships and facilitate positive change.

Caregivers

Foster and kinship caregivers undergo training to prepare them to become caregivers. Caregiver Training revisions were made to align with current research, legislation, policy, practice, and Indigenous worldview and trauma-informed approaches. The new licensed online Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education (PRIDE) training modules incorporate Alberta-specific content. The redesigned caregiver training was fully implemented in summer 2022.

Child Intervention Practitioners - Recruitment and Retention

While workforce challenges are common across every sector in the country, Children's Services is prioritizing posting job openings and has used creative strategies to hire qualified individuals as quickly as possible. To address recruitment and retention challenges, Children's Services introduced a new workforce model to better attract, recruit, retain and support career growth and development with a greater focus on succession planning and supports for new employees.

Notable progress was made in hiring efforts, including hiring more than 115 child intervention practitioners since September 2022, with many placed in rural/remote areas and locations where recruitment is difficult.

Child Intervention Practitioner Training

All practitioners working directly with children, youth, and families are required to complete Blended Delegation Training. The training objective is to prepare practitioners to undertake delegated duties under the CYFEA. There were 219 employees enrolled in delegation training in 2022-23. Delegation training is regularly updated to meet the evolving needs of practitioners and to help practitioners support the specialized needs of the children and youth they serve.

In February 2021, opioid and substance use training for practitioners was introduced, providing practitioners with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed when providing care to young persons who use substances, and when providing supports to their families and caregivers. Practitioners learn about common substances used, appropriate assessment and response to drug overdose, trauma-informed approaches to safety plans and personal safety strategies for the practitioner. Between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023, 160 ministry and Delegated First Nations Agencies employees took the training.

Suicide intervention training for practitioners was re-designed in February 2021. This training helps practitioners understand the scope of their responsibility and develop intervention skills, strategies, and tools to respond to those at risk of or affected by suicide. Practitioners learn how to identify suicide risk and suicide behaviours in children, youth and family members, initiate

intervention strategies, and develop well-being strategies to build resiliency and wellness. In the last year, 210 ministry and Delegated First Nations Agencies employees took the training.

Indigenous Cultural Understanding Framework (ICUF)

Experiential Indigenous cultural training continued to be a priority for all of Children's Services. The ICUF is an ongoing part of Children's Services work and is designed to increase knowledge and understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, and worldviews through four learning pathways: Foundations, Relationship and Culture, Reconciliation, and Wisdom.

Between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023:

- 12 sessions for the Foundations Pathway were offered with 238 Children's Services employees participating. All new Children's Services employees are to complete this training in their first year of employment. To date approximately 90 per cent have completed the Foundations Pathway Learnings since first being offered in 2019.
- The Relationship and Culture Pathway sets out the knowledge and understanding ministry employees should have if working directly with Indigenous peoples or communities, focusing on understanding, building relationships, and participating in cultural practices. 12 sessions were delivered to 228 Children's Services employees. To date, 1,125 of an estimated 2,400 eligible employees representing approximately 47 per cent completed the Relationships and Culture Pathway Learnings since first offered in 2018.
- In September 2022, Children's Services expanded existing ICUF training to include Reconciliation training in the Reconciliation Pathway. This pathway sets out the specific knowledge and understanding with respect to Indigenous people, families and communities for employees in leadership positions. Three Reconciliation trainings took place, and 78 Children's Services employees completed them.
- The Wisdom Pathway is an aspirational pathway under which Children's Services employees may elect to pursue further learnings about Indigenous cultural knowledge and awareness. To support employees through the Wisdom Pathway and as a commitment in the Alberta Public Service Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, the Indigenous Speaker Series, the Kihew Resource Room, and the Indigenous Knowledge Hub continued to be available as ongoing learning for all Government of Alberta employees. To support additional learnings Children's Services coordinates additional opportunities such as participation in teaching sweats and joining an Elder for medicine picking.
- Four Indigenous Speaker Series events, open to all Government of Alberta employees, took place, including one to commemorate National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

The goal is for Children's Services employees to be active in the community and participate in ongoing ceremonies and cultural teachings. Children's Services will offer ongoing Indigenous learning opportunities such as access to teaching sweats, medicine picking (sage and tobacco), cultural teachings such as: preparation of tobacco ties, ribbon skirt making, and other protocol teachings. The ministry can also assist in connecting offices to Indigenous communities and Elders to increase local learning opportunities.

Performance Measure 2.a:

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

Prior Years' Results				2022-23 Target	2022-23 Actual
2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22		
85%	88%	89%	86%	89%	91.5%

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's Services or young adults formerly from care, as they transition to adulthood and pursue post-secondary studies with the goal to obtain a career.

Last year, the ministry received 1,181 applications, and approved 1,057 young adults to receive a bursary to pursue post-secondary studies. Of the total recipients, 91.5 per cent of Advancing Futures young adults successfully completed their educational studies. This was a 5.5 per cent completion rate increase over 2021-22.

Advancing Futures recipients are successful because they receive a high level of skill development training, as well as social and emotional support from the Advancing Futures Practitioners. This measure exceeded its target by 2.5 per cent, which demonstrates how well Children's Services 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				2022-23 Target	2022-23 Actual
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22		
Indigenous	85%	85%	86%	87%	87%	86%
Non-Indigenous	84%	86%	86%	86%	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 grow up in a safe and nurturing family setting when out-of-home placements are necessary for short or longer periods.

In 2022-23, the ministry did not meet its target for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children placed in family-based care due to an increase in facility-based placements. The ministry has seen an increasing number of children with mental health, addictions, and emotional and behavioral difficulties that require intensive supports and exceeds the level of care and supports provided by foster and kinship caregivers. In 2022-23, 86 per cent of Indigenous children in care and 84 per cent of non-Indigenous children in care were placed in family-based care. Compared with 2021-22, there was a one per cent decrease for Indigenous children in care and a two per cent decrease for non-Indigenous children.

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

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
First Nation children and youth receiving child intervention services (not in care and in care) from a DFNA¹	1,887	1,904	1,920	2,033	2,014
First Nation children and youth receiving child intervention services¹	6,239	6,382	6,350	6,302	6,142
Proportion of First Nation children and youth served by a DFNA	30%	30%	30%	32%	33%

¹ Data reflects monthly average.

Over the last three years, an increasing proportion of First Nations children and youth receive child intervention services from DFNAs through 19 Agreements with 37 of the 48 First Nations in Alberta. This includes children and youth residing on-reserve within the boundaries of their reserve and off-reserve in circumstances where DFNA provisions are in place. Additionally, according to *An Act respecting First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, youth, and families*, Indigenous governing body law can have force of law as federal law when a Coordination Agreement is reached, or reasonable efforts are made to do so during the period of one year after the day on which the request was made. Since 2020-21, Children's Services transferred 160 First Nations children, youth, and young adults to Alberta's first Indigenous governing body (IGB).

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 relatively stable results in the 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 Children's Services 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.

Outcome Three: Reduction in red tape imposed by legislation, regulations and associated policies and forms improves services for children, youth, and families

Key Objective

3.1 Advance online services and strengthen the management of digital information to improve interactions between government and Albertans.

Children's Services continued to reduce red tape and administrative burden over the course of the last year. The ministry exceeded the Government of Alberta target of 33 per cent, achieving a final reduction of 33.8 per cent of its regulatory requirements.

In 2022-23, Children's Services invested \$8.8 million to modernize and transform digital services to create more user-friendly and efficient functionality and advance the Early Childhood Development System (ECDS). Upgrades to the child care subsidy application system made the re-application process easier and introduced automatic renewals for subsidy applications with no changes. To reduce administrative burden and improve accessibility for child care operators, funding agreements were added to the licensing portal allowing digital signing of agreements. Educators are also now able to digitally sign funding grant agreements added to the licensing portal.

In 2021-22, the online Family Day Home and Child Care Licensing Portals were launched to simplify communication and streamline services between child care operators and ministry employees. Providing operators with the ability to submit information online saves time on administrative tasks, allowing more time with children in their care. Building on the work in 2021-22, Children's Services further reduced administrative burden by completing updates to the Child Care Claims Portal that improved the process for submitting monthly claims.

Child intervention is continuing to transform its digital environment through the historical scanning to standard project. This project supports the move towards fully electronic child intervention records. Having child intervention records in a centralized digital system streamlines file access across the ministry, and results in important information getting to clients and families much faster.

In 2022-23, a pilot program was launched in nine child intervention sites to provide clients with prepaid debit cards for emergent needs and regular benefits. This pilot is reducing red tape by increasing accessibility to funds and no longer issuing paper cheques. An evaluation will be conducted prior to expanding across the remaining sites.

Performance Measure 3.a:**Percent reduction of red tape to enhance services for children, youth, and families.**

Prior Years' Results				2022-23 Target	2022-23 Actual
2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22		
Not available	8.2%	23.6%	28.2%	33%	33.8%

This performance measure tracks the progress towards the one-third reduction and reports on the net reduction in regulatory burden. Children's Services succeeded in making it easier to do business in the province by reducing red tape and regulatory burden for child care operators and Alberta families. There are no results available for the 2018-19 fiscal year as this performance measure was initiated in the department in 2019.

The ministry has achieved 33.8 per cent in reductions this year, exceeding the target of 33 per cent for 2022-23. In 2022-23, Inclusive Child Care program application forms were simplified across the province by reducing overlap and duplication in the information collected. These improvements reduced red tape in the department by 5.6 per cent.

Performance Measure and Indicator Methodology

Performance Measure 1.a:

Percentage change in the number of licensed child care spaces.

This measure shows the percentage increase in the number of licensed child care spaces over time. The number of spaces within a child care program is the total net floor area divided by the number of required square meters per child. Daycare programs require three square meters for each child, while out-of-school and pre-school programs require 2.5 square meters per child.

The percentage increase in licensed child care spaces is calculated by using the difference in the available spaces between March of the previous year and March of the current year. March data in these calculations represents the end of the fiscal year. This number is divided by the number of spaces (in March of the previous year) and expressed in percentage as indicated by the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{spaces in March of current year} - \text{spaces in March of previous year}}{\text{spaces in March of previous year}} \times 100$$

Source: Child Care Information System

Performance Indicator 1.b:

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

This performance indicator shows the total number of licensed child care spaces, the number of children enrolled, the total enrollment rate and the number of children receiving subsidy. Spaces indicates the maximum number of children a child care program is licensed to accommodate. The number of children enrolled is the actual number of children served by licensed child care programs. The total enrollment rate is the number of children enrolled divided by the number of spaces. The total number of children receiving subsidy is the total subsidy caseload count.

This performance indicator is typically reported at the end of March each year based on child care funding claim reports submitted by the child care programs.

Source: Child Care Information System

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 Indicator 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 Nations children and youth served by Delegated First Nations Agencies (DFNAs).**

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:

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

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

Performance Measure 3.a:**Percent reduction of red tape to enhance services for children, youth, and families.**

The scope of the baseline count included in the performance measure result is based on the number of regulatory requirements in forms, guidelines and policies that cause regulatory burden. Regulatory requirements are defined as “any action that a citizen, business, or government must take to access government services or programs, carry out business or pursue legislated privileges.”

To determine the one-third reduction target for Children’s Services, the baseline count of regulatory requirements in acts and regulations concluded in October 2019, and the count in associated forms, guidelines and policies was completed in February 2020.

The baseline count was retroactive to May 1, 2019, and reflects the inventory of regulatory instruments in force on that date. Statutes, regulations, policies, and forms that have been repealed after May 1, 2019, as well as statutes, regulations, policies, and forms created after May 1, 2019, were excluded from the baseline count.

Progress towards the one-third reduction will consider red tape/regulatory requirements eliminated or merged because of amendments to statutes and regulations in accordance with or changes to associated forms, guidelines and policies included in the baseline count completed in 2019-20 and in accordance with Treasury Board and Finance guidelines. The performance measure reports on the net reduction in regulatory burden. New regulatory requirements that result from a change are to be included in the formula. The Strategic Planning and Operations branch coordinates and tracks red tape reduction initiatives.

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{new red tape} - \text{red tape eliminated or reduced}}{\text{baseline count}} \times 100$$

Source: [Children’s Services](#)

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Ministry Financial Highlights

Statement of Revenues and Expenses (unaudited)

Year ended March 31, 2023

	2023		2022	Change from	
	Budget	Actual	Actual	Budget	2022 Actual
<i>(in thousands)</i>					
Revenues					
Early Learning Child Care Agreements	\$ 733,692	\$ 654,993	\$ 197,300	\$ (78,699)	\$ 457,693
Services to First Nations Reserves	45,678	48,606	51,232	2,928	(2,626)
Other Federal Transfers	35,330	33,332	36,222	(1,998)	(2,890)
Premiums, Fees and Licences	55	56	42	1	14
Other Revenue	7,699	15,740	22,609	8,041	(6,869)
Ministry total	822,454	752,727	307,405	(69,727)	445,322
Inter-ministry consolidation adjustments	-	-	(2)	-	2
Adjusted ministry total	822,454	752,727	307,403	(69,727)	445,324
Programs					
Ministry Support Services	5,928	5,413	5,559	(515)	(146)
Child Intervention	846,787	831,775	824,854	(15,012)	6,921
Child Care	1,076,132	976,007	488,643	(100,125)	487,364
Early Intervention Services for Children and Youth	128,804	131,155	135,431	2,351	(4,276)
Indigenous Partnerships and Strategic Services	10,237	8,058	6,403	(2,179)	1,655
Alberta Child and Family Benefit	335,000	284,105	287,920	(50,895)	(3,815)
Affordability Supports and Inflation Relief - Families with Children	-	218,622	-	218,622	218,622
Ministry total	2,402,888	2,455,135	1,748,810	52,247	706,325
Inter-ministry consolidation adjustments	(13,700)	(13,958)	(7,226)	(258)	(6,732)
Adjusted ministry total	2,389,188	2,441,177	1,741,584	51,989	699,593
Adjusted annual deficit	\$ (1,566,734)	\$ (1,688,450)	\$ (1,434,181)	\$ (121,716)	\$ (254,269)

Revenue and Expense Highlights

Revenues

The total ministry revenue was \$752.7 million, approximately \$69.7 million lower than *Budget 2022* and \$445.3 million higher than 2021-22.

Compared to *Budget 2022*

- Revenues decreased mainly due to lower spending than originally estimated under Early Learning and Child Care Agreements from the federal government to support the expansion of accessible, affordable, and high-quality child care. Revenue recognition for Early Learning and Child Care Agreements is based on actual spending and is available for carry forward subject to terms of the agreements. Other Federal Transfers for Child Special and Disability Allowances also decreased due to a decline in applicable caseloads. Slight increases were recognized primarily in Other Revenues from recoveries of contract surpluses and unused prior year accruals to partially offset the decreases.

Compared to 2021-22 Actual

- Higher revenues were primarily due to increases in Early Learning and Child Care Agreements from the federal government to support the first full-year expansion of accessible, affordable, and high-quality child care. Revenues recognized in 2021-22 were lower as the program was implemented in January 2022 which means one quarter of actual spending compared to a full year in 2022-23. Revenue recognition for Early Learning and Child Care Agreements is based on actual spending. This was partially offset by decreases in Other Revenue resulting from less recoveries of contract surpluses and unused prior year accruals. Other decreases were in Other Federal Transfers for Child Special and Disability Allowances as well as recoveries from Indigenous Services Canada for Services to First Nation Reserves, all attributable to decline in applicable child intervention caseloads.

Expenses

The total ministry's operating expense was \$2,455.1 million in 2022-23, \$52.2 million or 2.2 per cent higher than budget and \$706.3 million or 40.4 per cent higher than 2021-22.

Compared to *Budget 2022*

- Ministry Support Services expense of \$5.4 million was \$0.5 million or 8.7 per cent lower than budget.
- Child Intervention expense of \$831.8 million was \$15.0 million or 1.8 per cent lower than budget primarily due to vacancies resulting from hiring delays, partially offset by increased spending in facility placements and complex caseloads and At-Home placements.
- Child Care expense of \$976.0 million was \$100.1 million or 9.3 per cent lower than budget mainly due to lower expenditures to implement the Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care (CAELCC) Agreement. Unspent funding from the Early Learning and Child Care Agreements is available for carry forward subject to terms of the agreements.
- Early Intervention Services for Children and Youth expense of \$131.2 million was \$2.4 million or 1.8 per cent higher than budget due to Transition to Adulthood (TAP) Financial Supports as a result of higher caseloads and costs per case.

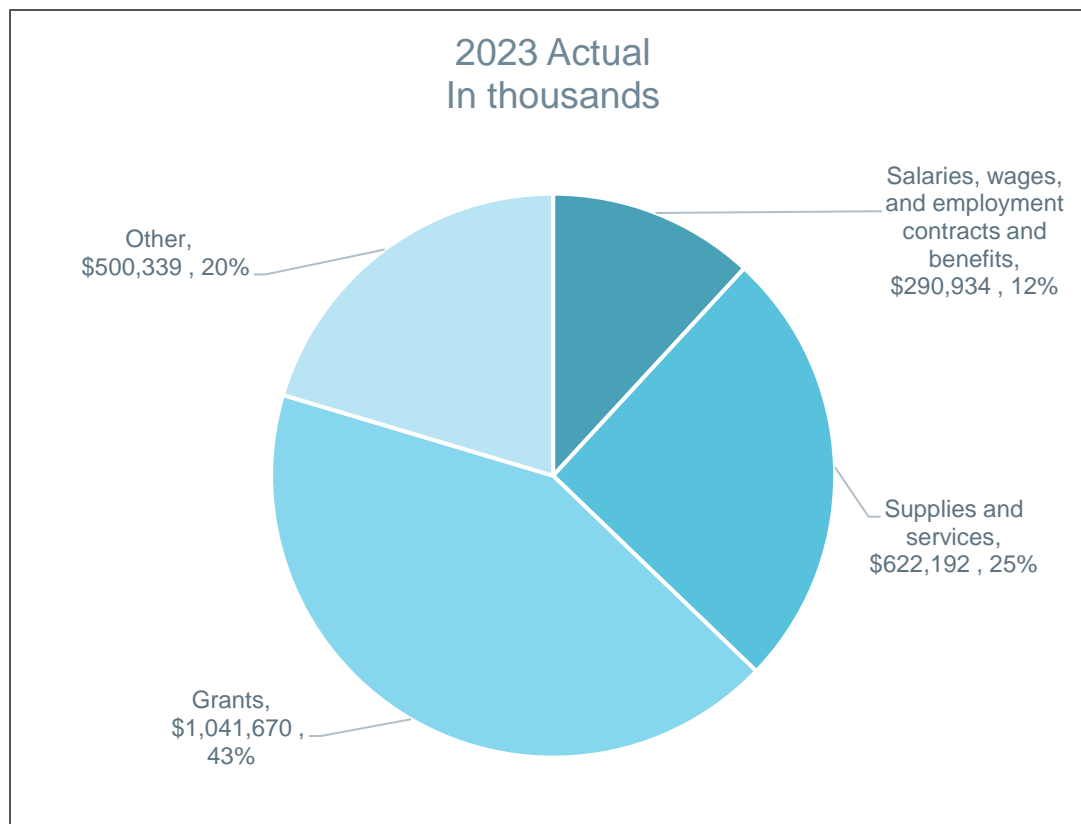
- Indigenous Partnerships and Strategic Services expense of \$8.1 million was \$2.2 million or 21.3 per cent lower than budget due to lower appeals, Inter-governmental supports, and staff vacancies.
- Alberta Child and Family Benefit expense of \$284.1 million was \$50.9 million or 15.2 per cent lower than budget due to higher than expected incomes, likely partially attributable to federal COVID supports still being included in the income calculations for first quarter payments.
- Affordability Support and Inflation Relief – Families with Children expense of \$218.6 million was incurred to administer and provide affordability support payments of \$100 per month (January to March 2023) to families with children.

Compared to 2021-22 Actual

- Ministry Support Services expense was \$5.4 million, a decrease of \$0.1 million or 2.6 per cent.
- Child Intervention expense was \$831.8 million, an increase of \$6.9 million or 0.8 per cent from 2021-22 primarily due to increased spending in facility placements and complex cases, At-Home placements and the new therapeutic foster care service, partially offset by decreases in Kinship and Foster Care due to lower caseloads and decreases in staffing costs due to hiring delays. As well, budget consolidation for Indigenous Partnership and Strategic Services resulted in the movement of negotiation staff from Child Intervention Delivery to Indigenous Partnerships and Strategic Services.
- Child Care expense was \$976 million, an increase of \$487.4 million or 99.7 per cent from 2021-22 due to increase in affordability grants, wage top-ups and space creation initiatives as part of the CAELCC. Also, current year reflects a full year of funding versus three months in 2021-22 for the Canada-Alberta ELCC program.
- Early Intervention Services for Children and Youth expense was \$131.2 million, a decrease of \$4.3 million or 3.2 per cent from 2021-22 primarily due to the reduction in financial assistance caseloads resulting from the age eligibility transition from 24 to 22; now supported by the Transition to Adulthood Program (TAP) financial support program.
- Indigenous Partnerships and Strategic Services expense was \$8.1 million, an increase of \$1.7 million or 25.8 per cent from 2021-22 due to budget consolidation resulting from the movement of negotiation staff from Child Intervention Delivery.
- Alberta Child and Family Benefit expense was \$284.1 million, a decrease of \$3.8 million or 1.3 per cent from 2021-22 due to higher-than-expected family net incomes resulting in lower benefit payments offset by a 6 per cent increase in benefit and eligibility rates effective January 2023.
- Affordability Support and Inflation Relief – Families with Children expense of \$218.6 million was incurred to administer and provide affordability support payments of \$100 per month (January to March 2023) to families with children.

Expenses – Directly Incurred Detailed by Object (unaudited)

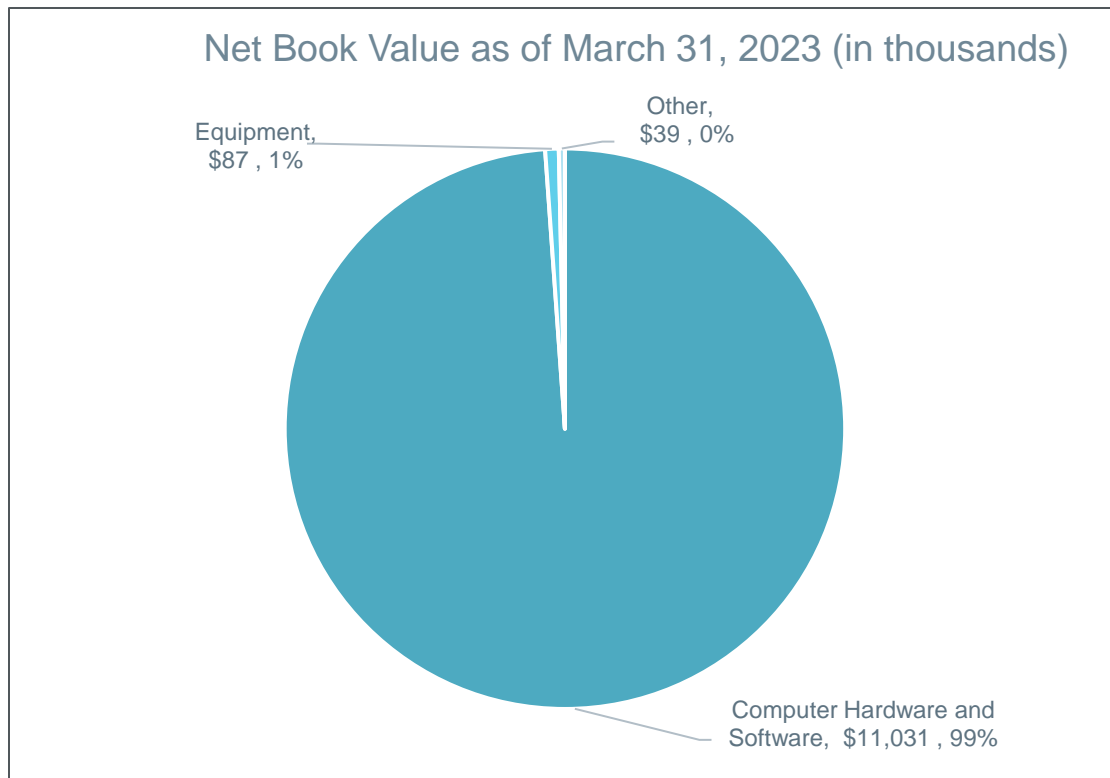
The following information presents expenses of the ministry that were directly incurred by object. The objective of disclosure of expenses by object is to provide information that is useful in evaluating the economic impact of government acquiring or consuming various types of resources.



- The ministry's largest operating expense was grants, which totaled \$1,041.7 million (43 per cent) in supports primarily for child care programs, including affordability and subsidy payments, and Early Childhood Educator wage top-ups.
- The next largest operating expense was supplies and services, which totaled \$622.2 million (25 per cent) primarily in the Child Intervention program (\$570.2 million). Included in Supplies and Services was approximately \$343.3 million in contracted services provided directly to Albertans on behalf of the ministry.
- "Other" operating expenses totaled \$500.3 million (20 per cent) and was primarily for the Alberta Child and Family Benefit program which provided \$284.1 million in supports to lower-income families with a focus on maintaining incentives for families to join and remain in the workforce and \$216.1 million in Affordability Support and Inflation Relief program payments, which provided \$100 a month to eligible families with children between January and March 2023.
- Expenditures for salaries, wages and employee benefits totaled \$290.9 million (12 per cent) and were mainly in the child intervention programs.

Supplemental Financial Information

Tangible Capital Assets (unaudited)



- Total net book value of tangible capital assets was \$11.1 million.
- Computer Hardware and Software make up the largest component of tangible capital assets and represents \$11.0 million or 99 per cent of the total tangible capital assets net book value. This represents investments in Information Technology and systems enhancements, primarily required to help deliver the federally funded Early Learning and Child Care program.
- The remainder is comprised of \$87,000 in equipment for commercial appliances, security systems & workstations and \$39,000 in “Other” for small tenant improvement projects.

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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, 2023, the trust funds under administration were as follows:

	2023	2022
Child Resources Rebate Trust Fund	\$644	\$661

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's Services made or approved during the Fiscal Year.

	<i>(in thousands)</i>
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:	
Prior Year Over Accrual	38
Other Miscellaneous Receivables	<u>22</u>
Sub total	
TOTAL	<u><u>\$ 60</u></u>

Lapses/Encumbrance (unaudited)

Year Ended March 31, 2023

	Voted Estimate ⁽¹⁾	Supplementary Estimate	Adjust- ments ⁽²⁾	Voted Estimate	Voted Actuals ⁽³⁾	Over Expended (Unexpended)
	(in thousands)					
Program - Operating Expense						
1 Ministry Support Services						
1.1 Ministers Office	\$ 742	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 742	\$ 728	\$ (14)
1.2 Deputy Ministers Office	756	-	-	756	741	(15)
1.3 Corporate Services	4,430	-	-	4,430	3,884	(546)
	5,928	-	-	5,928	5,353	(575)
2 Child Intervention						
2.1 Program Planning and Delivery	10,884	-	-	10,884	9,626	(1,258)
2.2 Child Intervention Delivery	534,094	-	(3,500)	530,594	521,011	(9,583)
2.3 Supports for Permanency	67,537	-	-	67,537	67,192	(345)
2.4 Kinship and Foster Care Support	231,700	-	-	231,700	232,459	759
	844,215	-	(3,500)	840,715	830,288	(10,427)
3 Child Care						
3.1 Child Care Affordability and Access	879,010	-	(5,500)	873,510	797,761	(75,749)
3.2 Child Care Quality and Worker Supports	197,122	-	-	197,122	177,685	(19,437)
	1,076,132	-	(5,500)	1,070,632	975,446	(95,186)
4 Early Intervention Services for Children and Youth						
4.1 Early Intervention and Early Childhood Development	80,794	-	-	80,794	78,324	(2,470)
4.2 Youth in Transition	48,010	-	-	48,010	52,713	4,703
	128,804	-	-	128,804	131,037	2,233
5 Policy Innovation & Indigenous Connections						
5.1 Policy and Partnerships	7,637	-	-	7,637	6,026	(1,611)
5.2 Indigenous Connections	2,600	-	-	2,600	1,945	(655)
	10,237	-	-	10,237	7,971	(2,266)
6 Affordability Supports and Inflation Relief - Families w/ Children	-	7,200	-	7,200	2,549	(4,651)
Capital Grants						
2.2 Child Intervention Delivery	1,000	-	-	1,000	1,000	-
3.1 Child Care Affordability and Access	-	-	2,000	2,000	-	(2,000)
	1,000	-	2,000	3,000	1,000	(2,000)
Total	\$2,066,316	\$ 7,200	\$ (7,000)	\$2,066,516	\$ 1,953,644	\$ (112,872)
(Lapse)/Encumbrance						\$ (112,872)
Program - Capital Investment						
2.2 Child Intervention Delivery		-	4,021	4,021	1,294	(2,727)
3.1 Child Care Affordability and Access	7,500	-	3,500	11,000	8,762	(2,238)
Total	\$ 7,500	\$ -	\$ 7,521	\$ 15,021	\$ 10,056	\$ (4,965)
(Lapse)/Encumbrance						\$ (4,965)

⁽¹⁾ As per "Expense Vote by Program" and "Capital Investment Vote by Program" page 43 of the 2022-23 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 because 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 no disclosures of wrongdoing filed with the public interest disclosure office for Children's Services from the period April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023.